PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

(HANSARD)

SIXTH SERIES—VOLUME 100

HOUSE OF COMMONS

OFFICIAL REPORT

THIRD SESSION OF THE FORTY-NINTH PARLIAMENT
OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN
AND NORTHERN IRELAND
THIRTY-FIFTH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SESSION 1985-86

COMPRISING PERIOD
23 JUNE—4 JULY 1986

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IN THE THIRD SESSION OF THE FORTY-NINTH PARLIAMENT OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND

THIRTY-FIFTH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SIXTH SERIES **VOLUME 100**

FIFTEENTH VOLUME OF SESSION 1985-86

House of Commons

Monday 23 June 1986

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

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[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

TRANSPORT

Road Safety

1. **Mr. Dormand** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what further proposals he has for increasing road safety; and if he will make a statement.

The Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. John Moore): The Government's road safety review is almost concluded. It aims to identify the scope for new policy initiatives. Meanwhile the vigorous application of well-established measures can achieve significant casualty reductions, particularly through safety engineering measures.

Mr. Dormand: Does not today's tragic accident on the M4 underline the continuing need for close examination of road safety? I join in the welcome which has been given to the substantial reduction in the number of road deaths over the past two years or so, but does the Secretary of State agree that one of the worst features is drunken driving, and will he take the initiative in introducing legislation so that someone who is convicted of drunken driving automatically receives a gaol sentence?

Mr. Moore: I welcome the recognition that the hon. Gentleman gives to the reduction in deaths, but, as he rightly says, we must not be complacent. I recognise, as he does, that half of all deaths relate to drink-driving offences, so it is clearly a significant and difficult issue.

May I press on for a moment, Mr. Speaker? The hon. Gentleman mentioned the tragic events of the early hours of today, and it has not yet been possible to inform the relatives of all those involved. As the precise circumstances of the accident are not yet known, I think that both sides of the House will agree that it would be premature to comment on possible causes. The accident is being investigated by the police, and staff in my Department are helping them. I know that the House will join me in expessing condolences to those so tragically bereaved by the accident. My hon. Friend the Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley), who is responsible for roads, visited the scene in the early hours of this morning and has told me how promptly and efficiently, as we would expect, the police, ambulance, fire and motorway maintenance services acted. I know that all would wish to join me in paying a warm tribute to those services.

Mr. Adley: I thank my right hon. Friend for his comments, and I know that the House will want to pay tribute to him for recognising the need to make that statement in answer to the first question, which I think we would all have expected from him. Is it not extraordinary that 12 people can be killed in an accident and yet the event really passes by, almost without a mention, and tomorrow will be forgotten by all except the poor bereaved people who are left behind? Will my right hon. Friend explain to the House, or, if he cannot, will he consider why railway vehicles have to keep a safe distance between each other and must behave in accordance with signals, and passenger-carrying vehicles have to be built to a certain strength, but none of those requirements are laid upon road transport?

Mr. Moore: At this stage the House would want me to concern myself with road safety, which is the subject of the question. I recognise the fine record of our railways, but we must keep in proportion the awful tragedy which occurred in the early hours of this morning. For example, the accident rate on motorways is a third of that on all-purpose trunk routes and an eighth of that on all roads.

We must leave no stone unturned to try to sort out the problems that we face, but we must try to keep them in proportion

Mr. Haynes: What further proposals does the Secretary of State have for cyclists, bearing in mind that a number of people, particularly those from the House, such as myself, for example, cycle back and forth and in doing so they are really taking their lives in their hands simply because the motorist could not care less about them? What provision will the Secretary of State make for cyclists, not only on the present roads, but on new roads, to give them facilities so that they can ride safely?

Mr. Moore: I welcome that question from the hon. Gentleman, who is an estimable hon. Friend in every sense of the word. He may be aware that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State opened a cycle route on Friday. For the first time there is a specific reference in the Highway Code – the details of which have been laid before the House – to the role of cyclists. I am aware of the problem, because although there have been improvements in some of the statistics for road safety, pedestrians and cyclists still suffer. The hon. Gentleman may like to be reminded of the happy fact that preliminary indications suggest that in 1985 about 50 fewer cyclists died compared with 1984. However, there is still a long way to go.

Mr. McCrindle: Bearing in mind the recent departmental circular urging parents to fit child safety belts in the rear of vehicles, has my right hon. Friend noticed the article in the *British Medical Journal* which points out that many of those seat belts appear to be ineffectively or wrongly fitted? Does the Department have any plans to contact manufacturers and others so that what is clearly intended as a safety device turns out to be so?

Mr. Moore: I have not seen that article, but if it is serious—and it must be in that journal—I shall ask my hon. Friend the Minister with responsibility for roads to look at the issue immediately.

Mr. Frank Field: May I invite the Secretary of State to return to the substance of the initial question, which concerned the action that he intended to take over drunken driving?

Mr. Moore: That was the substance, not of the initial question, but of the supplementary question. However, I said that I accepted the point made by the hon. Member for Easington (Mr. Dormand), which was that in the case of half of all of those deaths there was a causal relationship with drink. I understand that about two-thirds of those tragic accidents happen between 10 pm and 4 am. Clearly the issue is of concern. I should like to look at it carefully, as it obviously involves the attitudes of those who drive, as well as statistics. I do not want to say more now, but I recognise the seriousness of the issue.

Sir Dudley Smith: I wish to raise an ancillary but important point. Will my right hon. Friend investigate current signposting? Is he aware that, away from motorways, signposts are often inadequate and confusing, and are a contributory cause of driving accidents?

Mr. Moore: I accept my hon. Friend's long-held interest in the subject. I shall consider that point. I was not aware that signposting was regarded as a contributory factor to accidents, but I shall certainly look into the matter.

Mr. Robert Hughes: On behalf of the Opposition, may I express our condolences to the relatives of those killed in the early hours of this morning? The Secretary of State said that the police are holding an inquiry. Will he ensure that it is as wide ranging as possible. The only thing that we seem to know about the accident is that a mini-van ended up on the opposite carriageway. Will the right hon. Gentleman pay particular regard to the adequacy of central reservation guards, in order to prevent the possibility of such an accident in future?

Mr. Moore: I am delighted at the hon. Gentleman's initial remarks, and I shall ensure that his points are pursued effectively.

Newark Relief Road

2. **Mr. Alexander** asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects work on the Newark relief road to commence; and over how long a period it will last.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Peter Bottomley): Work is expected to commence towards the end of 1987 subject to the completion of statutory procedures and the availability of funds. The construction period will be two and a half years.

Mr. Alexander: Is my hon. Friend aware that the bypass was the subject of a public inquiry in 1983, that the Department approved it in 1984, and that we are told that it will be yet another three years before work commences? Is my hon. Friend aware of the widespread anger and resentment felt by those who live and work in the centre of Newark in my constituency over that completely unacceptable delay? I must tell my hon. Friend that my constituents have not been well served in this matter by his Department.

Mr. Bottomley: I recognise how forcefully my hon. Friend has put forward the case for his constituency and his constituents. However, he will be aware of the various procedures that need to be completed. It does no one any good, particularly his constituents, if we take a short-cut or make a mistake on the remaining processes, and so leave ourselves open to challenge.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Is my hon. Friend aware that that relief road is also of the greatest importance for Lincolnshire? Is he aware that the A46 between Lincoln and Newark is already inadequate? If there is to be proper economic development in Lincolnshire, there must be good communications with the midlands, and a relief road round Newark is essential to that end. Will my hon. Friend reconsider the matter to see whether there is any way of improving progress on that road?

Mr. Bottomley: I shall do as my hon. Friends ask. It is worth remembering that we need to maintain the strength of the bypass programme and that we are catching up on works which I am sad to say, went astray in the late 1970s when the roads programme was halved in real terms.

Motorways (Traffic Flows)

4. **Mr. Chapman** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he is satisfied with his Department's methods and record of forecasting traffic flows on motorways.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: In general, yes. We use methods which provide a sound basis for the planning of national roads.

Mr. Chapman: As the traffic forecasts on the M25, particularly on the western sections of this orbital motorway, have proved to have grossly underestimated the volume using it, does my hon. Friend agree on reflection that there must be a better way of forecasting such flows? Is that not particularly important because the provision of new roads demands long-term planning?

Mr. Bottomley: Yes. I do not think that we are too modest in saying that we try to pick up new ideas and to learn from our experiences. People accept that on occasion we overshoot or undershoot a little. We need to learn most from when we overshoot or undershoot by a great amount.

Mr. Spearing: Do not things happen rather differently? With a dense population and a demand for movement, will not roads almost inevitably fill up in proportion to the additional facilities that they provide? Is not the real answer a balanced programme for transport, including adequate public transport facilities, so that we have reliable and efficient transport by all modes and a minimum of congestion and accidents on the motorways?

Mr. Bottomley: Yes, Sir. However, as the hon. Gentleman would be the first to say, if people can get round half or part of the M25, that helps popular transport, whether by car, coach or bus.

Mr. Richard Page: As in the sections connecting with my constituency of Hertfordshire South-West, the annual traffic flows are between 25 and 40 per cent. above the original estimates, will my hon. Friend re-examine the idea of providing four lanes and, if necessary, consider using the hard shoulder under bridges, as on the continent? Since it is obvious that the forecast methods, if not the forecasters, are the same as those responsible for the original two lanes at the start of the M1, will the Minister's Department revise those methods?

Mr. Bottomley: We shall do the best that we can, but we do not want too many stretches of motorway without hard shoulders, because they increase the safety of motorways, as my right hon. Friend said in answer to the first question. I doubt whether many people who were responsible for the early stages of the M1 are still in position, but I shall ensure that what my hon. Friend says is taken into account by me and my successors.

Mr. Pike: Will the Minister examine carefully the traffic flows on the M62? Is there not a case for another east-west motorway from Lancashire to Yorkshire? Would it not be a good idea to extend the M65 east from Colne to Yorkshire?

Mr. Bottomley: The hon. Gentleman may be right, but he should engage the attention of his hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing), who seems to believe that this Government should not build any more roads. However, the hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) seems to think we should have better and safer roads. Once we get more through traffic on to the through routes, we shall have a chance of improving the residential areas, which will be the real solution to road safety for pedestrians and cyclists.

Mr. Ward: Will my hon. Friend re-examine the traffic forecasts for the M3, because I am sure that they are approximately right? Is he aware that that would clearly demonstrate to him the need to complete the M3-M27 link, which has been held up by one public inquiry after another, where that short section of road is a danger to life?

Mr. Bottomley: Poor stretches between high quality roads increase the dangers because people expect good roads throughout. We shall try to complete the missing link as soon as we can.

British Rail

5. **Mr. Ron Davies** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received concerning the level of maintenance of British Rail rolling stock in the light of the proposed reduction in staff; and if he will make a statement.

The Minister of State, Department of Transport (Mr. David Mitchell): Since British Rail's announcement on 20 May about its future plans we have received seven letters from members of the public about the general issue of rolling stock maintenance. The level of maintenance of British Rail's rolling stock is entirely a matter for it.

Mr. Davies: Will the Minister comment on the statement made a few days ago by the president of ASLEF, Mr. Tom Clarke, that British Rail could not be trusted to put safety before cost cutting? In the light of the 50 per cent. reduction in the staff employed in wagon maintenance, and the thousands of jobs that will be lost in railway workshops in the coming months, do the Government not think that they should reconsider their priorities and start investing not only in stock but in the railway network?

Mr. Mitchell: It seems that the hon. Gentleman has not been following what has been happening in British Rail's world. Since 1979, no less than £2,500 million has been invested by British Rail. Moreover, in the past two years, I have given specific approval for the provision of 1,351 new passenger vehicles. The problem is that the new vehicles require a great deal less maintenance, which is why British Rail has reduced the range of its maintenance facilities.

Mr. Coombs: Will my hon. Friend take every possible step to ensure that he discourages actively any attempt by British Rail to seek foreign tenders for railway maintenance work?

Mr. Mitchell: I know of no proposal by British Rail to seek foreign tenders for maintenance work on British Rail.

Mr. Freud: Is the Minister satisfied that when the Channel tunnel brings about an increase in road and rail transport the recently announced closure of British Rail workshops will not jeopardise an adequately trained work force?

Mr. Mitchell: British Rail has an investment plan for the Channel tunnel involving the expenditure of about £380 million. There is no reason to believe that there will not be adequate maintenance facilities for servicing all that investment.

Mr. Bagier: Is the Minister not aware of the great number of breakdowns that take place, even of east-coast main line Intercity trains? He has made the rather complacent statement that a large amount of new

equipment is being introduced, but does he not recognise that that equipment will not remain new for ever and that it will require some maintenance at some stage? Will he review the massive cuts which his Department is planning for railway workshops?

Mr. Mitchell: My Department is not planning any cuts in maintenance workshops. It is for British Rail to match demand with the facilities that it provides. The hon. Gentleman will know that the east coast main line is the subject of the largest electrification project that British Rail has undertaken for 25 years. It has been approved by the Government and it is going ahead. In the meantime, the HSTs are being serviced as is necessary.

Mr. Waller: Will my hon. Friend take this opportunity to refute as strongly as possible the suggestion by the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) that British Rail has put safety after its efforts to reduce costs? Is it not a fact that investigations into accidents which have taken place on British Rail's network show clearly that there is no pattern of reductions in safety having contributed to the accidents which have occurred?

Mr. Mitchell: My hon. Friend is right. That is borne out by the reports of my Department's inspectorate. The massive new investment which British Rail has been undertaking involves more modern rolling stock, which tends to be safer anyway.

Mr. Snape: What percentage of British Rail's locomotives and rolling stock has been constructed in the past decade? Does the hon. Gentleman feel that the percentage is satisfactory? Does he agree that the recently announced reductions in construction and maintenance staff at British Rail Engineering Ltd. will mean that British Rail will continue to have, in more ways than one, the oldest railway in Europe?

Mr. Mitchell: I do not have in my head the precise percentage of rolling stock that has been constructed over the past decade. If the hon. Gentleman cares to table a question about that, I shall be happy to answer it for him. I can — *[Interruption.]* If the hon. Gentleman gives notice of that question, I shall be prepared to give him an answer. I do not have the statistic in my head and I do not think that the hon. Gentleman should be surprised at that. We have considered every one of British Rail's proposals for investment in locomotives and not one of them has been turned down.

Vehicle Licence Duty

6. **Mr. Teddy Taylor** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he plans to take to curb the evasion of vehicle licence duty; and if he will make a statement.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Michael Spicer): The evasion rate is now 4 per cent. As a result of recent strong action, the number of offenders prosecuted or dealt with by out-of-court settlements was 9 per cent. up on the previous year and over 60 per cent. higher than in 1982. Further steps to deter evaders are being taken this year.

Mr. Taylor: The rate of evasion is quite alarming. It amounts to almost £100 million every year. As it is unreasonable to expect the police to chase up that evasion when they have so much on their plate, has the time not come to consider putting the costs of vehicle excise duty on to the price of petrol?

Mr. Spicer: I agree entirely with my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) that the evasion rate of 4 per cent. is still too high. He is quite correct to say that the tax evaded amounts to £100 million. My hon. Friend asked whether we should abolish vehicle excise duty. By taking up the plan which he suggests, 38p would be added to the price of a gallon of petrol. Therefore, the Government have no present plans to abolish VED.

Mr. Anderson: May I remind the Minister that on 24 October last year — I refer to column 489 of the *Official Report* — the Secretary of State, when he was Financial Secretary to the Treasury, informed me that he would draw to the attention of the Minister of Transport the fact that an additional 300 staff in the DVLC would, as he put it, produce the maximum net revenue from enforcement, and that in October last year that increase in staff was being seriously considered. Does the right hon. Gentleman not have a unique opportunity now, since his transformation, to do something positive about that and to save the public money?

Mr. Spicer: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport has just informed me that he is looking forward to visiting, at the earliest possible opportunity, the DVLC. This year we have already appointed 75 extra personnel for enforcement.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels: I back up what my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) said. Surely my hon. Friend agrees that 38p seems an incredibly high additional sum to be put on the price of a gallon of petrol. The police are disturbed from carrying out their normal duties by having to check licences, far too many of which are out of date. An amount of £100 million is involved. Will my hon. Friend reconsider the matter and place in the Library the exact breakdown of how he calculates the sum of 38p?

Mr. Spicer: My hon. Friend does not like the fact that it would involve an extra 38p. However, the figure has been well established. If I can provide further details about how the computation has been made, I shall do so.

Mr. Tony Banks: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that my predecessor as the Member of Parliament for Newham, North-West was a great campaigner against road fund licence fraud until, unfortunately, he was caught out? I believe that a Guinness bottle label was placed where the excise licence should have been. Is the hon. Gentleman aware that in the underground car park below the House of Commons a large number of cars do not bear current tax discs? [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh!"] Nothing unlawful is being done, but a number of hon. Members are using the car park as a long-term car park. Does the hon. Gentleman not feel that those hon. Members should pay a road fund licence also?

Mr. Spicer: Yes, Sir.

London Buses and Underground

7. **Mr. Greenway** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what is his latest estimate of the number of passengers using London buses and the London Underground; what were the comparable figures in each of the past five years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: In 1985-86 there were some 1,160 million passenger journeys on the buses — 7 per cent.

more than in 1981 — and 740 million on the underground — 37 per cent. more than in 1981, and the highest level ever. I am delighted at LRT's success in continuing to attract passengers while making major improvements in efficiency. This year revenue subsidy will be slashed to some £79 million compared with £230 million planned by the GLC.

Mr. Greenway: Is not that remarkable increase in the number of passengers using buses and underground trains in London a matter for great congratulation? Does my hon. Friend recall how the GLC — not lamented — which in 1981 doubled the fares as well as Londoners' rates, said that, with the removal of London Transport from the GLC, there would be massive accidents on the roads, race riots and all the rest? *[Interruption]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Relevance, please.

Mr. Greenway: Those are some of the things that the GLC said. Will my hon. Friend predict the likely increase in passenger use of London Transport in the coming year?

Mr. Mitchell: I expect that there will be about the same number of bus passenger journeys and an increase from about 672 million to 740 million Underground passengers. Clearly that will be an all-time record number of passengers. The financial burden borne by ratepayers and taxpayers has decreased by 1p in the pound and the level of revenue support needed has been halved in one year.

Mr. Stott: I recognise that there has been an increase in usage of the tube and buses in London, but does the Minister accept that, since the Government took control of London Transport, fares have increased by 16 per cent., that 3 million bus miles have been lost, that Londoners are paying an additional £1 million in rates — despite the Government's promises — and that the child's fare has increased by 50 per cent.? That is not a particularly good record.

Mr. Mitchell: Most of the improvements have been brought about by increased efficiency. Fare increases have been in line with inflation. That is an extremely good record. The massive increase in the number of passengers shows that the fare levels are attractive to them.

Dartford Tunnel

9. **Mr. Proctor** asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to announce his decision as to which contender has won the contract to construct a further crossing at Dartford on the M25; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moore: I am pleased at the interest shown by promoters in this very important project. The bids they submitted are being carefully examined. I hope to announce the result before the end of July.

Mr. Proctor: In view of the great importance to Essex and other counties and to all users of the M25 through the Dartford tunnel, will my right hon. Friend assure the House that there will be no delay in the construction of a third crossing at Dartford?

Mr. Moore: I recognise the great importance of that to which my hon. Friend draws attention from the point of view of potential users. I can give him that assurance. Obviously I shall seek to ensure that the decision comes before the House as quickly as possible.

Mr. Squire: As one who also represents a constituency near the Dartford tunnel, I assure my right hon. Friend that, for much of the day, there are considerable delays on the north side of the tunnel. Allowing for the usual time lag between contracts coming into play and construction taking place, I can only underline the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Billericay (Mr. Proctor). A third crossing is needed, yesterday.

Mr. Moore: I note my hon. Friend's comment. I have agreed to meet the Essex and Kent local authorities on 1 July, because I recognise the critical importance of this project.

Mr. Tony Banks: Will the right hon. Gentleman give an undertaking that any new tunnel will not carry toll charges? Perhaps the passage of vehicles could be greatly speeded up if the present toll charges for travel through the Dartford tunnel were removed.

Mr. Moore: I shall give no such undertaking. I cannot comment on the Government's position on tolls in advance of our response to the report on tolls by the Select Committee on Transport.

Mr. Couchman: Will my right hon. Friend, in considering this important addition to the roads through Kent which affect my constituency, take note of the appalling state of the M2, which links with the M25 and the Dartford tunnel as the route to the north? Will he ensure that this important artery from the Channel is considered in some depth at an early stage by his Department?

Mr. Moore: I know that my hon. Friend the Minister with responsibility for roads has listened carefully, as I have, to my hon. Friend's comments. One of the few things that I have learnt in the past few weeks is that issues relating to transport movements in Kent are uppermost in the mind of any Minister in the Department of Transport.

Rural Bus Services

10. **Mrs. Currie** asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether the Development Commission has made any grants for innovation in rural bus services.

Mr. David Mitchell: The Development Commission recently approved the first 13 grants — totalling £69,000 — from the rural transport development fund for minibus services, rural transport advisers and local liaison groups. It has also agreed to support a business advisory service for rural transport operators being run by the Council for Small Industries in Rural Areas.

Mrs. Currie: I welcome my hon. Friend's statement. May I invite him to come to my constituency of Derbyshire, South where, instead of getting stuck behind an almost empty heavily subsidised double-decker bus in our country lanes, he will now find himself joining in with the local services, which are now much improved and often run by minibus and minicab operators, public and private? Does he agree that the new Transport Act 1985 presents excellent business opportunities to those operating in transport in future?

Mr. Mitchell: I shall be delighted to join my hon. Friend in her constituency. I notice that what she has to say about the services there contrasts extraordinarily with what was said during the by-election by opponents of our

proposals. I am sure that the public will judge for themselves the difference between the actuality and the rumours which were spread about before.

Mr. Meadowcroft: Is the Minister aware that voluntary sector community transport projects are doing much innovative work as well and that they are not in quite the same category as those referred to by the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie)? What links does the Minister's Department have with Community Transport UK and its local branches?

Mr. Mitchell: The Department keeps in touch with all those developments, including a range of community schemes. The Development Commission is including those sorts of schemes in its operations.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: Does my hon. Friend agree that whether the Development Commission makes, or fails to make, a grant in any specific it should not be used as an excuse for the absence or deterioration of any rural service? Does he also agree that it is the right and proper duty of our county councils, now that they no longer use their money in a blanket subsidy way, to direct the money that used to be in their budgets for blanket subsidy specifically to ensure that there is proper provision where it is socially necessary so to do?

Mr. Mitchell: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Operators of rural services, to which we have given particular attention, get not only the rebate of fuel duty, but 6p a mile this year from the transitional rural bus grant. My hon. Friend is completely right in identifying the substantial sums which are available to county and district councils to provide services, especially in rural areas, which would not otherwise be paying and have, therefore, not been registered as commercial services.

Mr. Robert Hughes: Is not the reality that the National Bus Company is planning to sack 10,000 of its workers and axe one bus service in three? Does that not deny the possibility or rural services surviving the Transport Act 1985? Will the hon. Gentleman publish in full the registrations on bus services, which have now been completed, on which he should have information? It is perhaps too much to expect the Secretary of State to repudiate the views of his predecessor, but will the Minister invite him to distance himself from the former Secretary of State, who said that bus operators were now free to operate the services without the constraints of a social conscience?

Mr. Mitchell: The hon. Gentleman knows very well that my right hon. Friend's last comments were taken totally out of context. Over two thirds of all routes have been registered and the remaining routes are going out to competitive tender. The hon. Gentleman cannot say that the National Bus Company is going to pay off a given number of employees until it knows how many contracts it has won when it puts in for the tenders. In the past 10 years of decline of the bus industry, the National Bus Company has paid off a far larger number than that.

Severn Crossing

12. **Mr. Stern** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will defer any further development planning in relation to the second Severn crossing until a decision has been taken on the proposed Severn barrage.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: No, Sir. The consultants' study into a second Severn crossing is expected to be completed later this summer. If work were to be stopped, the valuable time lost could not be regained. I can assure my hon. Friend that if it is decided to proceed with a second crossing, adequate arrangements will be made for consultation.

Mr. Stern: As my hon. Friend is no doubt aware, the lower reaches of the River Severn and the Bristol channel are currently threatened by two major projects, both of which could have extremely damaging environmental implications, although I would accept that the second Severn crossing is of minor import compared with the proposed Severn barrage. In view of my hon. Friend's confirmation that the two will not be linked, will he confirm today that the plans for the second crossing will be so designed as to minimise any environmental impact?

Mr. Bottomley: Yes, Sir. When my hon. Friend talked of little import, I am sure he meant that the Severn crossing might be of great importance to south Wales and to Avon. What I hope he meant, which I should like to confirm, is that full account will be taken of any effect on the environment and ecology, and that having a second crossing is likely to be of far less importance to the waders and other natural life than the barrage might be. I cannot speak for the barrage, but I can speak for the crossing.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

European Assembly (Budget)

33. **Mr. Teddy Taylor** asked the Attorney-General what progress is being made in the action he has initiated over the illegal budget approved by the European Assembly; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General (Sir Michael Havers): As my hon. Friend knows, the President of the European Court granted interim measures in this case on 17 March, at the request of the United Kingdom, in effect suspending those parts of the budget contested by the Council. On 2 June Advocate-General Mancini delivered his opinion in this case. The judgment of the court is expected to be delivered on 3 July.

Mr. Taylor: I congratulate my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General on the magnificent efforts that he has made to reclaim the illegal sums demanded by the European Assembly, but is he aware that the Common Market's response has been to ask Britain for an advance payment of £180 million to make that up, and more, and that the Parliament has also decided to disregard entirely the decision of the court that £27 million of taxpayers' money was fraudulently and wrongly given to European political parties? Is there nothing that the Attorney-General can do to stop the Assembly illegally and fraudulently using money provided entirely by the Parliaments of member states?

The Attorney-General: I am very grateful to my hon. Friend for what he has said, and I am very pleased that we succeeded on the interim judgment. As my hon. Friend knows, it is not the first time that we have been asked, with other member states, to make an advance payment. It has nothing directly to do with the issue. In any event, it must be a matter for my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Mr. Marlow: If, as happens quite frequently, the Community cannot cope with its budgeting problems and requires its members to cough up what is known in the trade as a reimbursible loan, is Her Majesty's Government entitled legally to say, "No, we will not cough up," or if we did say that would we be taken to the European Court, and if that happened, what would be the outcome?

The Attorney-General: The circumstances must vary from case to case. In each case, we look at the merits. One has always to worry about the penal interest that would be awarded against us if we failed; the penal interest being the highest rate of interest prevalent at any given time within the Community. At the moment, it is over 20 per cent. in Greece.

Solicitors (Complaints)

34. **Mr. Nicholas Brown** asked the Attorney-General if he will make a statement on the Law Society's latest proposals for dealing with complaints against solicitors.

The Solicitor-General (Sir Patrick Mayhew): Subject to the jurisdiction, civil and criminal, of the courts of law, it is for the profession to provide arrangements for handling complaints against solicitors. The latest proposals are the most recent in a series of measures promoted by the Law Society with that objective.

Mr. Brown: In the light of the comments by Coopers and Lybrand about the inefficiency of the old Professional Purposes Department, will the Government be carefully monitoring the performance of the new Solicitors Complaints Bureau? Given that complaints against solicitors now number about 9,000 per year, does the Solicitor-General think that the proposed total staffing of 150 persons to deal with those cases is sufficient? Would it not do more for public confidence in the complaints procedure if the bureau were truly independent of the Law Society?

The Solicitor-General: No profession can hope to exist immune from any scrutiny, but professions can benefit from the scrutiny of a Royal Commission, for example. That is exactly what the legal profession underwent a few years ago. The Benson Royal Commission recommended that those jurisdictions should remain within the Law Society, but that investigation and adjudication should be separated. That is what the Law Society now proposes. The investigating committee will have a majority of lay members. Of course, the Government will be interested in the progress of the new arrangements when they come into force, but it will be for the Law Society to man them properly. We shall see how it gets on.

Trespass

35. **Mr. Adley** asked the Attorney-General if he has any plans to seek to consolidate the law relating to trespass; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: No formal consolidation is envisaged or would be appropriate. However, my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary is discussing with the police and other interested parties whether any strengthening of the criminal law is required, either by extending the proposed powers of the police in the Public Order Bill or by some limited offence of criminal trespass. In addition, the Lord Chancellor is considering possible improvements in the civil procedure for the summary repossession of land available under order 113 of the Rules of the Supreme Court.

Mr. Adley: In thanking my right hon. and learned Friend for his answer, and while not wishing to get this out of proportion, may I ask whether he is aware that some aspects of recent mass trespass have provided evidence that provocation of the police was part of the objective of some of those involved? Will he consider the law in other democratic countries, especially our fellow members of the European Economic Community, and confirm that in his discussions with the Home Office he will raise the question of the mass use of public roads?

The Attorney-General: That is principally a matter for my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary, but we have always believed that the operational side of police work should be left to the chief constable and his senior officers. It seems to me that they have been doing a good job with the peace convoy.

Mr. Alex Carlile: Why has not the simple remedy available to owners of residential property to deal with squatters, which was provided in the Criminal Law Act 1977, been extended to the residential occupation of land?

The Attorney-General: That is one matter being investigated by the Lord Chancellor and the Home Secretary. The entire area is being examined afresh.

Mr. Key: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the principal objection in this matter is that often matters of public order financially affect small tenant farmers, and that is unacceptable? Will he pass on to the Lord Chancellor the problem arising under order 113, under which a county court judge or a registrar could be used, but there is no duty judge system, as there is in the High Court, and that a speedier and cheaper method is not available?

The Attorney-General: The five-day period in order 113 is under review. The process can be speeded up in urgent cases. I shall ensure that my hon. Friend's comments are brought to the notice of the Lord Chancellor.

Mr. John Morris: Is not the real problem to ensure a balance between the rights of the owners and those who believe that they have a claim of right to a property? Is not the answer to speed up the legal process to adjudicate cases for those who are neither of those things? Is the Lord Chancellor considering that? Should there not be a duty judge, as there is in many other areas of litigation, who sits during the vacation? In other cases, one can see a judge at night, in chambers, and obtain a temporary order. Is that not what is required?

The Attorney-General: We are considering trying to reduce the five-day period, although it can be reduced in urgent cases. The period extends for five days after service, which can make it a little longer. I shall ensure that the Lord Chancellor is aware of the right hon. and learned Gentleman's point about having readier access to a judge.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: When considering the law of trespass, will my right hon. and learned Friend ensure that temporary trespass for the purpose of crossing land is not made a criminal offence?

The Attorney-General: That is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary. There will be many

difficulties with the introduction of criminal trespass. For example, we must cover the case of a man walking through the front door of a friend's house, thinking that he is at home, but he is not. We must consider such examples, which should never be made criminal offences.

Legal Aid

36. **Mr. Maclennan** asked the Attorney-General when he now expects to publish the results of the review of legal aid funding.

The Solicitor-General: As soon as possible, but, it is hoped, about or soon after the end of this month.

Mr. Maclennan: Does the Solicitor-General accept that if arrangements are not made to introduce an independent element into the review of legal aid fees; there will be the gravest disquiet in the legal profession, which considers itself to be grossly under-remunerated, and worse than that in consequence the criminal justice system will be severely impaired?

The Solicitor-General: Tempting though it is to enter the area opened by the hon. Gentleman, his question does not really arise from the review of legal aid funding being carried out by the efficiency unit, so I think that we had better wait until a suitable occasion arises.

Mr. Aitken: Will my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that the total cost in dispute, if the whole demand of the legal profession is granted, is about £8 million or £9 million? May I urge him not to be too cheese paring about this issue, on the ground that we need and deserve a first-class prosecution and defence service in this country?

The Solicitor-General: I never believe in paring cheese, but the point does not arise out of this question. I am grateful for my hon. Friend's concern about the issue that he raises, but I had better wait for a more appropriate occasion to deal with it more fully.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

African Commodity Exports

37. **Mr. Wainwright** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to international financial institutions concerning the scope for stabilising the price of the commodities which Africa exports.

The Minister for Overseas Development (Mr. Timothy Raison): None to those for which I have responsibility. They are not directly involved in commodity price stabilisation schemes.

Mr. Wainwright: Does the Minister, with his wide responsibility, agree that seemingly cheap imports of raw materials from Africa may eventually prove extremely expensive if they are bought at the price of destabilising the Western banking system by exacerbating the international debt crisis?

Mr. Raison: Obviously there is a real problem, but we believe that developing countries' commodity problems are best tackled in the context of overall economic policy. There are stabilisation schemes — for example, the European Community, STABEX and SYSMIN schemes —but assistance through bilateral aid, aid for structural adjustment, general balance of payments support, and so on, are all very valuable in helping to deal with the problem.

Mr. Budgen: Will my right hon. Friend draw to the attention of African countries the experience of the common agricultural policy, of OPEC, and of the tin industry before they draw any general conclusions about the desirability of these various interferences in the market mechanism?

Mr. Raison: Commodity schemes are sensitive and delicate mechanisms and it is right to look at what has been happening around the world.

Mr. Deakins: Is the Minister aware that the present Government, and a Labour Government, would be committed to the United Nations integrated programme for commodities, under which there are to be stabilisation schemes? Does he not talk to his colleagues at the Department of Trade and Industry about these matters?

Mr. Raison: As I have already said, there is scope for such schemes but we must be cautious in attributing to them virtues which they cannot always carry.

Aid (Gross National Product)

38. **Mrs. Shields** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the proportion of gross national product spent on overseas aid in 1985 compared with 1984.

Mr. Raison: As I informed the House on 20 June, OECD statistics show that in 1985 Britain provided net official development assistance equivalent to 0·34 per cent. of GNP. In 1984 the figure was 0·33 per cent.

Mrs. Shields: Bearing in mind that in 1979 the percentage was 0·52, why are the Government so hesitant to increase aid, especially when Sport Aid and other ventures clearly show public support for such ventures?

Mr. Raison: If the public want to support additional aid, as they certainly do, they have every chance to do so through very valuable mechanisms such as Sport Aid. In the current year there has been a substantial increase in our aid programme compared with last year, ahead of the rate of inflation, and I believe that that is widely welcomed.

Mr. Dorrell: Does my right hon. Friend accept that the decline in the offical aid programme since 1979 is regrettable? Will he confirm, however, that the total transfer, public and private, from this country to the developing world has exceeded 1 per cent. of our GDP every year since 1979? Would he care to speculate on how the proposals of the official Opposition for exchange and import controls might effect the economies of the developing world?

Mr. Raison: My hon. Friend has raised a good point, which the Opposition must answer. From the overall picture it is clear that the United Kingdom has played and is playing a significant role in helping the Third world.

Mr. Tom Clarke: In constant prices, is it not the case that since 1979 the real value of our overseas aid has fallen by 20 per cent.? How does the Minister explain that abrupt decline, and how can he say for one second that the Government intend to achieve the United Nations' figure of 0·7 per cent.? Will he come clean with the House today

and talk about the Government's record and policies, and contrast the generosity of the British people with the mean-mindedness of the Government whom he seeks to serve?

Mr. Raison: Despite what the hon. Gentleman says, I welcome him to the Front Bench for the first time in Overseas Development Question Time. Obviously, we have had to operate against the policy of the overall control of public expenditure, and it has not been possible to exempt the aid programme from that. On the other hand, we are increasing our aid programme and concentrating in particular on securing greater effectiveness. I believe that our efforts are widely appreciated.

Mr. Stanbrook: Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is unfair that his Department should have to bear the burden, from its overseas aid funds, of the payment of pensions for retired colonial officers, almost all of whom are resident in this country?

Mr. Raison: I understand my hon. Friend's point. Both he and other hon. Friends put it to my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary last week. It is a difficult matter, and the money must come from some departmental budget. However, I note what my hon. Friend has said.

Sport Aid

39. **Mr. Tom Cox** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions his officials have had with the organisers concerning the distribution in Africa of funds raised by Sport Aid.

Mr. Raison: I understand that the funds raised by Sport Aid for Africa are being divided equally between the Band Aid organisation and UNICEF. My officials have had discussions with Band Aid about its plans, and have offered to make available to it any technical advice which it may need. I congratulate all those who contributed to Sport Aid on their fine achievement.

Mr. Cox: I welcome the Minister's comments, but is he aware that, in the eyes of the British people, the standing of Bob Geldof on issues of aid is higher than that of his Department? Against that background, should we not be working in the closest possible co-operation with him, and, to set a real example, should not the Government match pound for pound the moneys that the British people have contributed through Sport Aid? Would that not show real commitment on the part of the Government?

Mr. Raison: I have the greatest respect for what Bob Geldof has done personally and what Band Aid and many other agencies have done. Regarding matching moneys, I understand that so far Band Aid has spent £28 million on relief in Africa. Over the past couple of years the British Government have spent £190 million one way and another on relief in Africa. Therefore, I am not sure that matching would be appropriate.

Mr. Hirst: Bearing in mind the difficulties that aid agencies have encountered in distributing aid in Ethiopia, does my right hon. Friend find it both disturbing and strange that the Marxist regime there apparently cannot feed its people, but is offering food, shelter and training to so-called freedom fighters for southern Africa?

Mr. Raison: There are many disturbing occurrences in Ethiopia. We have given great help to that country, and we are thinking about what more we can do. However, we must recognise that we do so against a difficult political background.

Africa

41. **Mr. Beith** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has any plans to cut the amount of aid allocated to Africa; and if he will make a statement.

43. **Mr. Simon Hughes** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if his Department plans to increase aid to Africa in the light of the United Nations Special Session on Africa; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Raison: We shall continue to give priority to Africa in our aid programme. We shall give particular help to those countries where aid can be used effectively, especially those undertaking sensible economic adjustment policies.

Mr. Beith: Does that priority mean raiding the budget for Asian countries, or will the Minister find new money for this purpose? Does the right hon. Gentleman recognise that the lesson of the United Nations Special Session on Africa is that there is a readiness to make the economic and structural reforms to which he refers, but that that effort will fail if there is not financial backing from the West, particularly in relieving the debt problem?

Mr. Raison: It is important that Asian countries should receive substantial aid, as they do at present. We must ensure that we make the best use of our resources, and we are certainly looking for good ways of spending development money in Africa. The Africans themselves, at the end of the United Nations Special Session, said that they were satisfied with what had happened at that conference. It was successful both in terms of the Africans' stance of a commitment to policy reform and the donor response.

Mr. Jessel: Can my right hon. Friend assure me that the amount of publicity rightly given to the needs of Africa will not mean that we ignore the needs of the Indian sub-continent, which may be just as great?

Mr. Raison: I am happy to give my hon. Friend that assurance.

Tropical Deforestation

42. **Mr. Tony Lloyd** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent representations he has received on the issue of tropical deforestation.

Mr. Raison: Several hon. Members have written to me or tabled questions in the House. We have also received representations from a number of individuals and organisations, including Friends of the Earth and the International Institute for Environment and Development.

Mr. Lloyd: Given the widespread international concern about deforestation of tropical forests, what is the Government's attitude to giving practical help, and what help are they giving to nations, such as Indonesia, which depend upon the cash generated from the sale of such timbers? What substitution are the British Government prepared to allow to compensate for that factor?

Mr. Raison: We are ready to give practical help to those countries that ask us to do so. For example, we are giving help in valuable ways to Ghana, Sudan, India, Somalia and other countries.

Mr. Cecil Franks (Barrow and Furness): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Does this arise out of questions?

Mr. Franks: No.

Mr. Speaker: Then I shall take it at the usual time, after the statement.

Invalid Care Allowance

3.31 pm

The Secretary of State for Social Services (Mr. Norman Fowler): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement about invalid care allowance.

Invalid care allowance is intended to help people who care for severely disabled people at home. It is a non-contributory benefit and depends on the claimant caring for the disabled person for at least 35 hours a week. It was introduced by the then Labour Government in 1976 for men and single women who had given up their sole means of livelihood to look after a severely disabled relative, but the legislation specifically excluded married women from benefit.

Since taking office, this Government have extended invalid care allowance to those caring for non-relatives and have also increased the earnings limit. Clearly there has also been pressure to extend invalid care allowance to married women. A case concerning their exclusion is now before the European Court of Justice and a debate is expected very shortly in another place. The Government have therefore reviewed the exclusion and have decided that, irrespective of the European Court decision, the allowance should be extended to married women on the same terms as married men and single persons. Accordingly, the Government will very shortly introduce an amendment to the Social Security Bill to achieve this.

The extension of invalid care allowance to married women will mean a very substantial expansion in the scope of the scheme. At present there are fewer than 11,000 beneficiaries and the cost of the allowance is £13 million. We expect up to 70,000 married women to claim the allowance, at an additional net cost of around £55 million in a full year.

The extension of the invalid care allowance to married women represents a very large improvement in the provision that we are making for disabled people in the community. It will recognise the vital role that married women play in looking after disabled people. I hope that the change will be welcomed on both sides of the House.

Mr. Michael Meacher (Oldham, West): Is the Secretary of State aware that this extension of the invalid care allowance to married women is undoubtedly right and will be wholly welcomed by women's organisations and the 70,000 married women who will benefit? Is he also aware that carers are often persons who have given up jobs to look after severely disabled relatives or friends? In that light, the payment of £23 a week invalid care allowance to married women carers, to bring them on a par with men and single women, is the minimum that they have a right to expect, when the alternative of residential or nursing care by the state would cost at least £170 a week. In other words, carers save the state eight times as much as they are given by the state. Is he aware that this is a complete vindication of the case that was fought right up to the European Court of Justice by Mrs. Drake, and that it is only tragic that this decision has been left to the last possible moment by the Government and that it was not made before that case started on 20 December 1984?

More specifically, will the Secretary of State clarify whether back payments will be made to all married women carers who have been denied invalid care allowance in the last 18 months, which the European Court will almost certainly rule tomorrow has been denied illegally? Is he aware that proceedings are already in hand to take the Government to court again if this entitlement is still denied?

Is the Secretary of State aware that while he is now giving to carers with one hand, he is taking away from carers with the other? Is he aware that carers are already disadvantaged by the current Social Security Bill, in two important ways: first, that they will no longer be able to qualify for the higher long-term rate of supplementary benefit after one year; and, secondly, that, of all client groups, they are singled out almost uniquely by the absence of any premium for them in that Bill? Is the Secretary of State aware, too, that support services, especially respite care, are every bit as important to carers as financial support, when it is known that two-thirds of them are in poor physical or mental health at any one time and that nearly seven in 10 suffer physical injury as a result of their caring duties?

Now that the Government have been dragged kicking and screaming through the courts to reach a decision which the Labour party made in 1983, will the Government face their responsibilities and provide the second half of what carers need — respite care and other support services — more graciously and more promptly than they conceded the first half?

Mr. Fowler: I am grateful at any rate for the hon. Gentleman's first words, when he said that the Government were entirely right to make this decision, but the further he continued with it the worse I thought his contribution became. If the Opposition feel so deeply on this issue, why was it that the last Labour Government specifically excluded married women from the legislation that they introduced? Married women were specifically excluded from the Social Security Benefits Act 1975, and it is that exclusion by the last Labour Government that is before the European Court at the moment. The Government will have to introduce primary legislation to put that right, and that is what we intend to do.

The question of the payment of arrears will need to be decided in the light of the European Court's judgment. Obviously we shall meet any legal obligations, but what those obligations are will depend upon that judgment. The European Court's judgment is thought to be imminent, and the Government will need a few days to consider it, but I shall make clear the position on arrears as speedily as possible. Of course I understand and support the extension of support services for the disabled.

As for the Government's record concerning the disabled, the fact of the matter is that the Government have doubled the mobility allowance; they have removed the invalidity trap; and they have taken a whole range of measures which have improved the position of disabled people in this country. The Government are therefore entirely content to stand on their record.

Sir David Price (Eastleigh): As one who has campaigned for years for the extension of the invalid care allowance to married women, I congratulate my right hon. Friend and thank him and the Government, and I extend my thanks to that least thanked of all Departments, the Treasury. Through my right hon. Friend, may I put it to the Treasury that it has set an example today from which I hope it has learnt that by looking not for narrow accounting but for total national cost benefit it may do a

[Sir David Price]

great deal more to help the carers in the future and that it may earn for itself, as well as for my right hon. Friend some Brownie points?

Mr. Fowler: I shall pass on my hon. Friend's thanks to my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer. Of course, the whole Government stand by this policy. I am grateful for what my hon. Friend said, but in particular I am grateful for what he has done over the years. I recognise the campaigning that he has carried out on this issue.

Mr. Michael Meadowcroft (Leeds, West): I, too, welcome the change in the legislation that is proposed by the Secretary of State in his statement today, which rectifies a piece of sexist legislation of the previous Labour Government. I also congratulate Mrs. Drake on her perseverance in persuading the Government to change this particular piece of legislation. Does this mean that everybody who cares for a severely disabled person at home will receive the invalidity care allowance? Will the Secretary of State look through other social security benefits which might also be thought to be sex discriminatory and rectify those before other people have to go to the European Court to do so?

Mr. Fowler: We shall obviously make entirely clear, not only in the publicity that we provide but by writing to as many people as we conceivably can in receipt of attendance allowance, the precise qualifications for invalid care allowance. Broadly speaking, as the hon. Gentleman knows, it goes to the carer on the basis that the disabled person should be in receipt of attendance allowance — that is, caring for the most severely disabled person — and the person caring should do so for 35 hours or more a week. It is intended as an income replacement and, broadly speaking, will not go to people over retirement age.

Mr. Fred Silvester (Manchester, Withington): Will my right hon. Friend not be put off by the rather miserable and mean-minded Jonah the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher), who led for the Opposition on this matter, and accept that although many of us will still have a "shopping list" on behalf of the disabled, we are grateful to him for taking this action so speedily and effectively?

Mr. Fowler: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. The public will make up their mind on the basis of what the Government have done, how we have acted and the extra resources that will be made available and compare that with what I took to be even more new promises, which are worth about as much as the old promises, of the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher).

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead): I thank the Secretary of State for his statement. Would it be fair to say that this afternoon's statement breathes new life into Dr. Johnson's phrase that to be hanged in the morning concentrates the mind wonderfully? May I offer the right hon. Gentleman the opportunity to congratulate Mrs. Drake and the Child Poverty Action Group, whose campaign has strengthened his hand against the Treasury? Will he confirm that this is new money from the Treasury and that he will not have to make savings from his existing budget, and can he tell married women the week in which they will pick up the money for the first time?

Mr. Fowler: I am certainly talking about additional resources. I must again point out to the hon. Gentleman that we shall have to introduce primary legislation because the Social Security Act 1975 specifically excludes married women and there is no way round that. The hon. Gentleman is typically fair, and I see from his response that he recognises the truth of what I am saying. Claims should be made from now onwards. We shall issue new leaflets and write to all those in receipt of attendance allowance. The new rules will start when the Bill receives Royal Assent.

Mr. Robert McCrindle (Brentwood and Ongar): Is not the rather sour attitude of the Opposition a case of the fox being well and truly shot? Reverting to the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Eastleigh (Sir D. Price), will my right hon. Friend give me an assurance that, in having gained the co-operation of the Treasury in implementing this welcome change, he will not consider that it in any way diminishes the continuing need to press for other desirable improvements in the social security system?

Mr. Fowler: Yes, I agree with both my hon. Friend's points. The response, particularly from the hon. Member for Oldham, West was grudging. The hon. Gentleman would be opposed to motherhood if he thought that it had been introduced by a Conservative Government. We shall continue to develop the social security system as we are doing.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): Can the Secretary of State understand that most people recognise that the statement has been motivated, not by any generosity on the Government's behalf, but because they face the possibility of a humiliating finding of the European Court that their previous attitude discriminated against women? Will he give some figure for the amount that married women have been saving the state by caring for severely disabled people, and also some clearer details than he has done so far about what expense his Department will undertake to ensure that the benefit is widely publicised? Will he again give some estimate of the number of women who will benefit from the statement that he has made today?

Mr. Fowler: I thought that I had given those figures. We expect there to be about 70,000 new beneficiaries. There will be about 50,000 net gainers because of the interacting effect of the entitlement to dependency addition. The Government cannot really do more about publicity than I have promised. We shall write to everyone in receipt of attendance allowance, as that seems to be an eminently sensible course to take. On the general position, I hear what the hon. Gentleman says, but I remind him that we are putting right the Labour Government's legislation.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley (Surrey, South-West): I join in congratulating my right hon. Friend on his decision. I have for some time urged the Government to make the right decision about married women and the invalid care allowance. Four out of five carers are women, and there are often more women looking after dependent elderly relatives and disabled people than there are looking after children. Will my right hon. Friend renew his efforts to look at the needs of carers in the broadest sense? They

require emotional and practical support, and not just financial help, and the best way of providing that is often in partnership with the voluntary sector.

Mr. Fowler: I have great sympathy with what my hon. Friend has said. As she may know, the Government have been developing policy in this area and seeking to introduce further proposals. I hope that in the not too distant future I shall have something to say about the further development of that policy.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): Does the Secretary of State realise that the public have become increasingly aware that their best defences against sexual discrimination are the European Court of Justice and the European Court of Human Rights? Is he satisfied that the Government's proposals on tax credits, which are currently being considered, will not fall foul of similar anti-discriminatory European legislation? Should the proposals not be withdrawn?

Mr. Fowler: The hon. Gentleman has taken us a little away from the question of invalid care allowance. The Government have taken a whole range of actions to remove sex discrimination from our social security legislation. Since 1983 men and women have been able to claim income-related benefits on the same terms. We have changed the household duties test, and there is equal treatment over claims for dependency benefits. In other words, quite apart from decisions by the European Court, we have taken a whole series of steps that have achieved greater equality.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): Is my hon. Friend aware that his announcement today will give particular pleasure to my contituency, where the Association of Carers resides? Would he care to pay tribute to the association for giving every hon. Member a great deal of information about carers, even though some of it ended up in a rather vituperative statement from the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher)? That information has been useful to us all.

Mr. Fowler: I certainly join my hon. Friend in paying that tribute. I think that there is broad support in all parts of the House for this step.

Mr. Rober N. Wareing (Liverpool, West Derby): Although I welcome the Government's decision, belated though it may be, did not the Minister for Social Security say last April that the cost of this extension would be about £100 million? We are now told that the figure is £55 million. Has the discrepancy occurred because in between times, while by-elections have been held, the Government have changed their mind, have decided that they can make the extension, and have accordingly lowered their figures? Alternatively, are some of the calculations inexact? Will the right hon. Gentleman give an assurance that the present level of benefit will be maintained, despite any inflation during the next two years, before the Government's demise?

Mr. Fowler: That is a matter to be dealt with in the uprating statement. I pay tribute to the efforts by the Minister responsible for the disabled. He has always made it clear that the Government accept the aim in principle but that there are problems of both resources and priorities.

The figure is an estimate. We think that £55 million in a full year is the net cost. The gross cost is about £80 million, but the extension of ICA to married women means that some entitlement to dependency additions will cease. That is the difference between the gross and the net costs. Another factor that must be taken into account is that new estimates have been made following the European case involving Mrs. Drake, and we can now base our estimates on actual applications.

Mr. David Sumberg (Bury, South): I join in congratulating my right hon. Friend on his statement, which will be welcomed by my constituents. Does he agree that the churlish attitude on the Opposition Benches is strongly influenced by the fact that, despite protestations about sex equality, women's committees and women's rights, it has taken a Tory Government to move in this direction?

Mr. Fowler: My hon. Friend is right. We have taken the action. The hon. Member for Oldham, West only talks extravagantly about it.

Mr. Michael Stern (Bristol, North-West): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the purpose of social security benefit is to meet need, rather than desire? Is he sure, given that £55 million has been added to his budget today, that the disabled could not be more effectively helped in other ways, for example, by the extension of mobility allowance for certain groups?

Mr. Fowler: Conflicting and competing priorities will always exist. However, ICA enables us to recognise the position of those who have given up the opportunity to work so that they can care for a disabled person. Such help is entirely in line with what most people want.

Mr. John Browne (Winchester): Does my right hon. Friend accept that his statement rectifying Socialist legislation will be widely welcomed, not only by married women, but by many others who genuinely believe in boosting community care rather than relying on official Government sources?

Mr. Fowler: Yes. My statement should be seen in the context of community care policy, and not as an individual policy.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on his decision, but can he explain to the British public how an institution of the Common Market, which we joined at the time of the referendum on the basis of free trading with Europe, can make a judgment on how much social payment we should make, to whom, how and why? Where will it end? Will my right hon. Friend ask the European Court, since it seems to have power over our social payments, whether it would be proper to allocate family credit on the basis of the sex of the recipient?

Mr. Fowler: We are bound by the directive on equal rights, and the case has gone to the European Court under that directive. I have made it clear in my statement that irrespective of what the European Court decides we intend to go ahead with this policy.

Bedford Commercial Vehicles

3.54 pm

Mr. David Madel (Bedfordshire, South-West): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 10, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the announcement by Bedford commercial vehicles that it intends to reduce its work force of 7,200 in Dunstable and Luton by 1,700 by the end of the year."

There are three reasons why I think that the matter should take precedence over the announced business. First, the announcement has serious employment repercussions for the area. Secondly, urgent action will be needed to provide extra opportunities for retraining. The House should now consider that. Thirdly, the House could resume its debate on the future of the commercial vehicle industry and the extent to which continuing American investment is essential. When sharp local increases in unemployment occur, the House should adjust its programme so that the matter can be properly debated.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he thinks should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the redundancies announced by Bedford commercial vehicles today."

I listened with great care to what the hon. Gentleman said. As he knows, the only decision that I have to take is whether to give this matter precedence over the business set down for today or tomorrow. I regret that I cannot find that the matter that he has raised is appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 10 and I cannot, therefore, submit his application to the House. I hope that he will find other appropriate ways of bringing the issue before the House.

Later—

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): I do not challenge your ruling Mr. Speaker, but you will appreciate how crippling a blow the loss of 1,700 jobs will be to the area represented by the hon. Member for Bedfordshire, South-West (Mr. Madel) as a result of the failure of General Motors to invest as it should have done in this country. As we cannot have a debate tomorrow, I wonder whether the Leader of the House, who is in his place, can be asked, through you, if he will ensure that a statement is made on this matter tomorrow afternoon.

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen): I take note of that request.

Sheepmeat (Caesium Levels)

3.55 pm

Mr. D. E. Thomas (Meirionnydd, Nant Conwy): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 10, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the restrictions on the movement and slaughter of sheep, made by the Secretary of State for Wales and the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, with effect in north Wales and Cumbria,"

known in Welsh as Yr Hen Ogledd

"and the environmental and economic implications of this action."

I raise this issue because on Friday afternoon the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food made the most important statement on agriculture that has been made in this place during the period that I have been a Member of it. The statement has the most serious implications of an environmental nature, including radioactive pollution, in north Wales and Cumbria. It has serious economic implications for 4,000 farmers in north Wales and about 1,000 in Cumbria.

The initial statement was made on Friday, when most of the hon. Members representing the affected constituencies, including myself — perhaps I represent the constituency which is the most affected — were in their constituencies. I was grateful for the opportunity to meet Welsh Office civil servants on Friday to discuss the matter, but that is no substitute for a debate in the House. I request urgently that my application be granted.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he thinks should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the restrictions on the movement and slaughter of sheep, made by the Secretary of State for Wales and the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, with effect in north Wales and Cumbria, and the environmental and economic implications of this action."

I regret that I must give the hon. Gentleman the same answer as I gave to the hon. Member for Bedfordshire, South-West (Mr. Madel). I do not consider that it is a matter that is appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 10 and I cannot, therefore, submit his application to the House.

Later—

Mr. Brynmor John (Pontypridd): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food made a statement in the House on Friday about caesium levels in young lambs. As a result, the House was left with the clear impression that the high levels were a recent development. However, in the weekend press, and again in today's press, there were ministerial concessions that Ministers had known of similar levels for about a month. As the House was left with a false impression, Mr. Speaker, I urge you to use your good offices to secure the debate for which I asked last Friday, or, at the very least, an oral statement setting the record straight. Any proposal to extend intensive monitoring to Scotland and Northern Ireland, which has been rumoured, should be announced orally to the House, preferably in a more full and frank manner.

Mr. D. E. Thomas: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. How is it possible for us, as Members

representing constituents affected in this way, to be informed of such statements? It is intolerable that major statements, with substantial economic effects for our constituents, should be made on Fridays. It is also intolerable that the Minister who has responsibility for agricultural policy in Wales has not yet spoken in the House on the matter, although he speaks on the subject regularly on television.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I have put down a question for written answer by the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food which should cover the point made by the hon. Member for Pontypridd (Mr. John). May I say to the Leader of the House, through you, Mr. Speaker, that it would not be regarded by me as any discourtesy, but indeed entirely proper, if the Minister responsible made an oral statement.

Mr. Speaker: Friday is a full working parliamentary day. There is nothing wrong with a statement being made on a Friday. On the question of a debate, I ruled on the application under Standing Order No. 10 that it did not meet all the criteria laid down by the Standing Order. There are other ways that the hon. Member can use to seek a debate on such an important matter.

Several Hon. Members *rose*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I shall take first the hon. Member for Barrow and Furness (Mr. Franks), who has notified me that he wishes to raise a point of order.

Deputy Chief Constable Stalker

3.57 pm

Mr. Cecil Franks (Barrow and Furness): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Earlier today I drew to your attention press comments which appeared in the national press yesterday and today concerning certain allegations against the deputy chief constable of Manchester. In view of the increasingly apparent breach of the rule of law, and breach of the principles of natural justice, together with the increasingly bizarre involvement of right hon. and hon. Members, surely it is incumbent upon my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary to make an authoritative statement this afternoon.

Mr. Speaker: That is not really a matter for me. I read the speculation in the newspapers, and this is a matter which the hon. Gentleman must pursue with the Home Secretary.

Mr. Franks *rose*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I do not think that I can do anything about it.

Mr. Franks: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. May I bring to your attention one urgent matter? I understand from the Press Association that officers from the West Yorkshire police are in the House at this moment interviewing other Members of Parliament. Surely it is incumbent upon my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary to bring the matter to a conclusion, one way or the other?

Mr. Speaker: That may well be so, but it is not a matter for me. The hon. Gentleman must pursue the issue with the Home Secretary, not with me.

Early-day Motion

Mr. Clement Freud (Cambridgeshire, North-East): On a different point of order, Mr. Speaker. This morning, as a result of the happenings at the Azteca stadium in Mexico last night, I sought to table an early-day motion to the effect that the House was sick as a parrot. That motion was refused by the Clerk, although he intimated that he would have accepted a motion that the House was over the moon. I am concerned that

Mr. Speaker: Order. What is the point of order for me?

Mr. Freud: I am concerned that, as a nation, we thrive on defeat. We boast of the charge of the Light Brigade, the Somme and Dunkirk. Why is it that we cannot reflect such sentiments through the Order Paper when we do so in history?

Mr. Speaker: Order. I judge, from what the hon. Member has said, that he sought to put down a motion which the Table Office refused to accept. I shall look into the matter.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Ordered,

That the draft Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exceptions) (Amendment) Order 1986 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Weights and Measures Act 1963 (Miscellaneous Foods) (Amendment) Order 1986 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Sainsbury.]*

Opposition Day

[11TH ALLOTTED DAY] [SECOND PART]

Water Authorities (Privatisation)

Mr. Speaker: I have selected the amendment in the name of the Prime Minister.

4.2 pm

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): I beg to move,

That this House rejects the Government's proposals for privatisation of the water authorities, which will undermine public accountability without improving efficiency or benefiting the consumer, and which will have serious consequences for capital investment, environmental protection, water resource planning, land drainage, fisheries management and recreational facilities.

This is the House's first opportunity to debate the plans that the Government announced earlier this year. The Government propose to introduce legislation in the forthcoming Session of Parliament to privatise the water authorities. Although nothing was said in the Conservative party manifesto of 1983, it is now apparent that water is to be privatised. Water is the latest in the line of national assets that the Government propose to sell. It will follow gas, the airports, the proposal for British Airways, and many others.

However, there is a fundamental difference. To privatise what is, for most of Britain, the most fundamental community asset is the most fundamental privatisation of all. In my view, the country believes that there are fundamental objections of principle which make the proposal unacceptable. I believe that today will mark the beginning of an increasingly well-argued, vociferous and, I hope ultimately, convincing campaign that will dissuade the Government from proceeding down such a political course.

In February this year, the Secretary of State for the Environment made a statement on this subject. It was only a year after his former colleague, the hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow), announced on 7 February 1985 that the Government would examine the prospects for privatisation in the water industry. A discussion paper followed two months later. Earlier this year, the Secretary of State produced a White Paper and announced that the Government would legislate in the autumn. The Secretary of State, in some of his answers and statements in that announcement, gave a clue to the flaw in the logic of the Government. He said:

"In the last six years we have made the water authorities fit and ready to join the private sector; and, as reported to the Public Accounts Committee, the quality of water services has been improving in almost all regions."—[*Official Report*, 5 February 1986; Vol. 91, c. 288.]

What has happened of late—it is similar to what has happened with the British Airways proposal—is that the Government have, on the one hand, argued how wonderful the water industry is becoming, how suitable and appropriate it is for its job, how competently it is performing and how increasingly effectively it is using its investment, and, on the other hand, said that it is no longer appropriate that it should remain in the public sector.

Although there may be arguments that it is not necessarily appropriate for a particular industry or one area of national supply to be in the public or private sector, we start from a position whereby, for about three quarters of the British public, water is a public service. For the rest, water is supplied by private companies. About a quarter of the people of England and Wales receive water from the private sector. There has never been any suggestion by my right hon. and hon. Friends that those companies should be put into the public sector because they have been pleasing their customers, because they are small and because they are responding effectively to local community needs.

Water is not a national asset; rather it is a community asset. It is principally because it has been seen to be a community asset that the management of the water industry has gone the way it has in the past 100 years. About 100 years ago, there were moves in the House to ensure, for the first time, that water services be provided by a metropolitan water board. The argument at that time was whether it was appropriate that the water industry should be a nationalised industry or a series of municipal undertakings which would be democratically controlled by ratepayers and local residents. We agreed the latter.

Over the decades that followed, a patchwork of local water boards and local undertakings was established throughout the country. They served the needs of people up and down the land. It was not until 1973 that there was a fundamental reform, but it was not nationalisation. In 1973, a structural reform created 10 water authorities, taking control out of local government hands and making them less acceptable because they were less accountable, although the principle of organising water on the basis of river basins was a logical progression.

Our fundamental criticism of the Government's proposal is that they intend to take water out of the area of public accountability and, in doing so, risk prejudicing the service to the consumer in many all-important respects.

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): Does the hon. Gentleman believe that the private water companies are
"out of the area of public accountability",
to use his own words?

Mr. Hughes: The private water companies are accountable because they are responsible within their regions to the water authorities. The Government propose —the hon. Gentleman knows this because originally he was the advocate of the privatisation proposal — that there will be 10 private monopolies. Those companies will give neither the benefit of competition, which the hon. Member for Eastbourne and his right hon. and hon. Friends extol, nor the benefit of accountability to the public because accountability will only be to the shareholders of the private companies.

Another of our fundamental objections is that all of the Government's arguments are clearly flawed, even by their own logic. Water, inevitably, is a universal need, for supply and for removal. It is vitally concerned with health and hygiene. It is of pre-eminent importance environmentally, and what it does environmentally concerns industry, agriculture, food supply, urban and rural living and leisure. It is unacceptable that the Government should seek to dissociate themselves from a close interest in these matters because they affect consumer safety, protection of the consumer from exploitation, adequacy and cost of services, river water quality, flood control — although there is an exception — and the use of chemicals in agriculture, amongst many other things.

I hope that the debate will centre on the fundamentals of the Government's proposition and that we will debate fundamental questions and agree on fundamental and important answers. There are four short questions. First, is there any clear and urgent need to change ownership of the industry? The answer is no. Secondly, is ownership of the industry relevant to the efficiency of its services? The answer is not necessarily. Thirdly, would a change of ownership cause major dislocation? The answer is possibly not major but certainly some. Fourthly, would privatisation lead to greater competition and, according to the Government's argument, greater benefit to the consumer? The answer is certainly not, because water supply and sewage disposal constitute a national monopoly throughout Britain.

The United Kingdom is unique in the developed world in that 99 per cent. of our population are connected to a wholesome, piped water supply and 94 per cent. are connected to the public sewerage system. Compare that with elsewhere in Europe and one can see the great advantage to be gained from retaining substantial public control over this asset. For example, just over the Channel in Belgium only 55 per cent. of the public are connected to the sewerage system, in Italy it is 56 per cent., and in Greece about 25 per cent. In much of Europe the percentage is substantially below our percentage.

For most people, water is the most substantial asset that they use each day. The most recent figures I have show that an average of 340 litres of water a day are consumed by each Briton.

The motivation for the Government lies in the fact that there is money to be made from the sale of the water authorities, when, having sold off as much else as they can, they find that they are running out of money — arguably, to be derived from selling an asset that is not theirs to sell.

When water was taken over in 1973 from the many smaller undertakings, it was taken not into national ownership but into a series of water authorities. Many other assets are properly defined as national industries, but there is an argument, which many people understand, that the Government, having exhausted what they can justify selling out of nationalised control, are turning to assets that are not even properly theirs. The people know why they do that. As recently as last Saturday in Porthcawl, the Prime Minister said that her prime interest was not in services, but in reducing the amount of taxation that British people should have to pay at a basic rate. That is flying in the face not only of opinion polls, but of the majority public view that, under the Conservative Government, the British people are losing good services — whether in the Health Service, the education service or the transport service. The view is that the public are fed up with interference in local accountability. The Prime Minister is not listening even now. I have no doubt that she will rejoice in having at her hand in her new asset-stripping exercise the right hon. Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Ridley), who has been so assiduous a devotee of the Government's magic of the market place economic policy.

In 1973, when the authorities took over the existing assets, no compensation was paid. That shows that it was not a nationalisation measure. Under the Labour Government, a national water authority was proposed, but the idea got no further than that. The Government have seized on the idea of taking away our present structure, despite all that they have said about safeguards, because they realise that the water industry's assets are worth £27 billion. There is a total work force of 52,000, annual turnover of about £2·6 billion and capital investment of over £900 million. That is the size of the asset that the Government have decided they would like to sell.

Mr. Cyril Smith (Rochdale): My hon. Friend has referred to the water authorities' annual capital programme. Is he aware that the North-West water authority has outstanding loans of more than £900 million which add £125 million a year to the bill that consumers must pay in interest charges? While my right hon. Friend is addressing the motley gathering on the Government Front Bench, will he suggest that they write off the water authorities' debts to Government Departments before any water privatisation takes place, if it does?

Mr. Hughes: My hon. Friend is right. I have been passed a copy of a letter expressing just that concern on behalf of the North-West water authority. I am having enough difficulty trying to persuade the Government to be generous enough to pay a few thousand pounds to the relatives of those who were injured or who died at the Abbeystead pumping station disaster — they appear to be unwilling to give that money, despite the compassionate reasons for doing so — let alone to give any undertaking about writing off those substantial debts.

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): The hon. Gentleman has referred to the asset value of the water industry. Does he realise that the Government pay no heed to the asset value of what they have privatised? The asset value of the British Gas Corporation is about £18 billion, and the Government are likely to sell it for little more than a third of that amount.

Mr. Hughes: The hon. Gentleman is right. He may have seen an article in the *Financial Times*, soon after this proposal was announced, which, region by region, went through how much the assets were likely to raise.

There are flagships. The Thames water authority in my region in London is a flagship which Mr. Roy Watts wants to sell off. There are other large authorities, of which the North-West is one, that clearly will not be easy to sell off. There are other, small water authorities — for example, the Southern water authority — which probably are not at all ready to be sold off. Therefore, the Government's argument that they have fatted the calf ready for slaughter does not on analysis apply throughout the land, in spite of the fact that investment will have increased from £340 million in 1981-82, in sewerage, for example, to about £525 million in 1986-87 — an increase of 38 per cent. in real terms.

There are now 10 modern businesses running the water industry in Britain. In their own White Paper the Government say that the finances have been strengthened and that a great deal of worthwhile investment has been carried out. Efficiency and performance have been substantially improved and now the Government are going to privatise. What is the danger? My hon. Friend the Member for Rochdale (Mr. Smith) made the point. The danger is that what will be of greatest interest to the new private companies will be raising money from the consumer where they can raise it. However, there is not much money in sewerage or in environmental protection.

[Mr. Hughes]

They are not very profit-producing. There is not much money in enhancing recreation without massively increasing the costs to the people who will use it. There is not much money in making sure that the amenities, landscapes and planning are acceptable to the local community or in consulting the public about what is being done. None of those things will produce a great amount of profit.

All the things that are needed will probably disadvantage the paying consumer, unless the Government realise the flaw in the financial argument, in which case they will do something else. They will then make it necessary for the water authorities to put up the prices to the consumer this year, next year and the year after, as they did in past years when the water authorities did not want prices to be increased. The Government will say that the price has to be increased to the consumer in order to have enough money in the kitty to survive in private hands as a financially viable proposition. That argument will not be to the advantage of the consumers either, and the consumers are the most important people to be affected by it. One need cite only one recent example to show that is true. If one looks at the average increase in cost since British Telecom was privatised there is very little net increase. However, if one looks at the net increase to the private telecommunications user, it is 8 per cent. up straight away. Prices have been held down for some of the people who make phone calls abroad on business, but for people using telephones locally privately prices have gone up.

The Minister for Housing, Urban Affairs and Construction (Mr. John Patten): Is the hon. Gentleman aware that tariffs are already balanced in the British water industry and that the rebalancing of tariffs necessary for British Telecom cannot and would not apply for that reason?

Mr. Hughes: The argument about British Telecom is that the public have seen tariffs go up with privatisation. The most obvious risk to most of the public from privatisation is that they will have no control. If the water companies go to the director general, who the Government propose to appoint, and say they want to put up prices by so much and the Government are tempted to say that it is too much, they will say, "In that case, dear Government, the services will go down."

Mr. Robin Squire (Hornchurch) *rose*——

Mr. Hughes: This is a short debate and many hon. Members wish to contribute.

Many people have already expressed concern: farmers, consumers, local government officers, representatives of environmental bodies and recreational interests. They see no prospect of the proposals to privatise water protecting either the service or the environment. In their manifesto of 1983 the Government ended the section on nationalisation by saying:

"merely to replace state monopolies by private ones would be to waste an historic opportunity. So we will take steps to ensure that these new firms do not exploit their powerful positions to the detriment of consumers or their competitors."

I wonder whether the Government had thought about the water industry. If the Government go ahead with what they intend as the last big asset sale before the general election, they may discover that they are dealing with the service that the country and individuals are most reluctant to hand over away from local and Government control. The Government will be making a mistake. They have five months in which to reconsider. If they introduce a Bill in November, we will oppose every clause and every line. *[Interruption.]* We will oppose it because it is the most fundamentally damaging and risky proposal of the whole privatisation series. If the Government go ahead to privatise the water industry, it may well be the last proposal that they are empowered to make.

4.25 pm

The Minister for Housing, Urban Affairs and Construction (Mr. John Patten): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

'welcomes the Government's proposals for the privatisation of the water authorities, which will benefit customers, strengthen safeguards for the water environment, encourage enterprise, improve the efficiency of industry, reduce the public sector and extend share-ownership.'.

I listened with great care to the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes). I came to the House this afternoon thinking that I was going to listen with equal care to his colleague the hon. Member for Woolwich (Mr. Cartwright), but alas he has been struck down by some unfortunate illness and could not introduce the debate. I listened carefully to the hon. Member for Woolwich during the debates on the Housing and Planning Bill and endeavoured, by listening carefully, to improve what we are doing. That is why I listened carefully to the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey in his short speech this afternoon.

I think that it is incumbent upon us in this place to listen carefully, especially when people feel that they have fundamental fears about something the Government are setting out to do. When people raise fundamental fears, I take the matter very seriously and do not just bat it aside as some kind of ideological knee-jerk reaction from whichever Bench it comes. Therefore, I welcome the opportunity of this brief debate during which, as much as possible, we can talk about principles, as the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey has done. We shall get many other opportunities to talk about the details.

I would be more moved by what the hon. Gentleman had to say about his fears of water privatisation if we did not have so many examples around the Western world of where water and sewerage services are supplied adequately, with good standards of public consumer protection. We have that not very far away across the Channel in France, where franchise companies supply water and other services very successfully. I know that recommending examples from abroad will not necessarily gain the consent of everyone in the Chamber. Therefore, perhaps I can suggest that we do not have to go very far from the constituency of the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith), who will reply to the debate on behalf of the Liberal party.

The hon. Gentleman and many of his constituents occasionally drink private water, if they let water cross their lips. It is excellent water, supplied by the Newcastle and Gateshead water company. I believe that the hon. Member for Houghton and Washington (Mr. Boyes) also drinks this private substance and does not come to any harm. Therefore, I say to the hon. Member for Southwark

and Bermondsey, "Do not let us erect the whole argument on the premise that public provision is good and private provision is bad". That would be a ludicrous argument to advance to this or any other place.

Mr. Allan Roberts (Bootle) *rose*

Mr. Patten: I would give way to the hon. Gentleman much more willingly if he was not wearing that offensive red striped jersey. If at a later stage he chooses to take it off, I shall give way. Until then, I fear that I must restrain myself.

Mr. Roberts *rose*

Mr. Patten: I give in.

Mr. Roberts: As the Minister found my jumper so attractive during the debates on the Housing and Planning Bill, I thought it might have induced him to give way today. As the hon. Gentleman is talking about private water supplies, has he heard the rumour that Perrier is hoping to buy into the North-West water authority when it is privatised, to introduce a new bottled water, Perrier Nouveau, which will be sold in France? It will be bottling Lake District water, because it is some of the best water available. It is better than the water Perrier sells in this country. Nowhere in the White Paper do the Government say that they will prevent foreign capital buying into our water authorities. Will the Minister prevent that?

Mr. Patten: I gave way to the hon. Gentleman when he began to divest himself of articles of clothing, for fear that he might go further. I know nothing of those rumours, and I shall look forward to learning more of the facts when they are forthcoming.

Mr. Roberts: What about foreign investment?

Mr. Patten: Foreign investment is welcome in this country, as our investment abroad is profitable for us. Foreign investment is always welcome in this country.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South) *rose*

Mr. Patten: I shall not give way, in the interests of others who want to speak. I shall try to look point by point at some of the issues raised by the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey. There are a number of myths about water privatisation, and there is another side to the argument of almost all those myths.

I should like to ask the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey, in his open-minded way, at least to consider the other side of the argument. One myth is that somehow privatisation will be bad for customers. However, we think that customers will benefit very much from the increased efficiency that will result from private sector management. Also, and this is important, water services plcs will have access to funds on the private capital market. That means that each year, during the public expenditure survey discussions with the Treasury, no longer will water authorities have to compete with hospitals——

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland) *rose*——

Mr. Patten: ——schools and other parts of the public sector for access to capital, which is greatly needed in those areas.

Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop (Tiverton): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Patten: I must give way first to the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham), and then I shall give way to my hon. Friend. After that I had better make some headway with my speech.

Dr. Cunningham: If the Minister wants to make some headway, he would be far better advised to abandon bogus arguments of the sort that he has just advanced. It is completely unnecessary to sell off Britain's publicly owned water companies and the regional water authorities to allow them to raise investment outside the Government's control. That can be done by a simple policy decision of the Government.

Mr. Patten: The hon. Gentleman was on his feet asking me to give way before I had even finished my sentence, so it was hard of him to say that I was using bogus arguments before he had heard me finish my argument.

In answer to the hon. Gentleman's question, I say only that I cannot believe that any Labour Administration or Treasury team would allow unfettered access to outside capital markets by all bodies in the public sector without any control at all. I do not believe that that could possibly be the case. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Gentleman muttered sotto voce. I can lip read. I think he said, "Wait and see."

Dr. Cunningham: I said, "BNOC."

Mr. Patten: I am sorry, I cannot lip read.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: Will my hon. Friend explain why, except on the basis of a purely capricious and reversible decision, water, which the Government do not own, should be considered within the public sector, and British Leyland, which the Government do own, is not considered within the public sector — the public sector borrowing requirement? Is it not wholly capricious? With the stroke of a pen water can be removed, just as British Leyland was.

Mr. Patten: It may be capricious, but that is the fact of the present situation.

I believe that customer requirements will be met much more easily under a privatised regime. Customers will be able to enter directly into ownership and control of water services plcs by becoming shareholders. That will sort out who owns what. It is real ownership. Real power is being given to individuals, not the phoney idea of public ownership through nationalised industries, to which idea I think the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey does not subscribe.

Strong regulation is essential for any private sector utility. I should be the first to say that. However, just to say that one needs strong regulation is not in itself an argument against privatisation. That cannot be so. It is merely the means by which we can ensure that the benefits of privatisation are passed on to customers and shareholders alike. A Director General of Water Services will be appointed to ensure that the water services plcs are well regulated and do not abuse their monopoly position. The director general's task will be to ensure that customers as well as shareholders benefit from the improved performance of privatised authorities. He will do so by means of a licence. The licence will set limits on the amounts by which water services plcs are able to increase their charges at any one time and will set standards of services that they are obliged to meet.

I return to the matter to which I referred when the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey let me intervene

[Mr. Patten]

in his speech. British Telecom is a one-off arrangement, as far as I can tell, based on the rebalancing of tariffs. Tariffs in the water industry are already balanced. There is already a statutory obligation on water authorities not to discriminate between one form of user and another. Therefore, the water services plcs will not be in the same position as British Telecom. The licence will be a tough discipline for the water services plcs. To keep within it, they will have to maximise their efficiency.

Let me deal with another myth, that water is somehow a free public good. Although it was not reflected in what the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey said, it is in the back of many people's minds that somehow water comes out of the atmosphere and should be free. It is nothing of the sort. *[Interruption.]* I am afraid that, as I am suffering from a summer solstice sore throat, I am easy game for those who want to shout me down. I cannot make myself heard above all that. *[Interruption.]* It comes from the hydrological cycle.

We need the most elaborate and capital-intensive system to ensure that the storage, purification and distribution of water is up to the highest modern standards of health and convenience. The value added by that system is financially enormous and socially incalculable.

Mr. William O'Brien (Normanton): What about the quality of water in Yorkshire?

Mr. Patten: I know that there are problems in Yorkshire. I have met the water authority to discuss them.

That system means that the water industry puts the highest demands on the latest techniques in engineering and biotechnology. These are very important techniques.

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): Will the Minister allow himself to be drawn on the question of capital investment? He may have seen speculation in this morning's edition of *The Guardian* that because of the Government's privatisation scheme it may be necessary to move money that would have been used for cleaning up the Mersey estuary to clean beaches at Blackpool instead. I do not know whether that is true, but it would be difficult for the North-West water authority, with a capital investment programme of £200 million a year, to keep up with such investment should privatisation go ahead. How would the Minister deal with that?

Mr. Patten: The speculation to which the hon. Gentleman refers has no basis whatsoever. The words that were written were incorrect. There is no basis for them. There is no trade-off between the investment in beaches at Blackpool and the Mersey clean-up. The money dedicated to the Mersey clean-up is dedicated to that end. I have received a letter from the chairman of the North-West water authority, outlining his plans to increase investment within the forward capital planning of his water authority over the next five years, to deal with the problems at Blackpool. I am pleased that I had the opportunity to say that in answer to the hon. Gentleman's question.

Another myth to which we might usefully refer, and to which the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey alluded only briefly, is that privatisation will somehow damage the water environment, as if, automatically, just because something is in private hands, the environment will be damaged, or even because there is no profit in it, the environment will be damaged. Those are illogical arguments in themselves. No one could substantiate those arguments. After all, it was left to us to bring into force part II of the Control of Pollution Act, which had long been neglected by the Labour party when it was in government. It is this Government who have introduced public inquiries that control discharges. It is this Government who have opened up public registers. It is this Government who are extending protection to all our water areas, including beaches and coastal waters.

We outlined those new advances in the pale green-covered consultation paper on the water environment, which we published a couple of months ago. We are convinced that privatisation gives several new opportunities for improving the water environment, including tighter ministerial control over water quality.

Mr. Spearing: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Patten: I shall not give way. I must proceed, as we have little time this afternoon.

The consultation paper on the environment clearly shows our commitment to improve the water environment. It reflects the most thorough review of the needs of the water environment for more than a decade, and that point has been widely recognised by the conservation and environmental bodies that responded to the study. No one has denied the thoroughness of the review that led to the publication of the paper.

I have been heartened by the welcome that some of the practical proposals have received from the bodies which we consulted and which responded to the consultation. The points which appear to have gained the approval of those who have responded so far are: first, the setting up of statutory water quality objectives for the first time — this has been widely welcomed — secondly, the creation of water protection zones for sensitive areas of the water environment; thirdly, the preparation of statutory codes of practice for conservation; fourthly — and this is most important and has considerable implications across the board in the environmental area — the establishment of a new Government inspectorate to monitor water services plcs, pollution control activities — this also has been widely welcomed — and, finally, the power to implement national and European Community environmental policies by regulation. These advances will ensure that environmental objectives are better defined, more vigorously pursued and, I believe, more effectively achieved than at present.

Mr. Spearing: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Patten: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will forgive me for not giving way.

Water services plcs will inherit all the statutory duties — and I stress this — which currently rest upon the water authorities. In the performance of their regulatory functions — discharge consents, abstraction licences and so on — they will have to act even-handedly. The powers of call-in by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, and the appellate powers to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, will continue. We will continue to have public registers and public access to information about discharges, and I am certain that the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey and his colleagues will welcome that. We intend to improve that access in all circumstances. In addition, we have made it clear that we

intend water services plcs to maintain — as I made clear in the consultation paper on the environmental protection issues — the current level of subsidy from main charges to continue their vital but non-profit making environmental work.

We have published a league table for the first time, showing the amounts of money which the different water authorities are spending on environmental protection work as a baseline below which they will not be permitted to go in real terms. This will be built into the operating licence, together with the circumstances under which the water services plcs will have to proceed.

Another myth which is sometimes circulated is that there will be an adverse impact on employees through water privatisation. I do not think that that will be the case. Some 50,000 people work in the water authorities and they will directly benefit from the success of their new employers — the water services plcs.

It is established Government policy to offer shares on attractive terms to those who work in the industry. I shall say a word or two about that now, as I know that the 50,000 or more employees will be interested in the Government's plans. Only last week my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy announced the proposed arrangements for the British Gas Corporation. These followed earlier schemes for employees of British Telecom and a whole range of other recently privatised bodies. The details vary from case to case, and will no doubt be different again for water, but there are common threads which run through them all.

The first common thread is that there is an initial block of entirely free shares for each employee. The second is that there will be an extra free share — sometimes even more — for every share that the employee buys, up to a specified threshold. Often there is an additional discount on additional share purchases, up to a certain ceiling. We will seriously consider what the employees in the water authorities could and should expect. We must also consider what the consumer — those who currently pay their water bills through water rates — might expect. We are keen to see the genuine devolution of ownership to people living in the regions, and individuals living in the regions will find the opportunity of owning shares in their local water company extremely attractive.

Another myth, which was expressed strongly by the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey, is that it is somehow wrong to attempt to privatise any service that is as vital as water. The argument appears to be that anything that is so vital to maintain human life as water must, QED, be provided publicly. That is an instinctive feeling that many people have, and I understand and appreciate it and do not dismiss it. However, I do not believe that that view stands up to close examination, for the following reasons.

First, I hope that there are no hon. Members who believe that there is anything inherently irresponsible about private sector activity.

Mr. Hardy: What about the reverse?

Mr. Patten: If the hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy), from a sedentary position, is implying that I mean that all public provision is inherently bad, I must state that of course I do not mean that. That would be bizarre.

There is also nothing that makes it inherently impossible for private bodies to provide public services. There is no logical argument to support that case.

Mr. Spearing: Does the Minister mean by contract, or by ownership?

Mr. Patten: By either.

After all, we have only to consider the food industry. There are no state farms in this country. We provide much, although not all, of our foodstuffs. All the food in this country is privately supplied. We all need food to survive, as much as we need water. However, private production is matched by public health standards, laid down by public bodies to ensure that food is wholesome and of the proper quality.

There is no clash of interest in the private production and the public regulation of foodstuffs. Why, therefore, should there be any clash of interest in the private production and public regulation of water? The argument that there would be a clash of interest does not stand up.

It is said that the food industry, with its scope for competition, is different from the water industry. I recognise that. I was about to say, and the words are deathlessly typed in the brief in jumbo type suitable for Ministers to read at the Dispatch Box, that "of course it is different." The Civil Service is marvellously adept at providing such phrases. Those who raise the argument forget the position of the statutory water companies. These cannot simply be dismissed. They are not a non-argument or an intellectual inconvenience.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Patten: I shall give way when I have developed my argument.

Since the 19th century, the water companies have been an example of the private sector providing a vital service — albeit simply water — on a monopoly basis. They have been doing that for more than 100 years. Twenty-eight private water companies now serve about a quarter of the population of this country. They supply pure water to towns the size of Newcastle and Bristol, and they supply it very well. People have been drinking company water without complaint for a generation. The hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed drinks privatised company water in his area. I shall gladly give way to him if he will tell us how the Liberal and SDP plans for water authorities in the future will deal with the water companies.

Mr. Beith: As the Minister would say, why look in the crystal ball when one can look in the book? It is a pleasure to answer the question, as we were directly involved in preventing the Labour Government from nationalising the private water companies. Those companies provide a specific service — the provision of water — without any responsibility for sewerage, environmental services, and so on, and operate, in effect, as franchised contractors to a publicly accountable water authority.

Mr. Patten: That is a clear indication to the Water Companies Association that the water companies, as franchised bodies, to use the hon. Gentleman's description, have the full support of the hon. Gentleman's party as suppliers of water in the future.

The hon. Member for Houghton and Washington also drinks privatised water. I drank it myself at Gateshead town hall last Thursday, and most people around the table seemed to be drinking it with evident enjoyment. It is no use the hon. Gentleman saying that he never touches a drop, as he once told me that he was a teetotaller. I am sure

[Mr. Patten]

that he has no objection to water being supplied by privatised water companies. I shall be pleased to give way if he will tell me what Labour party policy is towards the 28 water companies. [[HON. MEMBERS: "Answer!"] It seems that the Labour party either has no plans at all or it has a secret manifesto and will tell us about its policies at a later stage.

Mr. Spearing *rose*

Mr. Patten: Finally, I must deal with the myth about ownership. There is an idea that no one actually owns the water authorities and that they are not the Government's or Parliament's to do anything with them. That is a very rum argument. The Water Act 1973 created the water authorities, as the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey pointed out. Water authorities are public corporations answerable to the Government. Perhaps anyone who disputes that will tell me what they are if they are not public corporations answerable to the Government and therefore in the public sector.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: In many cases the assets were provided by ratepayers in local government water boards, or in other cases river boards. I do not know what the Minister means by a public corporation. He has not said that its property is vested in the Minister, like the shares in BL, so who does he claim owns it? He thinks that he has answered his own question, but he has not.

Mr. Patten: Local government created many services which were later transferred to other public bodies, which then ran them and extended them. In 1973 Parliament decided that water and sewerage services should be transferred lock, stock and barrel to the water authorities. Debts were transferred as well as assets. My hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton (Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop) was in the House at the time and I was not, so I do not know whether he protested.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: I can tell the Minister what Parliament did not do. This is a matter of public record, not of opinion. Parliament did not vest the water authorities in the Secretary of State or the Government. Does anyone in the House, including the Minister, challenge that?

Mr. Patten: I shall repeat what the situation is when I have dealt with the important point that in 1973, when the assets were transferred to the new public authorities, the debts were transferred at the same time. That fact must not be neglected. Before 1974, sewerage and sewage disposal was supported through the rate support grant system and other grants have been and still are paid to the water authorities, so the taxpayer has also played a part in funding the system.

The Water Act created the water authorities and my hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton agrees that they are public corporations answerable to the Government. They are therefore in the public sector and it is for Parliament to decide what to do with them. If that were not so, they would be very peculiar bodies indeed. If it is the will of Parliament, subject to parliamentary approval, the assets, debts and liabilities of the water authorities can be transferred to wholly-owned Crown companies, which will then empower the Secretary of State to sell them. The situation with regard to ownership is thus unutterably clear.

Mr. Spearing: On the question of ownership

Mr. Patten: I was about to begin my peroration, but I was rude in not giving way to the hon. Gentleman earlier, so I give way to him now.

Mr. Spearing: I am grateful to the Minister. He has been patient. On the question of ownership and the Crown, is he not aware that the river Thames and other rivers are part of the water cycle and at one time were owned by the Crown, by the Commissioners of Lands and Forests and now, in the case of the Thames, by the Thames water authority? Are the Government saying that under their legislation the river Thames will be owned by Thames Water Services plc and that its environmental control will be in the hands of the majority shareholders, whether at home or abroad, and accountable only to them?

Mr. Patten: I appreciate the hon. Gentleman's interest in the Thames valley, which I share, because the Thames runs through my constituency. A privatised water authority, wherever it may be, would have a large number of environmental duties, many of which would be subject to the most stringent surveillance by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and by the director general.

Sir John Wells (Maidstone): What my hon. Friend has said about the Thames applies likewise to the Medway. Inevitably, there are many navigations. Treatment of the leisure aspect in paragraphs 92 and 93 of the Green Paper was extremely slight, slender and inadequate. I appreciate that today my hon. Friend is dealing with the philosophy and not with the nuts and bolts, but the House is entitled to know where the navigations will be vested after privatisation. May we be assured that the Thames and the Medway will pass, say, to the British Waterways Board or something of that nature? We should be much happier if we could have that assurance today.

Mr. Patten: We are consulting widely with recreational and navigational interests as well as with fishing interests, which are also very important. On my hon. Friend's specific question, it is very important that we maintain and, if possible, improve the concept of integrated river board management, which means the total management of everything within the river basin. That necessarily includes the environment and, I believe, navigation and recreation on those waters, because those activities not only benefit those who enjoy them but may have deleterious environmental effects. That is why it is so important to maintain the concept of integrated river basin management. Indeed, these days in the Smoking Room hon. Members talk of little else.

I am grateful to the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey and his hon. Friends for initiating this debate. I listened with great care to what he said, and I hope that they have listened with great care to what I have said. There is more than one side to the argument that it is impossible to provide a public good privately or that this is only a matter of ideology or profit. There is an area of considerable debate in the middle into which the Government wish to enter. During the next five months we shall certainly listen carefully to all representations put to us, as the hon. Gentleman put them this afternoon.

5 pm

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): We, like the Minister, welcome the opportunity for this debate, and we shall support the motion.

The Minister deserves some sympathy. Certainly I sympathise with him for having a painful sore throat, but he has a painful task in every sense because he seeks to justify what to most people is a patently obvious political expedient, namely, what Lord Stockton described as the sale of the family silver to pay the bills. It is another public asset-stripping procedure which the Government are trying to dress up with philosophical justification.

The Minister talked about increased efficiency, customers' requirements and the position in other countries. I shall return to his arguments about customer's rights and efficiency, but first I shall deal with his point about France. The position in France is different from that which the Government propose for the United Kingdom. In France the water supply only is franchised, as the Minister well knows, and in no country is the complete cycle of water supply and sewerage management and control in private hands. We would be unique if the Government introduced that arrangement into the United Kingdom.

The Minister struck a note of light relief when he asked whether the public believed that water simply came from the atmosphere. At that moment, like water, his argument evaporated because the public are well aware that water is our foremost, most fundamental, natural resource. The public believe that it should be a publicly owned and controlled resource, and we in the Labour party agree with that.

The Labour party is wholly opposed to proposals to privatise Britain's water assets which are the nation's most fundamental resource and on which our existence depends. We believe that the water industry should be publicly owned and controlled and that it should be under democratic control and accountability at both regional and national levels. We further believe that the existing river basin management concept of organising the industry should be retained. In the event of any disposal of those assets, a Labour Government would return them to public ownership as a matter of priority.

Many people inside and outside the House are asking what the point of the proposals is. As recent opinion polls show, even Tory voters no longer agree that tax reductions are in the best interests of the national well-being and should have the priority to which the Government so persistently cling. The Government have announced that the water industry is to be sold. The decision has nothing to do with the performance or efficiency of the industry, and everything to do with financing tax cuts to buy votes at the general election. Despite what the Minister said, the water authorities are not the Government's to sell, and I assure the Minister and his colleagues in the Government that they have not heard the last of this argument.

The Government intend to dispose of 10 regional water authorities in England and Wales at a knock-down price, turning them into privately owned companies. The authorities' assets have been valued at about £27 billion but, as many hon. Members have pointed out, even the most optimistic forecast is that the Government expect to raise only about £6 billion or £7 billion.

The proposed sale will have a disastrous impact on health and pollution control, prices and investment, and recreation and the environment. No one on the Government Benches, least of all the Minister, has sought to argue that privatisation can or will solve the manifest problems of urgently required infrastructure investment, particularly in our major conurbations, such as the north-west, where mains, sewers and other water authority assets are collapsing at an alarming rate and are in need of fundamental replacement and massive investment. Sewage disposal, water purity, flood prevention, drainage work, greater access to information and to amenities will all be jeopardised unnecessarily and put at risk by the proposed sale.

Throughout their seven years in office, the Government have ignored their statutory duty to promote a national policy for water, and now they are planning to abandon that duty altogether. The argument that to pass customers into the hands of private monopolies is in the consumers' interest is amazingly curious, especially coming from a Conservative Minister. It is the most astonishing volte face that any Conservative Minister could make. Whatever the Minister said about water companies, such as the Sunderland and South Shields or Newcastle and Gateshead water companies, they simply act as agencies for regional water authorities in the supply of water. However much he twists and turns, in reality, virtually all consumers—99 per cent. of all households—will be connected to private monopoly suppliers, as the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) said. There will be no competition, there is no competition and there is unlikely ever to be any competition, and Conservative Members know that full well.

Almost an identical state obtains with sewerage services, except that the percentage of households is slightly less, being about 94 per cent. Those are unique circumstances for any major industrial nation, which is another reason why the Minister's comparison is simply invalid. No other major industrial society has its water supply and sewerage system organised in that way, with such high percentages of households connected to private monopoly suppliers.

Furthermore, as the British Telecom experience has already demonstrated, charges to consumers are more likely to increase. In the interests of brevity, perhaps I should quote from the paper produced by the National Consumer Council, which addresses itself to these issues, especially to consumers' interests, and states:

> "We must conclude that the proposals in the White Paper for privatising the water industry are contrary to the interests of consumers."

We share that view. It is a view widely shared by groups who are not necessarily associated with the policies or the political views of Labour Members and include the Country Landowners Association, the National Farmers Union and many environmental and recreational groups.

Furthermore, perhaps most damning of all in terms of the Government's apparent consumer interest in the matter is that in a long list of what the Minister regarded as achievements of the Government he failed to mention that, as a result of Government policy, the press is excluded from the deliberation of water authorities and undertakings in Britain. The public interest simply cannot be served by those matters being dealt with in secret, out of public scrutiny and the public gaze.

Apparently, according to a recent parliamentary reply from the Secretary of State for the Environment, the House is to be treated accordingly. As during the passage

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of the legislation to abolish the metropolitan counties, the Government refuse to publish the responses to their proposals they have received from interested bodies and organisations.

In answer to my question on Thursday 12 June, the Secretary of State replied:

"My Department has received 280 letters from organisations and others, following publication of the White Paper. It is for the originators of those letters to publish their views, if they so wish." [*Official Report*, 12 June 1986; Vol. 99, c. 311.]

The Secretary of State refuses to make that information available to the House as it should be made available for debates such as this and especially for debates on legislation.

Even I say "even", but perhaps I should say "also" the *Financial Times* and *The Economist* have poured scorn on the proposals. On 4 June, the *Financial Times* concluded a leading article by saying:

"The Government needs to consider whether, given its other pressing priorities, the time and effort devoted to this cause"

that is water privatisation

"will be justified."

Earlier this year, *The Economist*, in an article headed "Water Goes Private", said of the Government's arguments, "They are not convincing." That was very much an understatement. It is a good question to ask I notice that the Minister did not advance any answer or argument – who supports the Government's proposals to privatise the water authorities. No one in the Opposition and few, if any, of the organisations which have already published their views or their evidence support them.

Mr. Gow: Conservative Back-Bench Members support the Government's privatisation proposals. The hon. Gentleman was asking who supports the policy of privatisation. I invite him to await the results of the Division, which will take place in a couple of hours' time.

Dr. Cunningham: We have heard such words of bravado before, especially on policy matters emanating from the Department of the Environment. Under successive Secretaries of State, as time has gone on, the majorities have declined, the abstentions have increased and the votes in the Labour Lobby have come, I would say not thick and fast, but consistently against Government policy. We shall see what happens on this issue.

What of the arguments about the much-needed investment in the industry? I quote figures which neither I nor the Labour party have produced, but which come from the survey of the Government's record carried out by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy:

"Over the last 5 years capital investment by the water authorities, repriced on the basis of the Retail Price Index, has declined by 13 per cent. . . . If these figures represent an accurate picture works are not being replaced as fast as they are wearing out because allowance has also to be made for new works to serve new customers and raise evironmental and service standards."

That is an indictment of the Government's record during the past five years. Against that background of a deteriorating water industry, of a shortfall in capital investment, in addition to that which we know historically exists and which is not the fault of this Administration alone, is it realistic to suppose that investors will want to take on those organisations? Even if they do, will they bring forward that desperately needed capital investment to safeguard water supply and sewerage systems, the health of the nation and the industrial and economic health and well-being of the community?

It is clear that investment cannot lead to a bigger market share. Investors can receive a return only through increased charges or reduced expenditure. Everyone knows that the latter needs to be substantially increased. Again, I refer to the private sector and quote Mr. Stanley Hill of Arthur Collins and Co., who summed up the Government's proposals thus:

"So the financial assessment, in essence, becomes a simple one. Whatever the Chancellor takes out of the industry on floatation of the companies and by subsequent annual taxation has to be made good by increased charges on consumers or a reduction in future capital investment, or both. Perhaps this axiomatic deduction was obvious from the start."

The Government have produced no answer to those challenges.

On drinking water purity, about 10·8 million people in Britain receive drinking water on which the Government have had to issue waivers from the standard required by the EEC. Those figures were given in a parliamentary answer in response to my hon. Friend the Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron).

Mr. John Patten: Does the hon. Gentleman recognise that Britain was probably the first of all EEC countries to implement the Community drinking water directive, and that more than 90 per cent. of our water supplies already meet all of the 64 parameters of that directive? Does the hon. Gentleman recognise that that is a considerable achievement which compares well with any other European country and that we are working quickly and hard to ensure that the remaining 10 per cent. come up to the same standard?

Dr. Cunningham: Ten point eight million is approaching 20 per cent. of the population of Great Britain. That number of people receive drinking water below the required standards. Notwithstanding the Minister's comments, I assure him that those figures were provided by his Department in a parliamentary answer. If I cannot produce that answer now, I can produce it later.

Similarly, the position on pollution and sewage control is deteriorating. *The Guardian* said today that the Mersey basin project, widely supported and overwhelmingly necessary, is falling behind. The rate of pollution is outstripping the major investments which have taken place.

Mr. Allan Roberts: Will my hon. Friend comment on the fact that, only a few months ago, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food delayed the dredging licence to the Mersey Docks and Harbour Board, which could have meant the closure of the port of Liverpool because of the amount of mercury that was being dredged out of the estuary and dumped in Liverpool bay? The pollution of mercury and sewage in the river Mersey is such that no one in his right mind – no private capitalist —would want to buy what is an open sewer unless he could make much money out of consumers in the north-west of England by selling water.

Dr. Cunningham: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his intervention. I wish that hon. Members would pay

more attention to problems of that sort, and a little less attention to some of the problems which occur in my constituency from time to time. I am not referring to my hon. Friend the Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts) in that regard.

The Minister of State referred to reported correspondence between himself and the chairman of the North-West water authority on these and other issues, and he said that the chairman's reply outlined the authority's plans for further capital investment. Perhaps I could tell the House exactly what the chairman said, because I have a copy of the Minister's letter of 5 June 1986 about the EEC bathing water directive as it relates to the position at Blackpool, and a copy of the reply from the chairman, Mr. Dennis Grove, dated 12 June.

Mr. John Patten: Since the hon. Gentleman is referring to that correspondence, it will help the House if I place copies of it in the Library. I am in favour of open government.

Dr. Cunningham: I am delighted to hear the Minister of State say that, even before I begin to quote the correspondence. However, if he is so keen for it to be in the Library, why did he not deposit it there previously?

The Minister said in his letter:

"If the case concerning Blackpool were to be decided against us"

he is referring to a threatened prosecution of Britain by the European Community because of the raw domestic sewage on our beaches and littoral

"there would be no alternative but to set about urgently bringing Blackpool up to standard and to identify many more waters; we would then lose valuable flexibility."

Of course, flexibility refers to privatisation, not public health. It continues:

"An action before the European Court during the privatisation discussions or flotations would have wide-ranging implications going well beyond Blackpool".

He can say that again. The Minister continued:

"I need to know when a scheme could be started, when it could be completed, and what its cost and effects would be."

The Minister said that the chairman replied outlining his plans. That was not entirely accurate. The chairman said:

"I fully appreciate the national sensitivity of this matter, and will be glad to do everthing possible to help you in handling it satisfactorily . . . We cannot give priority, for the foreseeable future, to securing higher bacteriological standards as envisaged in the EC directive on bathing waters . . . I acknowledge the special circumstances applying at Blackpool, as set out in your letter . . . we will make provision in our forward capital programme for further improvements of the coastal waters in the Blackpool area, with the aim of reaching EC standards so far as this is feasible . . .

I must emphasise that we do not believe it is possible to achieve these higher standards at Blackpool, within our existing resources, without a significant impact on other programme areas such as the Mersey Basin Programme or coastal waters in other parts of the region."

The Minister was ill-advised to deal with the matter as he did in the debate, because, as the chairman of the North-West water authority makes clear in that letter, there is, frankly, not a cat in hell's chance of the water authority reaching the required standards within the financial framework imposed upon it by the Government. It is a scandal that it is being urged to reallocate resources just to try to obscure this matter in the interests of privatisation. That is the burden of what is being proposed, and I can tell the Minister of State that it is absolutely disgraceful that the Government should be proceeding in that way.

There remains a fundamental conflict between the cost of environmental safeguards of the sort which I mentioned and the need to meet the financial requirements of prospective shareholders. What is more, many of the improvements in the existing systems of control, outlined in the Green Paper, could be more effectively introduced by retaining the water authorities in the public sector. Furthermore, the quality objectives and controls which the Government have undertaken to impose would require a large central inspectorate to ensure proper enforcement.

Another major concern of the environmental world is the influence of the privatised authorities on land use planning and infrastructure development. Major conflicts of interest could arise if certain sectors of industry held substantial interests in the authorities. These are all questions to which the Government have not produced answers, nor indeed have they attempted an answer.

Privatisation would be bad for those employed in the industry. The unions, representing the tens of thousands of workers in the industry, have heard the message loud and clear. Perhaps I should say that I am a Member sponsored by the General, Municipal, Boilermakers and Allied Trades Union. People believe that not only their jobs and their contracts, but their pension rights will be threatened, as happened with the National Bus Company, British Telecom and others.

It was exactly those issues of water purity, public health, coherent policies necessary for pollution control and sewage disposal, strategic investment and security of supply which originally caused water to become a public utility and monopoly. There remain overriding reasons for retaining water in public ownership and control.

The Government's timetable envisages a Bill being introduced in the House in the autumn of this year. That Bill will not reach the statute book, if it ever does, before the summer of 1987. Proposals for the sale of those important public assets will presumably be launched in the immediate run-up to a general election. I make it clear that a Labour Government returning at that election would stop those proposals in their tracks and take back any privatised resources.

5.27 pm

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): This debate has taken place in the absence of the leader of the Liberal party and with only the intermittent presence of the leader of the SDP. We have just listened to the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) promising that the Labour party, if returned to office, would take back into public ownership any water companies which had been transferred into what I call genuine public ownership. Mercifully, my hon. Friend the Minister of State and the Government will in no way be deterred from their sensible purpose by the hon. Gentleman's threat.

I shall make two observations about the hon. Gentleman's speech. He said — this is a widely held misunderstanding — that the 10 water authorities, nine in England and one in Wales, were being starved of capital investment. The hon. Gentleman knows that this year about £1 billion of capital investment is being undertaken by the water authorities. Contrary to what he and — I almost said his hon. Friend — the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) said, the

[Mr. Ian Gow]

investment in the water industry over the past seven years has been that which is required to keep our sewers in good condition. It is a great misunderstanding, common on Opposition Benches, to say that our sewers are in a serious state of disrepair. They are not. There are particular problems in the North-West water authority area, but the overall condition of our sewers is good.

Mr. Simon Hughes: The hon. Gentleman questioned the disrepair of sewers. A recent parliamentary answer shows that in the last year for which figures are available, in one region, Yorkshire, there were 1,350 significant sewer collapses, and figures for other regions were 280, 4,921, 260, 230 and 280. Surely the hon. Gentleman is not trying to pretend that in any of the 10 authorities there is not a major problem of sewer disrepair?

Mr. Gow: I am indeed disagreeing with the hon. Gentleman, because I am asserting the opposite. There are problems in some areas, but overall the condition of our sewers, many of which were built in the Victorian age, is satisfactory. I give way to the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham).

Dr. Cunningham: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Gow: I am not a right hon. Member.

Dr. Cunningham: Just be patient. I am grateful to the hon. Member for giving way so early in his speech. As he challenged the point that I made, let me remind him, although I do not think that he needs reminding as not too long ago he held these responsibilities, of the existing problems. The average for each of the past three years is more than 4,000 significant sewer collapses. That figure does not include the minor collapses. If the hon. Gentleman does not regard that as a problem, I assure him that we do.

Mr. Gow: I commend to the hon. Gentleman the report of each of the nine English water authorities and the one Welsh water authority, where he will see that the chairmen of the boards of these companies set out, in some detail, the condition of the sewers for which they have responsibility. After studying those, as I am sure that the hon. Gentleman, if he has not done so already, will revise his opinion.

The hon. Gentleman referred to an observation by my noble Friend Lord Stockton and to his widely reported criticism that those who sit on the Treasury Bench are selling off the family silver. However, the great misunderstanding under which both my noble Friend and the hon. Member for Copeland labour is that whereas if one sells the family silver it is no longer around, if we sell the water authorities to the people, as I am delighted to say we shall, the assets remain. Therefore, the analogy about selling off the family silver is most inappropriate.

Mr. Spearing: Although it may not be selling off the family silver, because that money is still available to Her Majesty's Government for distribution to the rich people, they have created money that is not theirs out of thin air, where the moisture comes from and disappears to. This is a conjuring trick of doubtful morality.

Mr. Gow: I was disagreeing with my noble Friend Lord Stockton over the analogy about selling the family silver, because if one does that the silver is no longer there. If, as I hope, we sell the water authorities, all the millions of pounds worth of assets will still be there and will still be at the disposal and the service of the British people.

We have had a very interesting debate. I am sorry that the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) is no longer here. The debate is interesting because we have seen once again that alliance between the Socialist party and the Liberal party that we saw in the Parliament between 1974 and 1979. Here we have the once-mighty Liberal party opposing a measure of privatisation and opposing the opportunities for employees of water authorities and customers to become owners. I give way to the hon. Member for Rochdale (Mr. Smith).

Mr. Cyril Smith: I was not asking the hon. Gentleman to give way, but I am grateful to him for doing so. I was merely going to make, I confess from a sedentary position, the following point. I understand the hon. Gentleman's deep concern about the Liberal party, because he is the hon. Member for Eastbourne, where, as I understand it, the Liberal party is in control of the council. We judge each privatisation measure on its merits, and we do not think that water authorities fall into the category of services that should be privatised.

Mr. Gow: I wish to give some comfort to the hon. Member for Rochdale. He will be pleased to know that those who are joining him in the Lobby tonight — we have heard from the hon. Member for Copeland that the Socialist party will be joining the Liberals — have their problems. The Labour party candidate at Eastbourne in the last general election, and that in 1979, lost his deposit. I confidently expect that the Socialist party candidate will again lose his deposit. The hon. Member is right to say that, for the time being, the Liberal party controls the borough council. However, I do not wish to be diverted by those who sit below the Gangway.

I have two reasons why I believe that the motion moved by the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey is thoroughly misconceived. I have been in this place for only a short time, but I point out to my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing, Urban Affairs and Construction, to my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Wales and even to my hon. Friend the Lord Commissioner to the Treasury that nothing has occurred during my time in this place to lead me to believe that superior wisdom is given to Her Majesty's Ministers. I would have made the same observation when I had the privilege of being one of Her Majesty's Ministers.

I view with great enthusiasm the prospect of taking ownership and control of the water authorities away from the state. I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton (Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop) will be able to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because he will be able to give an interesting seminar on the question of ownership. I shall base my remarks on the idea that water authorities in England are owned by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State or by the Government, and that the Welsh water authority is owned by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales or by the Government.

I am pleased about the prospect of privatisation of the water authorities, because we shall take a significant element of ownership and control away from the few — Her Majesty's Ministers — and transfer them to the many. I welcome that because, to take my constituency,

our fresh water is supplied by the Eastbourne Waterworks Company which is privately owned. I am delighted that my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, West (Sir J. Page) is in his place. He is a director of the Colne Valley Water Company, but that is not the only distinction that is enjoyed by my hon. Friend. He will correct me if I am wrong, but I think that he is a vice-president, no less, of the Water Companies Association. I shall give way to my hon. Friend if I am wrong.

Sir John Page (Harrow, West): No. My hon. Friend is marvellous!

Mr. Gow: My point is that I have great confidence in my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, West, who is a director of a private water company. The Eastbourne Waterworks Company, which supplies all my constituents with fresh water, is an excellent company and is very well run.

Another advantage will flow from the privatisation of the water authorities. At present, no hon. Member is able to serve as a director of a water authority. It would be an office of profit under the Crown. I have thought of some posts that might be available for the Liberal party after the next general election, or even for some of those who are returned to this House after the next election, or even for my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath). He would be able to serve as a director of a privatised water authority. That is a by-product of the advantage of privatisation.

The important element in the scheme that has been announced by my hon. Friend the Minister is that we shall spread ownership widely among customers and employees. The trouble is that the once mighty Liberal party, which used to be in favour of spreading ownership, has now been led astray by the Socialists who sit on that side of the House. That is very sad.

My hon. Friend the Minister knows very well that at present the chairmen and boards of water authorities have to go to him and to my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury for permission to invest money.

Mr. Brian Sedgemore (Hackney, South and Shoreditch): The hon. Gentleman voted for it.

Mr. Gow: What I am saying is that I am in respectful disagreement with the present system, whereby water authorities first have to come to my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing, Urban Affairs and Construction. They used to come to me.

Mr. O'Brien: Why do the Government not change the system?

Mr. Gow: We are changing it. The Opposition ask why the Government do not change it, but that is exactly what my hon. Friend the Minister has announced this afternoon.

Mr. O'Brien: That is stupid.

Mr. Gow: The hon. Gentleman ought not to rebuke me. On 7 February 1985 I announced a change of policy. I told the House of Commons on 7 February 1985—my hon. Friend the Minister will correct me if I have given the wrong date——

Mr. John Patten: My hon. Friend is absolutely correct.

Mr. Gow: I am obliged to my hon. Friend. I told the House that the Government would be considering the possibility of privatising the water authorities. One of the reasons for my announcement to the House of Commons, after consultations with my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer, was that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor, my successor and the Government believed that privatisation was right.

Mr. O'Brien: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Gow: I shall gladly give way to the hon. Gentleman, but he ought not to try to interrupt me from a sedentary position.

I want to take away from my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing, Urban Affairs and Construction, however excellent a Minister he may be, and from my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, however excellent he may be, the decision about how much money should be invested in the water industry. Those who, I believe, are best qualified to make judgments about the required level of investment are the directors of the water authorities.

Mr. John Patten: That is quite right.

Mr. Gow: I am delighted to have my hon. Friend's approval for my two philosophical points. The first is wider ownership, through customers and employees. The second, and important, aspect is that I want to give more freedom to those who are engaged in running the water authorities.

I very much welcome this debate. I deplore the way in which the Liberal party has been led astray by its Socialist comrades, and I want to assure the hon. Member for Copeland that the Government will not be deflected from their chosen and right path because of the threat of renationalisation that he made during his speech.

5.44 pm

Mr. William O'Brien (Normanton): First, I intend to comment on the speech of the hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow). He has been applying whitewash to the Minister's contribution. As my hon. Friend the Member for Pontefract and Castleford (Mr. Lofthouse) said, he ran out of whitewash at the end of his contribution.

When the hon. Member for Eastbourne had responsibility for the Department he could have allowed those who were responsible for running the water authorities to invest in them, if he had thought that that was correct. There is no reason for saying that the only way in which to attract investment in the water authorities in order that services may be provided by those authorities is to privatise them. That is sheer poppycock. If the hon. Member for Eastbourne had given the right to invest to water authorities when he was responsible for them, a better service could have been provided than that which will be provided under private ownership. The hon. Gentleman made the existing water undertakings faceless by means of the Water Act 1983, which provided that the discussions of water undertakings should be held in private. The hon. Gentleman has a great deal to answer for.

Much has been said in this debate about water supplies, and reference has been made to private water undertakings, but little has been said about the sewerage operations that are undertaken by water authorities. Since 1974, the responsibility for sewerage has been given to the district councils. This has been under an agency

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arrangement, in accordance with section 15 of the Water Act 1973. It provides that district councils should act as agents for sewerage management. The existing agreements were renewed in the provisions of the Water Act 1983. There has, therefore, been good sewerage management by local government since 1974.

Reference was made earlier to the fact that sewerage management and sewage disposal was a local authority responsibility before 1974. Therefore, local government maintained and provided a proper, efficient and safe sewerage system throughout the country. That was demanded by the numerous Public Health Acts. They were the basis for bringing local government into being and for the maintenance of our sewerage system. The management of sewerage has not changed. It is still with local authorities. I consider that this very important service to the community should always be controlled by Parliament through local authorities which should be accountable to the public. If not with a water authority, it should be with a local authority. It is against that background that I believe that the Labour party should, as my hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) said, bring the water undertakings back into public ownership under the control of the regional water authorities when it next takes office.

I, like many hon. Members and organisations outside, believe that sewerage and sewage treatment are the least likely local activities to lend themselves to privatisation. The point has clearly been made that there is little profit in sewerage systems and sewage disposal. Had there been any profit private undertakings would have been involved earlier, so there is no doubt that there is little profit in the privatisation of sewerage systems and sewage disposal. If those activities, were returned to local authorities, it would complement their other environmental functions such as waste disposal, highway drainage, conservation, recreation, land drainage and the quality of rivers and river discharges. Local authorities are much involved with the functions that we are considering this afternoon.

The new metropolitan districts which came into being a few weeks ago are large enough, and have the expertise, to carry out the functions of sewage disposal. If privatisation were allowed to take place in the same way as previous undertakings have been privatised, there would be a further loss of jobs and job opportunities in local government. People employed by the metropolitan district councils, both in administration and design work and in manual work, would be affected. That should be made clear by the Minister out of respect for those who are doing a useful job in that area.

Sewerage schemes are in the main drawn up by local authorities and presented to water authorities for their consideration and acceptance. The priority approved by the water authorities is looked at on a regional basis, and that is correct. I underline the fact that the original proposals come from the local councils, and the water authorities decide priorities on a regional basis. However, the initial input comes from the metropolitan district council, and that is important in helping the water authorities to decide where priorities lie.

The work carried out by local authorities on behalf of water authorities is substantial. The White Paper, "Privatisation of the Water Authorities in England and Wales", shows, on page 10, table 2, that out of a capital budget of £867 million for 1985-86, £267 million was spent by water authorities under the agency agreement with local authorities. Therefore, substantial work is undertaken by local authorities. It is widely accepted within the water authority areas that the authorised agencies give good value for money compared with the engineering consultation fee structures. Therefore, much needs to be looked at in relation to the functions of local authorities and agency arrangements with regional water authorities.

The Minister referred to people who have responded to the consultation documents that have been sent out. As my hon. Friend the Member for Copeland said, no responses to those consultation papers that have been submitted to the Department of the Environment have been submitted to the House for our consideration. However, I have a copy of a letter from the Bradford chamber of commerce that was sent to the Minister. That letter dated 28 April 1986 — only a few weeks ago — makes it clear that the Bradford chamber of commerce has discussed the subject in its specialist committee and at a chamber council meeting. Therefore, the matter has been widely discussed by the Bradford chamber of commerce which comes under the area of the Yorkshire regional area authority. It says:

"The White Paper proposals were studied, especially the Government's suggested benefits of privatisation. Soundings were taken of large water users in the area with emphasis within the wool textile industry."

Bradford needs a good supply of clean water for the textile industry and that is why I am quoting this letter. It goes on:

"The textile trade association have made their views known that they oppose the principle of privatisation. The Yorkshire Water Authority have discussed and given a very guarded welcome."

That response comes from people who operate private businesses in west Yorkshire.

The Minister told my hon. Friend the Member for Copeland that he could not lip-read, but I hope that he can read the message that is coming from the Bradford chamber of commerce in particular, but also from many other organisations with no affiliation to the Labour party. The Bradford chamber of commerce gives a number of reasons for its opposition to the principle of privatisation. I hope that the Minister will make those views in particular, and the views of others who have responded to the consultation papers, available to hon. Members.

The Government have previously stated that, under privatisation, decisions would be taken for sound business reasons, and that is also implied in the document. However, the chairman of the North-West water authority, Mr. George Mann, said that sound business reasons led to filth being poured into the river Mersey for decades. Would a private company worry about that? The authority is spending millions of pounds trying to clean up the river. A great deal of money is also being spent on cleaning up the rivers Aire and Calder. I and my fellow Yorkshiremen fear that that investment programme will not continue after privatisation. We are also concerned about the river Don and other rivers in Yorkshire.

If the Government go ahead with privatisation, the Labour party pledges itself to take the industry back into public ownership and public accountability. There has been mention of the benefits that will accrue to workers in the industry, who will be allowed to purchase shares in addition to the shares that they will be given As I asked in an intervention earlier, will the workers have the right

to vote on decisions affecting the operations and the boards of the new privatised companies? Those golden shares——

Mr. John Patten: All shareholders have the right to vote at annual general meetings and special general meetings of properly constituted public limited companies.

Mr. O'Brien: That is something that we have obtained——

Mr. Cyril Smith: The hon. Gentleman should ask the Minister what percentage of shares will be held by the workers in the industry, and how representative will their voting be.

Mr. O'Brien: When the Minister replies he will no doubt tell us the value of the shares to be given to the workers and also how much say the workers will have in the operation of the industry. After all, the Government have made great play about the shares that will be offered to workers.

A report in the Reading *Evening Post* on 21 February 1985 suggested that the chairman of the Thames water authority, Mr. Watts, and its directors had held top level secret meetings with City merchant bankers about the funding of the new company. If that is true, as the hon. Member for Rochdale (Mr. Smith) suggested, the real influence on the privatised undertakings will come not from the workers or customers who hold a few shares but from the merchant bankers.

The Minister admitted that there would be no restriction on foreign investment in the privatised regional water authorities. The Yorkshire authority could, therefore, be run by Americans, if they invested, who could then call the tune on the level of services for the area——

Mr. John Patten: The hon. Gentleman probably did not hear what I said, although he can read it in *Hansard* tomorrow. I was referring to the general welcome for foreign investment across the board. The Government will retain a golden share to ensure that the sort of problems mentioned by the hon. Gentleman could not happen.

Mr. O'Brien: The implication was that there would be no restriction on the amount of foreign money that could be invested in the privatised undertakings. However, I accept what the Minister said about the Government ensuring that a substantial amount of local money would be involved.

This is a short debate, so I shall not comment on the water aspect. As I have said, the sewerage system is important, although it has not been heavily involved in the discussions to date. I appeal to the Minister to consider what would happen to the sewerage system under privatisation. If it must be sold, it should be taken over by local authorities to ensure a satisfactory service.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): Order. Perhaps I could help the House. It is interesting that five hon. Members have addressed the House, all of whom have referred to this being a short debate. The debate has now lasted for more than two hours and must end by 7 o'clock. I appeal for brevity. I am sorry for hon. Members who are waiting to be called.

6.7 pm

Sir John Page (Harrow, West): I hope that the hon. Member for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien) will forgive me if I do not take up his argument, because I especially want to address my remarks to the water companies. My declaration of interest was most handsomely and fulsomely declared on my behalf by my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow). I am a director of a water company and the deputy president of the Water Companies Association.

I have a very long, very full and very well prepared speech, which regretfully I shall have to concertina rather more than I would wish. It was with pleasure that I noted the amount of knowledge and interest in water companies shown by hon. Members on both sides of the House. There are 29 water companies, of which 28 are members of the Water Companies Association. They supply water to 25 per cent. of the population, and the water goes to more than 200 constituencies, as I found to my cost as I am currently writing to the Members of Parliament for each of those constituencies. The water companies have been doing a good job in supplying wholesome water for more than 100 years.

Until the 1973 Act, there was no question of agency or franchise; they were independent companies, and the Act made little, if any, difference to their operation. Of course, capital financing does not constitute a burden on the public sector borrowing requirement. When the 1973 Act became law, there was some argument about whether the statutory water companies should remain. They were kept, and during and since the transition they have provided continuity and stability in the industry. When the water authorities are privatised, the statutory water companies which the White Paper states will be retained will provide valuable competition by comparison. As a result, 25 per cent. of water supplies will be free of any accusation of monopoly.

I shall mention two or three subjects briefly, as the Water Companies Association will be sending its response to the White Paper to my hon. Friend the Minister in a few weeks' time. Indeed, the water companies are grateful for the courtesy, interest and care shown by my hon. Friend the Minister, by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and by officials in their Department. At present, the companies pay water authorities for the water that they abstract. If plcs were created, they would have a monopoly, which might put the companies at a disadvantage. I hope that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will pay particular attention to that point when drawing up the Bill.

Mr. John Patten: My hon. Friend will be pleased to hear that we intend to ensure that no water services plc is in a monopolistic or exploitive relationship with a statutory water company. We intend to make certain that the Director General of Water Services can ensure that bulk transfers are properly and fairly priced.

Sir John Page: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that generous and clear response, which is typical of his helpful and robust attitude towards this issue.

We must also consider the importance of securing our water resources in future. As it is almost certain that the planning time will be longer than the time covered by licences granted to those water services plcs., we feel that that should be retained in the hands of my right hon.

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Friend the Secretary of State. We also feel that to impose the same price formula for the whole industry would make things so bland as to be almost meaningless.

Moreover, the water companies have the greatest reservations about the removal of the control over the maximum dividend payable to shareholders. At present, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State sets the limit for the maximum dividend, and it is laid down in law that the surplus must be returned to the consumer by a reduction in water charges in future years.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: Hear, hear.

Sir John Page: I agree with my hon. Friend, but the water companies are not blindly hostile to the idea of becoming WS plcs. We believe that the statutory water company and its present modus operandi should be retained. We are happy with the controls on prices, and the control on dividends should also continue. There would then be some check on the price, service and efficiency offered by a new WS plc.

Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse (Pontefract and Castleford): Profit.

Sir John Page: I am deeply fond of the hon. Gentleman, but he cannot divert me from his sedentary position *[Interruption.]* — and I shall not give way.

If the WS plcs provide a better service, with water of a higher quality and at a cheaper price than that provided by the statutory companies, the latter will deservedly disappear. But while the new companies prove themselves, the statutory companies should be allowed to retain their present arrangements. What is the snag? It can only be that two different sorts of undertaking would be providing water in England and Wales. That is the case now, and vive la difference. *[Interruption.]* As the great party of Europe is here, it may not be necessary for me to translate for the alliance.

When British Telecom was privatised, an enormous effort was made to ensure that there was competition, and Mercury was set up to that end.

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Sir John Page: If my hon. Friend does not interrupt me, he will probably have a better chance of speaking. I am now galloping round Becher's Brook for the second time and am nearly at the finishing post. I shall not fall.

The beneficent Lord has smiled on my hon. Friend the Minister and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, because, instead of having to provide extra competition, as happened in the case of BT, they have the perfect tool of competition at hand in the shape of the statutory water companies. If legislation were enacted and statutory water companies did not exist, my hon. Friend the Minister would have to go to the enormous trouble of creating them. The only disadvantage is that, by retaining them alongside the WS plcs, there will be less uniformity and harmonisation and bureaucratic neatness.

Fortunately, the Government do not worship at the altar of those household gods. In fact, I think that they would be rather iconoclastic about them. I am getting rather intellectual now, but when one speaks to a Minister from Oxford one has to get on. Thus, I leave it to the wisdom and farsightedness of my right hon. and hon. Friends, and feel sure that they will retain the statutory water companies in essentialy the same form as present, so that they can continue to provide a service and a comparison for the people of England and Wales, just as they have done in the past 100 years.

6.18 pm

Mr. Ian Wrigglesworth (Stockton, South): I shall be as brief as possible at this late stage in the debate. I am pleased to speak after the hon. Member for Harrow, West (Sir J. Page), because even if he does not oppose the Government's intentions he is certainly anxious about them. Indeed, he expressed some of the anxieties that have already been expressed from these Benches.

I shall respond to the case — if one can describe it as that — that has been made for the privatisation of the water industry by the Minister, and rather more succinctly by his predecessor, the hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow).

The hon. Gentleman said that the Government were right to privatise because they intended to spread ownership and to remove water authorities from Treasury control. However, he began by boasting about the £1 billion invested by the water authorities, despite Treasury control, which he regretted. He boasted and regretted at the same time.

Many of us believe, despite what the Minister said, that it is possible for public authorities to go to the market. It is reasonable to suggest that the success which the water authorities and other public sector authorities have achieved in providing a service is testimony to the effectiveness of the present system. We see no reason to change that system.

The hon. Member for Eastbourne talked about spreading ownership. If he regards turning a vast public monopoly into a private monopoly as providing the consumer with a better service and that that is decentralising and pushing away control, we profoundly disagree. We do not believe that such spread of ownership is advantageous. Indeed, many of the new owners will be the highest polluters of our rivers and waterways. That is another reason why this spread of ownership is not desirable.

If the hon. Gentleman wanted to extend ownership to employees in the industry, we would not disagree. There is a good case for giving employees in such enterprises a financial stake in their own business, but that is different from taking control out of public hands and putting it into private hands.

The Minister referred to a number of other arguments. In his justification of the privatisation of the water industry, I expected him to say that the present system was hopeless and was not providing the consumer with an adequate service, that it was damaging the environment, not providing anglers with the service that they require and not providing leisure facilities. Alternatively, I expected him to boast that under privatisation all anglers and all domestic and commercial users of water would receive a much better service, be provided with cleaner water and benefit from the privatisation which the Minister claims is the answer to the industry's unknown problems. He did not do that.

The Minister said that privatisation would provide the industry with the opportunity to obtain capital from the market, but it can already obtain that capital from the market. The Northumbrian water authority has obtained

vast amounts from other parts of the world to build the Kielder dam. The trouble is that the Government bookkeeping insists that such borrowing be included in the PSBR, and that conflicts with the doctrinal view of Ministers and Conservative party supporters that the PSBR is the sacred cow which must not be expanded. One of the arguments is that that would crowd out other money in the market. There was no crowding out problem when BT shares were launched on the market, nor is there in the prospects of launching British Gas shares. I cannot see that that argument applies. It is a bogus argument.

The Minister said that there would be tough regulation of the water industry. Why is there a need for tough regulation, if the present system is working satisfactorily? I thought that the Government were against establishing new quangos and public bodies. If the Minister wants the best regulation, he should have competition, but water is the most natural monopoly. If any industry is to be a candidate for privatisation, water is surely the last such industry because of its natural monopoly.

We have said that we support privatisation when clear competition is possible, when the consumer has a choice and when there is a guarantee of efficiency because of competition. This is the last industry for which competition should be introduced, and we are therefore opposed to the Government's privatisation measure. The Minister says that there will be tighter control over water quality. It is difficult to see what can be achieved under privatisation that cannot already be achieved under public control.

For all the reasons that I have explained, we reject the Government's privatisation proposal. If the Minister were able to come to the House and assure us that services would be improved, we might take a different view.

I fear that anglers will be charged fees that they cannot bear by private companies out to make a profit, that boating and other leisure facilities will cost more under privatisation because companies have profits to make and are not there to serve the public interest, that there will not be a guarantee of a better supply, and that pollution control will not be improved because it is not in the interests of a private company to provide such facilities. That is why I believe that the Government have got it wrong, why the proposition will be opposed in the country and why we shall oppose it in the Division Lobby.

6.27 pm

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge): In any programme for privatisation two essential ingredients are necessary. The first is competition, and the second is a reasonable prospect of a proper sum of money being made from the sale of assets.

However we feel about the principle of privatisation, in all the other Government privatisation schemes it has been possible to see competition resulting, or to create competition. That was true even for British Telecom, and it turned out to be so, whatever the misgivings. As the hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Wrigglesworth) said, it is difficult to envisage any other sector of life in which there is less likely to be competition than in the supply of water. Unless we pretend that in future there will be alternative reservoir and supply systems for the same householders in the same area, there can be no competition in a real sense.

It is said that we shall gain efficiencies within a privatised system for the benefit of the consumer. So far, so good. But that cannot exist in a monopoly. If I create efficiencies in my business as a solicitor, I pass the benefits on to my clients not out of the goodness of my heart, but because, if I do not, my competitors will. In a sense, I have to share the benefits of my efficiency with my consumer. I cannot accept that the mere creation of efficiency will, of itself, help the consumer.

I cannot see how the competition argument for privatisation plays any part in the discussion about the privatisation of the water industry. I am not entirely convinced, subject to what my hon. Friend the Minister might say, that the competition point has been made.

Even on the question of raising money there is no certainty that this will be the sale of the century. Briefly, the argument is that if there are to be sufficient safeguards in terms of all the environmental considerations, and if we are to be able to guarantee the supply of water to consumers at a politically acceptable price, we must impose severe restrictions on the commercial companies which take over. If we impose sufficient restrictions for environmental safeguards and for the supply of water at a politically economic price, how attractive will the industry be on the open market?

I am wondering about the possibility of creating a white elephant. I understand the arguments that are advanced in favour of the Thames water authority. On the other hand, I wonder how the extremely good chairman of the water authority in my area would feel if he were told that he had to supply water at a commercial rate to an isolated householder on Dartmoor? I think that that might worry him a great deal, and he might wonder in the end what he could do about it.

It seems that there are three possibilities. First, we could impose all the necessary restrictions to ensure that care is taken of all environmental safeguards so that water is supplied at a politically acceptable price. Alternatively, the Government could find themselves with a white elephant that no one wants to buy.

There is a more sinister possibility, however. If a commercial entity could be found to take over the companies, with sufficient restrictions, what would happen if at some future date that entity were to say to the Government, "We tried it out, having taken on board a unit with all the restrictions that you imposed, and we are saying that, unless we push up the price in the areas where we know we can make a profit, we shall no longer be able to make a profit"?

The Government might have to agree to the relaxation of restrictions, with all the political consequences that would ensue, which I do not have time to elaborate. Alternatively – and to take an extreme example – the Government might be faced with the necessity to take back the concern, which would not have been the object in the first place.

The debate is taking place at an early stage in the Government's consideration of these matters, and I am encouraged by the fact that my hon. Friend the Minister has made it clear that he intends to listen to the debate rather than to lay down strict parameters. I should like to feel that in the end arguments which have been advanced extremely quickly will, nevertheless, be taken into the system and considered. It is because I have that degree of confidence in the Government that I shall not be troubled about voting for them, despite my reservations.

Given the problems that everyone would admit exist in the water industry, it is remarkable that there is nothing

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in the alliance motion to suggest that it has any positive solutions to offer. The motion merely tells us that on one issue the Liberal party and the SDP have managed to unite. They have been able to agree about the future of water. That might be a platform for a parish council election, but it is no platform for an election to government.

6.33 pm

Mr. Geraint Howells (Ceredigion and Pembroke, North): As a Welshman, I feel that it is especially appropriate that I should be called to speak in this debate, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Water has a special significance in Wales, apart from the fact that we have a great deal of rain. I understand, however, that the sun was shining in mid-Wales this afternoon.

Welsh water has long been a political issue, well before reorganisation, equalisation or privatisation were considered. The drowning of entire valleys following the construction of the Claerwen dam in Radnorshire, the Clywedog dam in Montgomeryshire and the Trywerin dam in Gwynedd and the scattering of communities to make way for dams to supply water to the cities of England aroused the strongest of emotions, and these events are still remembered and felt today.

I believe that the Government's plans to privatise the water authorities will provoke equally strong reactions in Wales and other parts of Britain. Water is a valuable natural asset, and to us on the Liberal and SDP Benches it seems utter folly to treat it as a market commodity and leave it to the mercy of the private sector, where the profit motive is, by definition, more important than the public good.

The reorganisation of the water industry by the Water Act 1973, which was introduced by a Tory Government, at least provided for some public accountability through the appointment of majority local authority nominations to the boards. Unfortunately, this public accountability has been eroded since 1983, and the Government, blinded as they are by their own ideology, are about to remove it altogether. They have given the water authorities impossible financial targets and have thus helped to force up water charges while limiting the authorities' scope for investment.

The present network of water authorities, imperfect though it is in some ways, at least provides valuable public services which no private company would feel able to afford, and in my view public health is among the most important of them. Who is to say that with privatisation there will not be some cutting of corners to please shareholders? Never mind the poor old customers who live in rural areas. Presumably there will have to be a new body —yet another quango—to ensure that certain standards are kept in maintaining the purity of our water and the efficiency of the sewerage system. When the Minister replies to the debate, it will be interesting to hear exactly what plans are being made.

There are many problems with pollution control because of the enforced low spending of the present authorities, and I greatly fear that with privatisation there will be a failure to keep the necessary high standards. We know that lower standards are already being tolerated. It is estimated that even now about 5 million people in Britain receive drinking water that fails to meet stringent EEC public health standards.

What responsibilities will the new water companies have for flood control and conservation? I am sure that many Conservative Members are members of the Country Landowners Association, there being many landowners on the Government Benches. I read with interest an article that appeared in the *Western Mail* today. It reads:

"Private-water chaos feared Landowners fear Government plans to privatise the water industry could cause chaos in rural Wales.

The Country Landowners Association want statutory functions, including pollution control, water-abstraction licensing and fisheries management kept in public hands.

They fear that if the Government privatise these water authority functions, farmers and other landowners will be at the whim of profit-oriented companies.

Charges for vital farming needs, such as taking stream water, could rise and landowners guilty of water pollution might face huge costs for damages instead of the present level of fines."

Those are the views of Major George Lindsay, the chairman of the Country Landowners Association's Welsh water committee.

There is widespread concern in rural areas, and this fear has been expressed by the NFU, about related charges levied in rural and urban areas. The logic of privatisation would seem to be that a company is run for the profit of its shareholders. It follows that where there is virtually a monopoly, minus any sort of state control, charges to the consumer will have to meet the aspirations of the shareholders.

As time is limited, I shall bring my remarks to a close. I say on behalf of my alliance friends that I hope that the Minister will take heed and abolish his plans to privatise the Welsh water authority and other authorities in England, which do a power of good. He should leave the Welsh water authority in the hands of those who are managing it so well. That can be said of the WWA and other authorities throughout the country.

6.39 pm

Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop (Tiverton): In the three and a half minutes that are available to me, I observe that I am not satisfied that the Government own the assets of which they wish to dispose. I believe that the Government are not satisfied either on that score. It seems that their intention is to nationalise the water industry before attempting to privatise it. That is what is widely believed.

Both the motion and the amendment include non sequiturs and spurious arguments. The alliance motion states that

"privatisation . . . will have serious consequences for capital investment".

Surely that cannot be so. A monopoly for which there is no competition can borrow as much as it likes provided it can justify its costs. It can invest that capital, and pass on to the consumer the costs of so doing in increased charges. Among the problems it will not have are "serious consequences for capital investment".

The Government's amendment

"welcomes the Government's proposals for the privatisation of the water authorities, which will benefit customers".

Why would it benefit customers? I can appreciate why economies will benefit shareholders, but not why they will benefit customers.

The normal way in which a business increases its profits is by persuading its customers to consume more of its

products. However, we do not want people to consume more water; nor does the Prime Minister. My right hon. Friend has recommended metering to discourage people from consuming water, as it were free of charge. The Government's amendment

"welcomes the Government's proposals for the privatisation of the water authorities, which will . . . strengthen safeguards for the water environment"

That can be done without privatising the authorities. That is why it is a spurious argument.

I cannot agree with the alliance motion because it contains an untrue proposition. If the motion had stopped at the end of the first sentence, the alliance would have found me with it in the Division Lobby tonight. I am opposed to the Government's amendment because it welcomes privatisation. I do not believe that privatisation is in the interests of consumers. There is too great a conflict between the interests of a water company and the interests of consumers in terms of water and sewerage. Moreover, the compulsory purchase of land for further reservoirs and the digging up of roads to put in new sewers and pipes should be co-ordinated with the other public authorities if the travelling public is not to be greatly disadvantaged.

6.42 pm

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): I am glad that the hon. Member for Tiverton (Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop) was able to contribute to the debate. His personal crusade on the issue of who owns the water authorities is an important factor in the discussion. The discussion on that point is by no means over, as the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) said. We have now heard the Government's admission of their intention to nationalise water authorities before they can privatise them. The words that the Minister used earlier seemed to show that the Government must do so. I see no way that the Government can simply dispose of assets which are not vested in the Minister without what is in effect, however compressed, a two-stage process — one by which the Government acquire assets which are vested in water authorities and one by which they hand over those assets to newly constituted private water companies. How that will be done will occupy further discussion. I shall return to the implications in a moment.

We could have done with a longer debate so that many of the arguments could have been extended and developed. It would have been interesting to hear more from the hon. Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls) on the reservations that he shares with the alliance on many aspects of the proposals. He placed some emphasis on the impossibility of generating competition, which in other industries has been an argument for privatisation, in the water industry. I welcome what he said. I suspect that before the end of these discussions, he will be in the same Division Lobby as the alliance, even if he does not go all the way tonight.

My hon. Friends the Members for Stockton, South (Mr. Wrigglesworth) and Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Howells) underlined, from our point of view, the many failings of the Government's proposals. The hon. Member for Copeland gave clear Labour support for our motion and referred to a wide variety of organisations, which do not normally support either the Labour party or the alliance, which have strong reservations about the proposals.

The hon. Member for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien) stressed, rightly, that the argument is not just about water supply. The key environmental functions of sewage disposal and the provision of drainage and sewerage systems are, in a sense, far greater problems in the water industry than the supply of water, which has been reduced to a relatively simple operation by the activities of various sections of the water industry over the years. The largest problems will arise in environmental protection.

The hon. Member for Harrow, West (Sir J. Page) spoke about the existing private water companies and his connection with them. I shall say more about that in the course of my comments on the Minister's remarks. Why did it fall to a wet to set out the Government's proposals on water policy? The Minister did so with a striking lack of conviction. Many alliance Members were genuinely convinced, by the end of his speech, that he was not convinced by the Government proposals he advanced. Perhaps we do him a disservice by saying so, but I think that everyone on this side of the House felt that he did not show any real conviction for the cause he sought to advance because of the obvious weaknesses of it. As he set up arguments one by one, they were knocked down.

The Minister argued that it was necessary to privatise the water industry to give it access to capital from the market and access to investment other than that provided by the Government from the public sector borrowing requirement. The Minister knows that that is nonsense. It needs only a mere stroke of an accountant's pen to decide whether a water authority's investment shall be reckoned for public sector borrowing purposes. He knows full well that there are institutions nominally in the public sector which have the freedom to go to the market for capital investment, and there are institutions which have not.

It was quite open to the Government to make the decision to give the authorities freedom to go to the market for their finance. The hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow), who spoke strongly in favour of the Government's proposals, could have done so himself when he was Minister. He did not need to come to the House to announce the privatisation of the authorities. He could have given them the freedom to go to the markets for their capital.

Then the Minister chose, extraordinarily, to attack me and my right hon. and hon. Friends over the existing private water companies. In 1977-78, we were involved in preventing the then Labour Government from nationalising those companies, as they were intent on doing. I remember the meetings vividly. My hon. Friend the Member for Rochdale (Mr. Smith) will remember them well. My hon. Friend the Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Ross) was closely involved. We were determined that the efficient operating water companies should not be nationalised.

The Minister sought to draw from that the conclusion that that was a model for the operation of the entire water industry. The private water companies, most of which have done a good job over many years, are quite unlike the monsters that the Government seek to create. Since the current legislation has been on the statute book, the statutory water companies have been effectively accountable to the water authorities for what they do. In a sense, they are the franchised concerns like those which the Minister sought to advance as the model when he cited France. We are not reluctant to do what is done abroad. France has adopted proportional representation in its

[Mr. A. J. Beith]

electoral system. There is no need to look to the alliance Benches for any reluctance to follow the example of good things done in other countries.

As has been pointed out, private water companies have limited dividends. There is a dividend restraint on them which requires them to return to their consumers the benefit of the efficiency which they generate in their activities. That they do. I pay tribute to what a number of companies do. Furthermore, the companies only supply water. They do not have any of the other environmental or regulatory functions, such as fisheries management, amenities, and others specified in the motion. It is when one extends over such a wide area that one comes to an issue of public accountability.

The problem is not primarily one of ownership, although ownership is an aspect of it. It is primarily an issue of public accountability — how important public services are controlled and regulated. The Government, by singling out the issue of ownership and seeking to transfer ownership so massively, have thrown the baby out with the bath water. They have excluded the regulations of a monopoly activity, which closely concerns every aspect of the life of every citizen of this country, from effective public accountability.

It is interesting that no Minister representing Scottish interests is on the Government Front Bench. That is because the Government do not propose to take such a step in Scotland. It is interesting to speculate why. I suspect that one of the reasons is that the Government never managed to complete stage one of the process in Scotland. They never managed to get the local authorities out of democratic community control. They never managed to get the water and sewerage system out of local community control in Scotland, where it is still controlled by elected local authorities. The intermediate step has been taken in England with the creating of the halfway house of bodies with some public accountability but not democratic control. That is why we opposed their creation and have pledged constantly to introduce regional democratic control of the water system and of the functions now carried out by the regional water authorities. That already exists in Scotland. Therefore, the Government do not have that halfway status from which to move to privatisation.

I wonder why the Government are pressing ahead with this privatisation. There was a rather similar hint in what the hon. Member for Eastbourne said that the attractions of creating directorships of water authorities which Members of Parliament could take was part of the privatisation process. I hope that that was a jest and that it does not enter into the Government's motives. If the Government showed the same zeal in securing through their friends the appointment to water companies of people of their choice as they have done with the water authorities, every water company would be dominated by Conservatives. A great deal of political influence has been brought to bear in appointments to water authorities. There may be many ex-Conservative Members of Parliament seeking such posts after the next election.

The proposal is not about that. It is about feeding the meter of privatisation which the Government have set ticking away. They have made the national budget dependent on constant acts of privatisation, to such an extent that one wonders what they will do next. With a budget of £3 billion or £4 billion a year dependent on privatisation, what will be next? What industries are left?

Will the Government be turning next to the Church of England so as to privatise it and to distribute some shares?. Might they not privatise the official Opposition? That is a wonderful opportunity. It provides the scope to break the monopoly arrangements and to allow the free market in alternative Governments to operate, instead of sustaining arrangements by which large distorting public subsidies go to one of the parties.

The Government are on an endless treadmill, privatising industries to balance the books. That is what is happening with the water industry. In one sense, one can argue that the Government's plans are a shambles, because they cannot privatise the water industry at one go. Perhaps, by privatising two or three companies a year, they see the means of keeping up the flow of money to balance the books, using the sale of assets to finance current expenditure — the most basic accounting mistake one can possibly make. That is what is involved in privatisation of the water industry.

The consumer and the general citizen will suffer. It is wrong to suggest, as did the hon. Member for Tiverton (Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop), that the issue of capital investment is a non-sequitur. Capital investment is the crucial issue in the water industry's future. It will be a matter of consumers in the country asking why their village will not be connected to the main sewerage system, consumers in the city asking why their sewers are collapsing, and consumers in resorts asking why their resort is not being singled out for removal of coastal pollution. Those everyday questions of capital investment are the essence of public accountability in the water industry.

One cannot set up any type of Oftel or "Ofwater" institution that can reasonably engage in making the water industry accountable without getting it involved day to day in what are basically public decisions about where priorities lie. That body will have to be involved not only in capital investment decisions but in prying into many other issues of environmental management and leisure and amenity management. It must be involved in issues raised by, for example, the anglers as to how much money they will have to pay for the facilities for which the water authorities are responsible. The new privatised water companies will be involved in sea fisheries management. They will have the power to decide who can fish for salmon in the North sea off the English coast which, as some Conservative Members know, is a controversial issue. The hon. Member for Reading, West (Mr. Durant), who is the Government Whip in the Committee on the Salmon Bill, is well aware of the number of days spent discussing who should fish for salmon. In future, a commercial company will decide who has the right to put to sea, how effectively the rules are enforced, and the amount of conservation.

It will be the same for someone who wants to take a boat out on some canals, which are part of the water system. It will be the same for those involved in those river navigations which are controlled at present by the water authorities. Many aspects in which public accountability is involved will be handed over lock, stock and barrel to private companies, the primary interest of which must be the payment of dividends to their shareholders, and which will not be under the restraints of the existing private water companies.

The Government in the White Paper and in what they have said so far have given no reassurances to all those people involved in any of those activities, least of all the consumer of water and the ordinary user of the basic services, that their interests will be protected. In all the discussions on this subject the Government have simply failed to grasp the public mood. They have failed to recognise that environmental control and pollution control are major political issues about which many people care deeply. Because people care so deeply, these proposals will be a millstone around the Conservative party's neck between now and the next general election.

6.55 pm

Mr. John Patten: This has been an interesting and worthwhile debate. We shall, of course, take note of all the points that have been made. We intend to listen, as my hon. Friend the Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls) said in his excellent speech, to constructive questions and criticism. We note the views that were put forward by my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) on the demands and needs of people for a wider spread of ownership and the much wider dissemination of ownership. My hon. Friend's emphasis on that theme was quite right.

I listened carefully for any mention by a Labour Member of the future position of the statutory water companies. The hon. Members for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) and for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) made clear the Liberal party's attitude to the statutory water companies. We do not know what the Labour party's attitude is. I ask the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) to make known as soon as possible not now, because of the shortage of time the Labour party's attitude to the statutory water companies.

Dr. Cunningham *indicated assent.*

Mr. Patten: It would be wrong for the hon. Gentleman not to make clear the Labour party's policy. I note that he has indicated assent, but I shall continue to ask him for more straightforward and spoken assent.

Hon. Members, including the hon. Member for Copeland and my hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton (Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop), were concerned about ownership. I was pleased to give way a number of times to my hon. Friend, just as I was pleased to give way, as Ministers should do, to as many other hon. Members as possible. I hope that the hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Wrigglesworth) does not expect Ministers not to give way as often as they are asked to do so.

In answering my hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton on the issue of ownership, I shall use more or less the same words as I used earlier. The Water Act 1973 created the water authorities. Water authorities are public corporations which are answerable to the Government. That was not denied by any hon. Member when I offered hon. Members the opportunity to do so. The water authorities are clearly in the public sector. If they are in the public sector, it is for Parliament to decide what is to happen to them. Subject to parliamentary approval, any future Bill will transfer the water authorities' assets, rights and liabilities to wholly owned Crown companies—I hope that that answers the point made by the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed; I have made it before—and will empower the Secretary of State to sell them at his or her pleasure at the correct time.

It was a little unfair of the hon. Member for Copeland to talk about lack of investment by the Government in the water industry, especially when he used the phoney figures produced by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy. The institute should know that the retail price index is not a suitable index for investment. Indices of capital expenditure prices move differently from the RPI. The institute should have chosen a more useful and valid index, because it would have produced the fact that, since 1980, investment in water by the Government has increased by 30 per cent. in real terms, which is a considerable achievement. We shall have no lectures from the Labour party or any other party about underinvestment in the water authorities. Care and consideration for the water authorities before privatisation will certainly be continued by us.

Question put, That the original words stand part of the Question:

The House divided: Ayes 183, Noes 253.

Division No. 229] **[7 pm**

AYES

Abse, Leo
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Alton, David
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Bagier, Gordon A. T
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Anthony
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'rmline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Buchan, Norman
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell, Ian
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Carter-Jones, Lewis
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clelland, David Gordon
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S)*
Cohen, Harry
Conlan, Bernard
Corbett, Robin
Cox, Thomas *(Tooting)*
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Edwards, Bob *(W'h'mpt'n SE)*
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Freud, Clement
Garrett, W. E.
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Gould, Bryan
Gourlay, Harry
Hancock, Michael
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Janner, Hon Greville
Jenkins, Rt Hon Roy *(Hillh'd)*
John, Brynmor
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kilroy-Silk, Robert
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Edward
McCartney, Hugh
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McGuire, Michael
McKelvey, William

MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Robert
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Meadowcroft, Michael
Michie, William
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Park, George
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Penhaligon, David
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ryman, John
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shields, Mrs Elizabeth
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Smith, Cyril *(Rochdale)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Torney, Tom
Wainwright, R.
Wallace, James
Wareing, Robert
Weetch, Ken
Welsh, Michael
White, James
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Winnick, David
Woodall, Alec
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Richard Livsey and
Mr. Ian Wrigglesworth.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Ashby, David
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Benyon, William
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'tc'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Bruinvels, Peter
Bryan, Sir Paul
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nick
Bulmer, Esmond
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Rt Hon Sir Adam
Carlisle, John *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, W. S.
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Clegg, Sir Walter
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Corrie, John
Couchman, James
Cranborne, Viscount
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Dykes, Hugh
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Fletcher, Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony
Greenway, Harry
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Ground, Patrick
Hanley, Jeremy
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(N'folk SW)*
Heddle, John
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jackson, Robert
Jessel, Toby
Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Key, Robert
Knowles, Michael
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
Madel, David
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Antony
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mills, Sir Peter *(West Devon)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morris, M. *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Mudd, David
Murphy, Christopher
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Oppenheim, Rt Hon Mrs S.
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abgdn)*
Pattie, Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Porter, Barry
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Price, Sir David
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Rees, Rt Hon Peter *(Dover)*
Rhodes James, Robert
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rippon, Rt Hon Geoffrey
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Sumberg, David
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Terlezki, Stefan
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*

Wall, Sir Patrick
Waller, Gary
Walters, Dennis
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Whitney, Raymond
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Tony Durant and
Mr. Archie Hamilton.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 33 (Questions on amendments)*.

The House divided: Ayes 242, Noes 167.

Division No. 230] **[7.15 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Ashby, David
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Benyon, William
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Bruinvels, Peter
Bryan, Sir Paul
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nick
Bulmer, Esmond
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Rt Hon Sir Adam
Carlisle, John *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, W. S.
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clegg, Sir Walter
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Corrie, John
Couchman, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Fletcher, Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony
Greenway, Harry
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(N'folk SW)*
Heddle, John
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jackson, Robert
Jessel, Toby
Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Key, Robert
Knowles, Michael
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lester, Jim
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
Madel, David
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Antony
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mills, Sir Peter *(West Devon)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morris, M. *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Mudd, David
Murphy, Christopher
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Oppenheim, Rt Hon Mrs S.
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abgdn)*
Pattie, Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Porter, Barry
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Price, Sir David
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Rees, Rt Hon Peter *(Dover)*
Rhodes James, Robert
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rippon, Rt Hon Geoffrey
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, P. *(Belfast E.)*
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speller, Tony
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Sumberg, David
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Terlezki, Stefan
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Wall, Sir Patrick
Waller, Gary
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Whitney, Raymond
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Tim Sainsbury and
Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd.

NOES

Abse, Leo
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Alton, David
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'mline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Buchan, Norman
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Carter-Jones, Lewis
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas

Clay, Robert
Clelland, David Gordon
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S)*
Cohen, Harry
Conlan, Bernard
Corbett, Robin
Cox, Thomas *(Tooting)*
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Edwards, Bob *(W'h'mpt'n SE)*
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Freud, Clement
Garrett, W. E.
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Golding, John
Gourlay, Harry
Hancock, Michael
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Janner, Hon Greville
Jenkins, Rt Hon Roy *(Hillh'd)*
John, Brynmor
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Edward
McCartney, Hugh
McGuire, Michael
McKelvey, William
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Robert
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maxton, John
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Meadowcroft, Michael
Michie, William
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Park, George
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Penhaligon, David
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ryman, John
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Smith, Cyril *(Rochdale)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Torney, Tom
Wainwright, R.
Wallace, James
Wareing, Robert
Weetch, Ken
Welsh, Michael
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Winnick, David
Woodall, Alec
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Ian Wrigglesworth and
Mrs. Elizabeth Shields.

Question accordingly agreed to.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *forthwith declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.*

Resolved,

That this House welcomes the Government's proposals for the privatisation of the water authorities, which will benefit customers, strengthen safeguards for the water environment, encourage enterprise, improve the efficiency of industry, reduce the public sector and extend share-ownership.

Rate Support Grant Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

7.23 pm

The Minister for Environment, Countryside and Local Government (Mr. William Waldegrave): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

With the best will in the world, it is difficult to make a speech of great oratorical note about this Bill. I can think of only one person who would have done this measure justice, and that is someone whom we all miss Mr. Cowans, the late hon. Member for Tyne Bridge. I should have liked to hear a speech from Harry Cowans on this Bill, and I was almost tempted to deliver his speech for him. It would have had a great deal to do with throttles and accelerators, and it would have been a fine speech. Unfortunately, I cannot live up to Harry's standard on this matter as, doubtless, I cannot on other matters.

The Bill results from a challenge by a number of authorities to the way in which one particular aspect of the block grant system has operated, with the broad agreement of the local authority associations, since 1981.

Under section 59 of the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980, the Secretary of State has power to determine block grant multipliers to limit the change in the amount of block grant payable to an authority from one year to the next. We have taken this to mean that safety nets could be set to protect local authorities against losses in any one settlement and that caps could be set on increases to prevent undesirable gains by some authorities at the expense of all other authorities. Each year since 1981, these powers have been used to limit certain factors affecting grant entitlements but not others. It would clearly be nonsense if the powers were to be used in such a way that all the factors which can change an individual authority's grant entitlement from one year to the next were caught by these nets or caps. For example, authorities would not expect to be protected from grant losses resulting from an increase in their own rateable resources, or a reduction in school age children. In particular, authorities could not expect to be protected from the grant results of their own expenditure decisions which are an integral part of the present system.

On the other hand, we have thought it right to limit losses or restrict gains arising from certain kinds of changes which are made from time to time in the system. For example, nets have been set to protect authorities from losses resulting from changes in the way that grant-related expenditure assessments are calculated. In 1986-87 caps were set for a number of authorities because we concluded it was desirable to restrict the windfall gains resulting from our decision to abolish expenditure targets. The power was also used to ensure that the grant effects of abolishing the GLC and the metropolitan county councils would be neutral at ratepayer level.

This approach has had the general support of the local authority associations. It has been embodied in the RSG reports for each of the six years since 1981, all of which were approved by this House.

As a result of a legal challenge by Birmingham city council, the court has now ruled that to use the powers in this way is ultra vires. The Secretary of State, the court has now judged, cannot separate out single factors as he has in the past. The effect is that under the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980, the Secretary of State is restricted to limiting changes in the total amount of grant payable to an authority for one year compared to the previous year. I do not believe that the powers could be used in the real world in this way in a sensible fashion. The system is intended to limit the grant of those who deliberately overspend. If multipliers could limit only the change in the total amount payable to a local authority, we should also be limiting losses in grant due to that overspending. This would clearly contradict the will of the House in approving successive rate support grant settlements.

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark (Birmingham, Selly Oak): Believe it or not, I have considerable sympathy with the Government over the dilemma facing them. A law which the Government thought was a good law, as usual with lawyers, was written badly. The Government have a right to the law. However, does my hon. Friend understand the problems faced by cities like Birmingham when he speaks about overspending, and does he apreciate the special problems faced by Handsworth? We are likely to be caught and forced to do what the Government want, or we will be accused of overspending. Birmingham city council needs to spend a certain amount of money, and the Government are spending their share, but if Birmingham spends its share it can be penalised and lose millions of pounds simply becaue it has overspent by a few hundred thousand pounds. Will my hon. Friend accept that that makes the law whether it is good or bad rather odd in a compassionate and useful sense?

Mr. Waldegrave: I find it rather unnerving to have my hon. Friend's support on this matter. In the wider context of his points about urban programme spending, he has put forward an argument which he has made eloquently before, and he put forward that argument eloquently for the city of Birmingham. He stated that there are aspects of the fundamental system that he would like to see changed. However, today's debate is intended to confirm that the system, as passed by the House, should be as we thought it was. I note my hon. Friend's point, and I recognise that he would like to see more fundamental changes than it would be proper to make in the Bill.

Ms. Clare Short (Birmingham, Ladywood): According to Birmingham city council, the Government are exaggerating the effects of the court ruling. The ruling referred only to caps that had been applied in the past financial year. The Government are pretending that the ruling also referred to safety nets that applied in previous years. Birmingham council has said that that is wrong and that the wording in the old legislation on the two issues is different. I hope that the Minister will justify this wide interpretation of the court ruling.

Mr. Waldegrave: I can well understand that Birmingham, having won its point, may wish to suggest that it is a small victory relevant only to Birmingham so that we do not correct the legislation. Our advice, however, is that the ultra vires effect is wider than the hon. Lady suggests, but no doubt we shall explore this further when she has made her speech.

In addition, the practical effect of the Birmingham judgment is to cast substantial doubt on the grant entitlements of every local authority, not only for 1986-87, but for every previous year back to 1981-82. If we did not have this Bill, we should have to start by recalculating

[Mr. Waldegrave]

grant entitlement for 1981 and roll the calculations forward cumulatively on the basis of the new rules for safety nets and caps until 1986-87. When I tell the House that since 1981 almost 1,500 safety nets and some 170 caps have been set, hon. Members will appreciate the enormous problems involved in disentangling precise grant entitlements for any local authority.

Mr. Terry Davis (Birmingham, Hodge Hill): Is the Minister saying that without the Bill the Government will have to revise calculations going back many years? How does he meet the point made by Birmingham and other authorities that it is not possible to reopen the grant settlement for previous years because of another court case in 1983?

Mr. Waldegrave: It would not be for us to reopen such settlements. They would simply be ultra vires. If the powers that the Secretary of State has been using since 1981 are ultra vires, they are ultra vires, and that is the end of the matter.

Mr. Davis: Is it not correct that a decision must be regarded as valid unless it is challenged within a reasonable period?

Mr. Waldegrave: I think that if the use of a power is declared to be ultra vires, its use is ultra vires, but I am sure that my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, who is to wind up the debate, will be interested to hear the hon. Gentleman's speech, because we shall have to return to these points.

It is abundantly clear that if recalculations had to be made they would involve unexpected and possibly unmanageable losses of grant for a large number of authorities. The Bill therefore has two main purposes. It validates the way in which the powers to determine block grant multipliers have been used since 1981, and it sets on the statute book the precise powers necessary to ensure that the previous practice can continue for the future. The new power will enable the Secretary of State to determine multipliers for the purpose of limiting or avoiding the effect on the amount of block grant payable to a local authority for any year, or the contribution made, or to be made, by ratepayers, of any difference between that year and the previous year in any of the matters relevant to the calculation of block grant. This will enable the Secretary of State to limit the effect of particular factors, as he has been doing.

The hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw), like all good lawyers, can argue the case from every side. He argued with panache last time that there was a very good precedent for retrospective legislation, if it worried the House, in that the Labour Government had indulged in a far more dramatic piece of retrospection with the War Damage Act 1965, but I do not think that we need go that far. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Wanstead and Woodford (Mr. Jenkin) said when the need for legislation was announced, there is a difference in that it is legitimate to legislate in this way to implement settled expectations, but unacceptable to legislate retrospectively to defeat settled expectations. I hope, therefore, that the point about retrospection will not delay us on this occasion.

Mr. Jack Straw (Blackburn): I am glad that the Minister raised that point, as it anticipates part of my speech. In the Chamber on 10 April he sought to distinguish between the Bill and the War Damage Act 1965 on the ground that the latter damaged people's rights retrospectively, whereas his proposition sought to maintain the status quo. Does he accept that Birmingham's rights are being changed retrospectively?

Mr. Waldegrave: I used the word "expectations" on this occasion, and I think that it is the better word. The moral point is that the House does not like the type of retrospection that leads to people getting something different from what they expected. Indeed, the House disliked it intensely when the Labour Government indulged in it in such spectacular fashion in 1965. That is not the situation today, but I know that my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State will be able to deploy a considerable number of examples of that type of retrospection by Labour Governments.

In addition to the main provision on multipliers, the Bill contains a small number of minor technical provisions which are either consequent upon the amendments to the powers on block grant multipliers, or where we consider it appropriate to confirm and clarify the use of other powers in the 1980 Act. I am sure that the House will agree with me that the more technical matters can be considered fully in Committee, but I should like to draw attention briefly to three of those provisions.

First, under sections 60 and 61 of the 1980 Act, RSG reports and supplementary reports are required to specify the considerations which led the Secretary of State to make all the particular determinations required by the Act. It would be totally impossible for reports to meet this requirement in respect of every determination. For example, a detailed description of the considerations underlying each of the grant-related expenditure determinations would alone require a document several times the size of the present RSG report. The Bill provides, therefore, in paragraphs 8 and 9 of the schedule, that reports will provide such explanations as the Secretary of State thinks desirable of the main features of determinations specified in the reports. I stress, however, that it is not our intention in any way to reduce the level of explanation currently provided by the RSG reports. We simply seek to confirm that the normal practice has been carried out on a proper basis and can continue unchallenged.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): Does the Minister accept that one of the complaints, especially from local government officers, is that it is difficult to discover all the considerations leading to the figure produced by the Department? One way to deal with that is to make the documents and considerations known. The wording of the Bill will make it possible for much less information to be produced by the Government, thus making the life of local government staff even more difficult.

Mr. Waldegrave: Rightly or wrongly, there is now far more litigation than in the past—for the benefit of the hon. Gentleman's profession—so we have to examine all legislation to see whether there are loopholes. I do not believe that it is possible philosophically or logically to have a complete description of anything—if the hon. Gentleman thinks about it he will find that that is true—but we are advised that the wording of the existing Act allows room for the type of litigation that we fear, and

that is now more common than it used to be. I repeat, however, that it is not our intention to use the new legislation in any way to diminish the proper explanations given. I make that pledge here and now.

Mr. Straw: I accept the Minister's philosophical statement, but does he accept that in the so-called real world of rate support grant the phrase

"as the Secretary of State thinks desirable"

in paragraph 8 of the schedule leaves a wholly subjective power in the hands of the Secretary of State? If the Minister means what he says about the way in which the legislation will be used, will he give an undertaking to consider favourably amendments in Committee seeking to amend that wording — for example, by substituting the words "as are reasonably necessary"?

Mr. Waldegrave: We are moving rather rapidly to Committee points. I cannot give a pledge now to accept detailed amendments in Committee, but I am sure I can pledge that any amendments put forward will be seriously considered at that stage.

Second — the hon. Member for Blackburn should like this — paragraph 10 of the schedule introduces a restriction on the Secretary of State's powers to redetermine block grant multipliers determined at the time of a rate support grant settlement. The present provisions of the 1980 Act give the Secretary of State discretion to redetermine all multipliers in a supplementary report in the light of later expenditure information which was not available at the time of the settlement, although the Secretary of State has never used the power in this way for net and cap multipliers. Had we done so, the result would have been, yet again, a completely unacceptable degree of uncertainty for local authorities as to their grant entitlements.

Local authorities will have set their rates in the light of their entitlements for the main RSG report. Accordingly, we thought it right to limit the Secretary of State's power to redetermine net and cap multipliers so that he may do so only when there has been an error in the application of the principles to the original determination on the basis of the information then available.

Thirdly, and finally, I come to the provisions in the schedule relating to the returns of expenditure information to the Secretary of State. At present there is no certainty for local authorities as to whether late information will be taken into account in the making of the supplementary report. We want to create more certainty. Some authorities have already been seeking to exploit the present uncertainty. The previous Secretary of State received a telex from one authority purporting to contain new information just as he entered the House for the settlement debate. The proposed changes will enable the Secretary of State to disregard information which it is not "reasonably practicable" to take into account and to make appropriate assumptions where no information is available. I assure the House that the Secretary of State will make crystal clear the date when it will no longer be reasonably practicable for further information to be taken into account.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: I have had a hand in running a great authority which often has great problems because sometimes information comes late in the day. I am sure that most hon. Members will accept that it is nonsense, as my hon. Friend the Minister pointed out, for someone to deliver a telegram as one is about to enter the House for the debate in question. Does my hon. Friend agree that it would be improper for the date to become too rigid? It would make it difficult for and unfair on local authorities if my hon. Friend were to lay down a time limit of a fortnight. What does he call fair and reasonable?

Mr. Waldegrave: It would be proper for the Secretary of State to discuss the matter with the local authority associations. He will be bound by the words "reasonable practice". If he took a decision which seemed unreasonable, it could and doubtless would be challenged in court.

This Bill is necessary to provide local authorities with certainty about their present and past grant entitlements. It validates a procedure which has been followed since 1981 with a broad measure of agreement from the local authority associations. The alternative to legislation would be total uncertainty for local councils about what their grant entitlements have been and could be. I hope that no reasonable hon. Member could seriously countenance that outcome. Therefore, I ask the House to support the Bill.

7.41 pm

Mr. Jack Straw (Blackburn): On 10 April, the day of the Fulham by-election, when the words "Statement: Block Grant Multipliers" appeared on the television annunciators throughout the Palace of Westminster, many of my hon. Friends thought that the Government had finally taken leave of their senses. One or two of my more cynical hon. Friends thought that the Government had finally uncovered a secret weapon for stashing away millions of pounds of the then Conservative-controlled borough of Hammersmith and Fulham to stave off the near certainty of a humiliating defeat. Although the Government had no such luck, the announcement certainly ensured that the Benches were cleared for what turned out to be the announcement of an important but disreputable decision to introduce retrospective legislation to pre-empt the expected High Court decision the following Tuesday, and so to deny the ratepayers and the council of Birmingham of at least £7 million which was and remains rightfully theirs.

The Bill seeks to implement that decision, and the Benches are not much fuller today than they were on 10 April, for the same reasons. On the surface these matters are complex and technical, but that should not obscure from us the fact that, behind the smokescreen of obscurity that the Government have created, they must stand condemned for the chaos to which they have reduced the rate support grant system, not least for the way in which they have perverted and distorted the system to aid their political allies in local authorities and to hit their opponents.

First, I shall make some general observations about the system of central support for local government. Inherent in all systems of such support has been the idea that central Government should seek to compensate for different levels of need and resources, so that for a standard level of service the impact on ratepayers should be roughly the same in all authorities. We support such objectives. It follows that we also accept that any system which seeks to be fair is bound to be complex and apparently technical, since involved in such a system are mathematical assessments of need and resources area by area. We may and do argue about the methods used, about the

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extraneous objectives that the Government have introduced through mechanisms, such as penalty and target, and about the overall percentage of the rate support grant. We do not complain in principle that any rate support grant system is bound to be complicated if it is to be fair.

As so often in the past, our objection is that the Government have used the complexity of the system to make it not fair, but unfair. That is the burden of our case. When the Minister made his statement on 10 April he asserted, as he did tonight, that he had adopted this position for the calculation of caps because it was the only sensible and practical way. Implicit in what he and other Conservative Members said was the suggestion that somehow Birmingham had late in the day and unexpectedly found a legal loophole to embarrass the Department and to obtain for itself some gratuitous, unanticipated advantage. That was also implicit in the Minister's remarks this evening when he spoke about the settled expectations, as if Birmingham were making use of a loophole in poorly drafted legislation. That is not correct.

First, since the day when the provisional announcement of the 1986-87 rate support grant settlement was made in July 1985, Birmingham has been making representations about what it felt to be the unfair and harmful way in which it had been treated.

Secondly, my hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) raised that issue in the debate on the rate support grant order on 20 January in his speech, at column 57, and again in an intervention in the speech of the Minister, at column 127, who made light of his objections.

Thirdly, Birmingham is correct to consider that it has been ill-treated because, contrary to what the Minister has suggested about settled expectations of the law, on the face of the language used in the relevant legislation the Minister had clearly not followed what Parliament plainly intended. Both section 8 of the Local Government Finance Act 1982 and section 59 of the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980 speak of the requirement for the Secretary of State to compare the grants payable to an authority in the current year with the "amount payable" to it in the previous year. The key words are the "amount payable", and for Birmingham those words meant the amount due to it. What else can they mean?

It is no good the Minister suggesting that the legislation is poorly drafted. It has been perfectly adequately drafted. The language is clear, and so is the intention of Parliament. Parliament passed that legislation, knowing what it meant, and it was on that basis that Birmingham went to court.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: I have found myself agreeing and disagreeing with the hon. Gentleman. He knows that I thought that Birmingham should have a better grant. Bearing in mind the problems that we face, the system is rarely fair to our great cities. However, although I believe that Birmingham should have a larger grant, I still contend that the Government's intention at the time was that Birmingham should not have more grant, despite the fact that many hon. Members thought it should. As the hon. Gentleman knows, I have had one or two stand-up disagreements with my colleagues on local government legislation in the House, and, indeed, about the rate support grant system. Does he agree that the Government have a right to the law as they thought it genuinely existed? It my be wrong, but it is not sharp practice.

Mr. Straw: I believe that Birmingham is right to consider that it has been the subject of sharp practice, as I shall show.

Mr. Robin Corbett (Birmingham, Erdington): It is legalised theft.

Mr. Straw: As ever, my hon. Friend is correct.

I am not suggesting that Ministers were presented with a paper from their lawyers saying that the course that they were about to pursue was plainly unlawful, yet they chose to follow that course. However, the Ministers were wrong. If they received any advice, that was wrong, and Birmingham was right. It is no good the Minister talking about settled expectations or the fact that the system had broad support from local authority associations. They have thoroughly opposed what the Government have done in this rate support grant settlement.

A major point made by the Minister in support of the Bill was that if the judgment of the court was allowed to stand, although Birmingham and some authorities could benefit, other authorities would be bound to lose. That is inherent in the nature of a system that is close-ended. It cannot be a sufficient argument to justify what is proposed. First, Birmingham can rightly claim that it has suffered in the latest settlement significantly more than other authorities. We are told that the penalty system has been abolished. Technically, the target and penalty system has been abolished. Every £1 of extra expenditure over GREA costs Birmingham ratepayers £2·08. That compares with £1·47 for Liverpool, £1·83 for Manchester and £1·38 for Leeds. There can be no question but that Birmingham ratepayers have been unfairly treated.

Secondly, it must be said that, in the past, Birmingham and other authorities have suffered from redistribution. All hon. Members remember the second or third supplementary report of 1982-83 when the Greater London council obtained £100 million of rate support grant because the Department discovered that it had budgeted by about £170 million less than it thought it would. Because that was taken from a close-ended system, other authorities, including Birmingham and Lancashire, suffered. They did not scream about that; they accepted that that was how the system operated.

Nor does it lie in the mouth of the Government to make that point, because the reduction in the overall rate support grant has resulted in all authorities suffering and the effect of any redistribution being much worse than it otherwise would be.

The Minister said that those caps were introduced in 1986-87 to prevent gratuitous gains from the ending of targets in 1985-86. But the Government and the Minister do not come to the House with clean hands. No such considerations affected the decision that they made in 1983-84. My hon. Friends who represent Birmingham constituencies especially will recall that, in that year, the Conservatives were struggling to maintain their control of Birmingham city council. The response of the then Secretary of State, the right hon. Member for Wanstead and Woodford (Mr. Jenkin), and the Minister, who was at his side then, was to stuff money Birmingham's way by

fiddling the target system in Birmingham's favour. The then Secretary of State made little pretence about his motives. On 14 December 1983, he said:

"The third change"—

in the target mechanism—

"will give authorities such as Birmingham, which budget well below target, an incentive to continue to do so."—[*Official Report*, 14 December 1983; Vol. 50, c. 996.]

The result was that Birmingham Conservatives could cut the rate by 10 per cent.—

Mr. Corbett: It did them no good.

Mr. Straw: Indeed, it did them no good. I shall come to that point in a moment.

They could cut the rate by 10 per cent., despite budgeting for an increase in expenditure of, as it turned out, £40 million, or 12 per cent. In that year, Birmingham alone—if anyone suggests that I am wrong to maintain that there was a fiddle, he should consider this—took 19 per cent. of the increase in target available for the entire country. That was made clear in a reply given on 21 December 1983.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) asserted, the bribe did not work and the electors of Birmingham tipped out the Tories in the municipal elections in May 1984. Birmingham has been punished by the Government ever since for so doing. The city was forced to increase its rate by 43 per cent. in 1985-86, despite increasing spending by only 6 per cent. half the increase in 1983-84 by the Conservatives. The Bill is part two of that punishment.

Birmingham is not the only authority which rightly is aggrieved by the way in which multipliers have been used. I have been in correspondence with the Minister about the London borough of Greenwich relating to a matter which deeply worries my hon. Friend the Member for Greenwich (Mr. Barnett) and which he has discussed with me in detail. I need not detain the House on the complexities of that issue, but I hope that—

Mr. Christopher Chope (Southampton, Itchen): Where is he?

Mr. Straw: The hon. Gentleman asks where my hon. Friend is. He sends his apologies and has asked me to raise the matter in his absence. I hope that the Under-Secretary of State will respond to the Greenwich issue when she replies.

There are many detailed objections to the Bill and its drafting which can be pursued in Committee, but four of them must be raised here. The first is retrospection. I do not deny the fact that Governments of all complexions sometimes consider it necessary to introduce retrospective legislation. We are promised a catalogue from the Under-Secretary of State when she replies. The present Government have one of the worst records of any Government for retrospective legislation. Retrospective legislation is, as the right hon. Member for Wanstead and Woodford said on the Second Reading of the War Damage Bill 1965—

Mr. Corbett: Where is he?

Mr. Straw: He has not sent his apologies to me. However, he said—and for once I am happy to quote his remarks with approval—that retrospective legislation was "a damned slippery slope". As I said in an intervention, it is no good the Minister pretending that there is a difference in principle between what happened in 1965 and what the Bill does. He spoke about "settled expectations", or whatever the phrase was. Those were the words he used today, but I remind him that the words he used were:

"Our proposition would maintain the status quo."—[*Official Report*, 10 April 1986; Vol. 95, c. 362.]

The idea that there is a status quo in rate support grant is a contradiction in terms, because there is no certainty from day to day. The Minister has taken back those words. Of course, the Bill changes Birmingham's rights retrospectively.

Mr. Waldegrave: I have not taken back anything. The hon. Gentleman is making heavy weather of this. If someone passed a law saying that his salary my salary or anyone else's salary for the past 10 years was to be cut by 5 per cent., and took away the money, that sort of retrospection would be deplorable; but if someone said, "Owing to a mistake by the computer, which has now been discovered, you should have been paid that much less, but we confirm what you have been paid," such retrospection, of the type contained in the Bill, is tolerable.

Mr. Straw: I am glad to hear that the Minister now accepts that, in both cases, the individuals or institution involved would end up with less than they thought. That is the connection between them.

Ms. Clare Short: Birmingham was shocked and worried by its previous rate support grant settlement. The city is in great difficulty and has received less money than it expected. That is universally agreed. Birmingham Labour Members have been on delegations to the Secretary of State. Let there be no doubt that the legal fight for £7 million was part of our enormous anxiety to get back some of the resources we considered were taken from us in that settlement. There is no argument about settled expectations being fulfilled; rather the reverse.

Mr. Straw: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. She makes the point again that the Bill will adversely change the expectations of Birmingham and several other authorities.

Ministers would be on better ground if they said that retrospective legislation which seeks to make lawful that which was previously unlawful is one thing—to put people in a better position than they were before. In the 18th century, there were plenty of examples of acts of indemnity which sought to do that. But to do the reverse, to make things unlawful which were previously lawful—to put people in a worse position—is not acceptable, and there would have to be strong grounds for doing it. Those grounds have not been adduced today.

The Government have become slap happy in the use of retrospective legislation. There have been examples in the Local Government Finance Act 1982 and the Local Government Act 1985 where the Government made unlawful grants to voluntary organisations from the GLC and the metropolitan counties, and in the Local Government Act 1986, where they changed the law relating to the sale of local authority mortgages after a due date when previously they had encouraged it. Of course, the new Secretary of State for the Environment, whom we welcome to the Front Bench tonight, has a good pedigree in retrospective legislation. His track record of overturning the courts' rulings is unsurpassed. We all remember what he did when the court found that what he had done on London Transport was unlawful. At least he waited until the court had made a decision. However, the Minister has,

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in a breathtaking way, announced, three days before the case was to go to court, that, no matter what the court decided, the Government would legislate to change the law.

Mr. Corbett: My hon. Friend is mistaken. The matter is much worse than he is describing. When the matter first went to court, the Department of the Environment caved in. It knew, when the Minister made his statement, that it had been acting illegally because its legal advice was to that effect, and it knew that it had no defence. It knew that it would surrender in court, and then the Government would change the law.

Mr. Straw: I stand corrected for being too soft on the Government.

A second objection is that the retrospection goes too wide. This point was raised in interventions to the Minister, and we shall have to deal with it again upstairs. I find it odd that, because in a particular case that affects the settlement this year the law has been found to be defective, Ministers believe that they have to change the law for every decision made back to 1980. The decision of the Law Lords in the case of O'Reilly *v.* Machman in 1983 was that decisions made by Ministers or public institutions could be challenged only under the judicial review procedure.

That decision caught the Labour party. It was pursuing a case in the Chancery division against the Boundary Commission and it would probably have won, with Vice-Chancellor Megarry's interest in the case, when the decision was suddenly announced and it had to take it through the judicial review procedure, where it lost, for a variety of reasons. Order 53 laid down time limits for taking issue with ministerial and other public decisions. There is no question about challenging the decisions of previous years. Even if there is a case for retrospection, the Bill goes too wide.

Thirdly, it leads to an undesirable increase of the power of the Secretary of State under clause 2.

Fourthly, it will deny Parliament information on which to base its decisions. Paragraph 8 has already been discussed in interventions. I have great personal respect for the Minister, but, on the experience of the past six years, we have to bear in mind that we should treat with a pinch of salt ministerial undertakings that they will be reasonable and take everything into account. If the Minister were in charge of the Government, that might be fine, but he has to think about the Secretary of State and the Treasury. The Treasury does not give a fig for undertakings given to the House. If it thinks that it can get away with something, it will try to do so. Paragraph 8 gives the Minister powers to give the House only that information that he thinks is desirable, and that is unacceptable.

The Government now find themselves in a bog of their own making by seeking, in successive years, further to control local authority spending in an undemocratic and impractical way. We now see that, for all the pain that has been inflicted on local authorities, Ministers are unable to work out what it has all been for. Before he was translated to the Department of Education and Science, the previous Secretary of State was reported as saying that he had had a look at this mad system and could not work out what it was there for.

Treasury Ministers, according to the usually authoritative *Financial Times*, are now questioning what this vast edifice of insanity is for. The newspaper says:

"Expenditure funded by the rates, rather than centrally, does not affect the public sector borrowing requirement.

Some Treasury officials also support this view and Mr. Nigel Lawson, the Chancellor, agrees that the Government's persistent rows with local councils over their finances are more political trouble than they are worth."

The Chancellor is right about that, if about nothing else. Although the Government have perceived that the system is mad and is doing nothing for them, they will not follow their perceptions through to a logical conclusion. If they had any sense, they would withdraw the Bill, destroy the rest of this appalling edifice, and start again.

This Bill is unworthy. By its unnecessary retrospection it shows scant regard by the Government for the rule of law and respect for the courts that they claim to hold so dear. The Bill denies the ratepayers of Birmingham £7 million, which is rightfully theirs, and further sours relations with local authorities. We shall oppose it.

8.5 pm

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): My colleagues and I shall also oppose the Bill for some of the reasons enunciated by the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw), and for other reasons. I shall state our objections to the Bill and then ask the Minister one or two questions on which he has not touched, although I do not criticise him for that.

As the House has heard, the announcement of this Bill was made to pre-empt the court hearing on the following Tuesday, as the Government had been told that the court was likely to find against them, which would undermine the basis of the last few years of rate support grant calculation. I understand the Minister's point that, if that decision had been upheld, there could have been many legal actions challenging all the rate support grant settlements and multipliers of many local authorities for several years. That could have brought in more uncertainty and more cost than would have doing something quickly.

Ms. Clare Short: I intervened in the Ministers's speech to make this point, although he did not react to it. Birmingham's view is that the judgment affects only caps and not safety measures. The language of the legislation is different in both cases. Caps have been set only in 1981-82 and 1986-87, so the Minister is exaggerating. The case for the Bill is weakened if this point is true, but the Minister did not answer it. No legislation on safety nets has been called into question, and that practice has been adopted much more frequently than have caps.

Mr. Hughes: The hon. Lady is right in the sense that two mechanisms have recently featured in the multiplier. One has come to be called the cap and the other the safety net. The hon. Lady is correct to say that Birmingham was advised that the probability was that the direct effect of the judgment would be only to challenge one of those, so that it would not have applied in more than certain cases for a limited number of years. The difficulty is that undermining the nature of ministerial calculations, which we have all criticised because they are plucked out of the air by the Government as their method of adjusting the formula, left open to others, whether they were ultimately vindicated or not, the possibility of challenging the multipliers in court, and being upheld. We do not know

about the result of that for sure, and we never shall. I accept that there was, however, a possibility that there might have been a substantial undermining of the system, but it might have been reduced to just one or two cases.

I understand, and I would be grateful if the Minister would confirm this, that four identified authorities stood to benefit in the same way as Birmingham had the Bill not come before us, rather than one, as had previously been thought. I understand that Nottingham was one of them, and that it became a well known and accepted fact between the Department and officials in the Nottingham city council. It would be helpful to know, because we have not talked about any example other than Birmingham, whether it was clear that certain other authorities fell in the same category.

It would be useful to clarify whether there are vested interests in the result of this legislation. If Birmingham and Nottingham will lose what they calculated they would gain, and if the total pool of money were always the same, other authorities will gain. I have received a briefing, as other hon. Members have, from the Association of London Authorities. It says that for them it will not be disadvantageous for the Bill to go through because London authorities will be the beneficiaries of the system as readjusted. If the pool is the same and if one is altering the formula by which it is distributed, inevitably there will be winners and losers. It would be fair both to the House and to local authorities if the Government were to tell us which authorities they were advised would have stood substantially to benefit, in the way that it was made clear that Birmingham would have benefited.

I was about to turn to the more important matter concerning retrospection when the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) intervened. Rather than that the Government should have to amend the law, thereby validating the payment of rate support grant and the multiplier formula and their right to use the multiplier since its introduction in the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980, it would have been possible to legislate to prevent any challenge on those matters, although the Birmingham case could have stood. There is some justice in an argument that acknowledges that the case is deficient, but that because money is limited the system must not be perpetually undermined and uncertainty increased.

One of local government's complaints is about uncertainty and the complexity of the system. It would be possible for the Government to agree to stop the clock and prevent any challenge, to say that after a certain time challenges cannot be made on certain grounds. That would have been a much less dangerous course for the Government to pursue rather than retrospectively to legislate generally. There are occasions when one can legislate retrospectively to correct something that has been to somebody's disadvantage, but it is completely different to legislate retrospectively when people have worked on the premise that they will obtain an advantage — in Birmingham's case £7 million — that they are then told they cannot have.

Ms. Clare Short: Will the hon. Gentleman give way again?

Mr. Hughes: There is a difference. I hope that the Minister will accept that if retrospection is acceptable in this case, the argument is invalid because this is retrospective legislation which will be to somebody's disadvantage. I give way to the hon. Lady.

Ms. Short: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way. He might like to know Birmingham's calculation. It thinks that the court ruling potentially affected 30 shire counties, 121 shire districts, eight metropolitan districts and one outer London borough. We are probably talking about £150 million. The low spending authorities were capped under the new settlement. That is the figure that Birmingham puts on the hon. Gentleman's proposition that nobody should be denied money retrospectively.

Mr. Hughes: That is helpful. Although local government financial legislation is technical, it is not at all technical to local government treasurers, and local government ratepayers are not concerned with technicalities. They are concerned about the services that are provided for them. Substantial amounts of money — perhaps one-tenth of the total budget, in terms of rate support grant from the Government — are involved.

I intend to make two or three further general points of criticism and then to ask a few questions. One of the complaints is that there is a perpetual moving of the goal posts relating to local government finance. If the rules are to be changed halfway through the planning process, it is horrendously difficult for anybody to plan ahead. There is a year-by-year allocation of funds. There is to be a recycling of money this year because of the new system. Furthermore, I understand that the preliminary announcement about next year's rate support grant will not be made in July, as has been the case in recent years, because of complications — including the one before us now. That makes it increasingly difficult for local authorities to plan their budgets. Local government says to central Government, "You are treating us unfairly. You set down a system. We go to court and we are upheld by the court. You then say that we cannot have our victory, and you perpetually change the rules. When we play by them and win by them, you tell us that that is unfair." That cannot be a fair balance.

We accept that the courts have a role to play if people feel that the law has been misinterpreted. Therefore it is unfair to local government to say that if it is clever enough, intelligent enough or needy enough to go to court and find ways round the law, that will be rendered unlawful, and the Government reserve the right to change the rules whenever they find that that is to their advantage.

The Bill purports to clarify the law. I do not believe that anybody can say that by this legislation the Government are fundamentally clarifying the law. Having started on the road of seeking to clarify the law and getting rid of penalties, I hope that under the new regime we shall be able to get to grips this year with the need to make local government finance clear so that local authorities can plan ahead. If the Minister takes on board the Chancellor's point that there is not now the same view in the Treasury about local government expenditure having a direct effect on general public expenditure, perhaps local government can be given the freedom and planning ability for which they have been clamouring for so long.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Is the hon. Gentleman seriously suggesting that this Government are in any way interested in making local authority finance

[Mr. Tony Banks]

clear? Is he not aware that this question has very little to do with economics but that it has a great deal to do with politics?

Mr. Hughes: My earlier intervention, which challenged the Government's plan to change schedule 1 to allow the Secretary of State to supply information under a new definition only if he thinks that such explanations are desirable, will, I hope, answer the hon. Gentleman's question. I have always believed that the view of the people in Marsham Street and their Ministers is to retain as much control as possible, to make everything as obscure as possible and to make life in local government as dependent upon central Government as possible. My party has long fought against that.

There have even been rebellions by Government Back-Benchers. They complain bitterly that the system is suspectible to gerrymandering. That complaint was made last year when the counties were screaming because London was getting more money. Why was that? It was because there were local government elections in London — as there were in Birmingham in 1983, although that did not do the Government much good there. The system is perpetually susceptible to gerrymandering. However, it did no good in London, as it did no good in Birmingham three years earlier.

That is why we must be suspicious and say to the Government that we want a categoric undertaking that in future we shall be given not one jot less of information than we are given now. If this legislation is passed, it will allow the Government to give considerably less information to local government than they do now. It also provides the Secretary of State with considerably greater powers than he currently enjoys.

The perpetual battle in this House is for the legislature to have more power over the Executive. However, the Government keep on insisting that they should have more and more power. When that power is abused, the Government immediately introduce new laws to change what the courts say is wrong.

My last point is that there are certain authorities — one of them, about which I am most concerned, is Avon — that are themselves concerned about whether their grant for the current year is to be redetermined. The Minister knows that an all-party deputation from Avon was due to meet the Secretary of State tomorrow afternoon. However, the meeting was postponed at the last minute by the Secretary of State, and no further date for the meeting has been set. That all-party delegation includes Conservative councillors. They had intended to ask the Secretary of State to redetermine Avon's grant, and they wished to be sure that this legislation would not impede that. They had done what everybody else was doing, and as they were supplied more information about their figures they realised that they were entitled to a substantial amount of money through a redetermined grant at a higher level, which would be to the advantage of the people of Avon.

I have specifically raised the case of Avon, but my question also applies more generally. Will the Minister assure me that nothing in the legislation will prevent Avon and other such authorities which have perfectly good grounds for arguing for a redetermination of grant, and were led to believe by the Government that that was possible, from, first, being able to argue the case and, secondly, from being able to have that redetermination? I also ask the Minister for a specific undertaking that the postponed meeting with the all-party Avon delegation will be rescheduled in the near future so that it can put its case, have it listened to sympathetically and possibly benefit from the Government's response.

The House is becoming used to many debates each year on local government finance — rate support grant preliminary announcements, actual announcements, supplementary announcements, correcting announcements and matters being put right after appeals to courts when the Government have misunderstood their own legislation. As this is the first occasion under the regime of the new Secretary of State, I hope — although I have little grounds on the Government's record over the past seven years for doing so — that the Government will remember that without fundamental reform and clarification of the structure of local government there will be more and more such difficulties. The Government are lying on a bed of nails of their own making, but those who really suffer are, tragically, not the Ministers in Whitehall but those trying to run our local authorities and who have a very difficult job under current Government policies.

8.21 pm

Mr. Michael Portillo (Enfield, Southgate): I have some sympathy with the closing remarks of the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) when he called for a more simplified system. After many years of unchallenged operation of the law on block grant multipliers, it has now been challenged, found to be defective and different from what we had assumed, which leaves the Government with the practical problem of what to do about it.

The hon. Gentleman acknowledged that the uncertainty caused by the court case could be widespread and could undermine the system back to 1981. Although it is possible to hold different views on that, the Government must recognise that there is uncertainty. The hon. Gentleman also said that the matter did not relate only to Birmingham, although it is understandable that many Birmingham Members are present this evening to put their views.

There was a little inconsistency in the hon. Gentleman's comments. For example, although he said that uncertainty was damaging to local government, he did not make clear his proposals to deal with that. I am not sure whether I agree that capping the challenges to courts would be better than retrospective legislation, even though that can cause great disquiet. The hon. Gentleman suggested that we should allow Birmingham's case and make sure that there were no further challenges, but I am not sure that, as a matter of principle, that is the better solution.

Mr. Simon Hughes: I thought that by a combination of that process and adjustment in the coming year it would be a matter for the future that would not involve the unravelling of the whole package for four or five previous years.

Mr. Portillo: I understand that, and I share the hon. Gentleman's views on retrospective legislation. However, later in my speech I shall explain why, on this occasion, I think that the Government are right.

I unfortunately missed the Minister's statement on 10 April because I was helping the excellent Conservative

candidate in Fulham on that day. I was sorry that I was not here, because I was not able to enjoy the remarks of the hon. Members for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) and for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), and those of hon. Members representing several Birmingham constituencies. I use the word "enjoy" advisedly, because when a Government operate a law that is challenged in the courts and found to be otherwise than what was supposed, it is a cause of considerable mirth and enjoyment on the Opposition Benches. Some years ago I worked in the Conservative research department, supporting the then Conservative Opposition. I remember how very much we enjoyed those occasions when the Labour Government ran foul of the courts.

On 10 April the hon. Member for Blackburn did not disappoint us — he was clearly enjoying himself. He referred to

"a serious constitutional issue — a bare-faced attempt by the Government to interfere with the judicial process." [*Official Report*, 10 April 1986; Vol. 95, c. 360.]

Today, his remarks did not follow in the same vein. The intervening weeks have moderated his tone.

When the Conservative party was in opposition we had all sorts of opportunities to enjoy ourselves, and we certainly did. For example, when the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) was Secretary of State for Trade he found himself in the unfortunate position of having revoked licences granted by the Civil Aviation Authority to Laker Airways for a low-fare service between London and New York. On appeal, the High Court ruled that he had acted beyond the powers conferred upon him by the Civil Aviation Act 1971. In December 1976 the Court of Appeal overturned the appeal of the Department of Trade. Lord Denning, who was then Master of the Rolls, said that there came a time when the courts had to declare that a Minister of the Crown had exceeded his powers. On that occasion Mr. John Nott said:

"at least one Socialist Minister accepts that the rule of law applies to Labour Ministers as well as to every other citizen of this country." [*Official Report*, 14 February 1977; Vol. 926, c. 32.]

Lord Mulley, when he was Secretary of State for Education and Science, was unfortunate enough to interfere with the Conservative-controlled Tameside authority in Greater Manchester. He was taken to court and found to have been unreasonable in his actions. Lord Denning referred to him as having misdirected himself on whether it was unreasonable for Tameside to retain some form of selective education.

The right hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Jenkins), when he was Home Secretary, found himself in some difficulty over television licences. Some people had bought new licences at the old rate after the new rate had been announced, which was perfectly legal. However, the right hon. Gentleman refused to accept that and threatening letters were sent to people demanding payment at the new rate on the pain of having their licences revoked. The ombudsman stepped in, reported that there had been muddle and inefficiency in the handling of the cases by both the Home Office and the Post Office, and the right hon. Gentleman was forced to apologise. The Court of Appeal decided that his attempt to revoke licences was unlawful, invalid and had no effect. That was the case of Congreve *v.* The Home Office and was reported in *The Times* on 4 December 1975. On that occasion my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesham and Amersham (Sir I. Gilmour) weighed into the debate and said that it was the first time a Home Secretary had been

"censured by the Ombudsman for maladministration and then condemned by the Court of Appeal for contravening the Bill of Rights." [*Official Report*, 8 December 1975; Vol. 902, c. 235.]

Mr. Waldegrave: May I remind my hon. Friend of one other case? Does he remember when the former Labour Prime Minister, now Lord Wilson, threatened to revoke dog licences, and all his colleagues started yapping at the same time? Was that another example of the revocation of licences?

Mr. Portillo: I remember that case, although my hon. Friend will forgive me if I say that I had not thought of including it in this particular catalogue.

This is not the first time that a Government have found themselves in difficulties with the way that the law stood, despite its interpretation.

Mr. Terry Davis: Can the hon. Gentleman tell us from memory, or as a result of his researches, whether the Labour Governments of those times introduced Bills in the House of Commons to revoke people's licences, and so forth?

Mr. Portillo: The hon. Gentleman anticipates my remarks, or perhaps I anticipated his intervention. I shall come to that point shortly.

I am not suggesting that the hon. Member for Blackburn, whose remarks of 10 April I have already quoted, is the first Opposition spokesman to go over the top in criticising a Government who find themselves in this position. Nor am I saying that those Labour Ministers — the Home Secretary, the Secretary of State for Education and Science and the Secretary of State for Trade — were in any way acting dishonourably. They were clearly interpreting the law as they saw it. They were certainly doing things with which I strongly and wholeheartedly disagree, but I am sure they were honourable in interpreting the law as they saw it, and I am sure also that they were acting in accordance with the advice that they were given, which I am sure was given in good faith by the officials who were paid to give that advice.

Mr. Tony Banks: Does the hon. Gentleman recall that when the GLC introduced its "Fares Fair" policy and thought that it was operating under the Transport (London) Act 1969, unfortunately, as a result of the Bromley court case, it was revealed that it was not doing so, and the Prime Minister refused point blank to introduce any legislation to enable that council to carry on in a lawful manner? There seems to be one law for a Government and another for a local council.

Mr. Portillo: I do not share the hon. Gentleman's familiarity with that case. I remember it dimly, and I feel sure that there are a number of points which he may have rather selectively failed to make about it. I am in some danger of wearing your patience rather thin, Mr. Deputy Speaker, so may I return to the case in point?

We are discussing a rather special and particular case, because we are not dealing with a single administrative act, which I think we were doing in the three examples that I have quoted, which dealt with television licences, a licence to an airline and a problem which had arisen with a local education authority. In this case my hon. Friend the

[Mr. Portillo]

Minister has run into a problem with a practice which has been going on over five or six years. During that time there have been frequent opportunities to question that practice. There have been frequent references to block grant multipliers in the House. Annual rate support grant reports have been made available to the House. The hon. Member for Blackburn could not be accused by any hon. Member of being anything but assiduous in the way in which he conducts his duties, but, as far as I am aware, he has not campaigned actively over a period of five or six years on this issue, saying that the Government have got the law wrong and that it is clear that the thing should not operate in this way. He has not, as far I know, been stirring up local authorities, which might have a grievance, to take the matter to court, to make sure that the law was tested and to bring the matter back to the House if further legislation was necessary.

As far as I know, the hon. Gentleman, like the rest of us, has woken up to this rather late in the day. Indeed, he rather gave himself away when he said that my hon. Friend the Minister's statement appeared on the Annunciator on 10 April 1986. It was clear from the way in which he referred to it that he had been taken entirely by surprise. So far from campaiging, or feeling a great grievance on the issue, he and his hon. Friends were not aware that the point had arisen at all. For five or six years they acquiesced in an understanding of how the law operated.

Mr. Patrick Thompson (Norwich, North): Does my hon. Friend agree that the reason why hon. Members on both sides of the House did not wake up to the fact over many years is that the complexity of the matters surrounding the rate support grant is notorious? It is well known that the number of people who understand it is so few that it is difficult to find them.

Mr. Portillo: My hon. Friend is characteristically kind to the Opposition, and he is right to be so. I started that passage of my speech by saying that I made no criticism whatever of the assiduous way in which the hon. Member for Blackburn approaches his duties.

Once we have got over the bogus indignation that has been expressed by the Opposition, once we have got over the exaggerated mirth, which I understand, with which the Opposition have greeted the sight of a certain amount of egg on the faces of a few Ministers, there is the serious matter of what should be done. I share with the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey, and certain other hon. Members, a natural dislike of retrospective legislation. It is right that we in the House should be suspicious of that, but the principle that we dislike retrospective legislation cannot be applied entirely without regard to the particular circumstances.

The particular circumstances in this case are that since 1981 there has been a common perception of how the law stood. All the years in which the block grant multipilier has applied it has been determined, settled and closed. In one particular year one particular local authority thought that it was doing badly out of the system and challenged it. It did so successfully in the sense that the law has been shown to be flawed, but it would be absurd to suggest from that that the whole shooting match should now be undone. It is not at all clear to me in whose interests that would be. It cannot even be clear to any local authority in whose interests that would be, because the calculations are simply too complicated for us to work out who would stand to gain or lose. However, I am sure that the chaos which would ensue would be in no one's interest.

It is interesting that the hon. Members for Southwark and Bermondsey and for Blackburn both referred to the difficult situation in which local authoritites find themselves anyway, operating in a situation of uncertainty. Therefore, I am sure that on consideration both those hon. Gentlemen will feel that they would not wish that the uncertainty be made even greater. Indeed, I think that the hon. Member for Blackburn said something to the effect that a certain amount of retrospection would be justified in this case

Mr. Straw: No.

Mr. Portillo: I am sorry if have misquoted the hon. Gentleman. I thought that he was coming close to saying that there might be some case for retrospection, but that he thought it went too widely.

Mr. Straw: I think that the record will show tomorrow morning that I said no such thing.

Mr. Portillo: We shall rely on the record, and if I have misquoted the hon. Gentleman I shall apologise to him unreservedly.

It cannot seriously be wished by anyone that uncertainty and chaos should be the result. It is for that reason that I am pleased to give my support to the Government on this occasion. However, I want to return to the point made by the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey that simplification of the system is desirable. I do not think that there is any disagreement on that. My hon. Friend the Minister has said that he wishes the matter to be simplified, and I know that that will be forthcoming in due course. All I can say is, the sooner the better.

8.37 pm

Mr. Terry Davis (Birmingham, Hodge Hill): The Minister began by describing the Bill as dealing with a most complicated matter. I agree with that point, but the issues involved are straightforward in fact. Before dealing with those issues, I must first deal with two of the Minister's points which I regard as red herrings.

First, the hon. Gentleman referred to the system having been introduced to limit grants as a result of overspending. Birmingham city council, whether Conservative or Labour, has never overspent. On the contrary, under both the Labour party and the Conservative party, it has kept within the rules. I repeat that it has always played the game according to the rules.

The second red herring referred to "settled expectations". There were never any settled expectations in Birmingham about the present level of the rate support grant. From the beginning — indeed, before the rate support grant was announced — Members of Parliament from Birmingham went on deputations to see the Secretary of State for the Environment to complain about the way in which Birmingham was being treated as a result of the consultation announcements and the information which the city council had gleaned from the local authority associations. We complained to the Secretary of State then, and we continued to complain, about the way in which Birmingham was being treated. At no time did the city council or Birmingham Members of Parliament accept

that the city was being treated fairly, and at no time did we accept the settlement as announced by the Secretary of State.

Turning to the real point, I must tell the Minister that he has clearly not understood the depth of feeling among Birmingham Members of Parliament and the Birmingham public over what we regard as a grossly unfair decision. I refer not to the decision about the amount of the RSG but to the decision to introduce this Bill tonight. It is a most unfair piece of legislation.

The point about retrospection is simply another of the Minister's red herrings. Indeed, the hon. Member for Enfield, Southgate (Mr. Portillo) has also misunderstood the point. No one is questioning the RSG settlement for previous years. We are advised that it is unnecessary for two reasons to introduce a Bill in order to leave those settlements untouched. The hon. Member for Southgate has obviously not appreciated that caps — as distinct from safety nets — have only applied in two years. No one has raised the question of the use of multipliers for safety nets. The only issue has been the use of the multiplier for caps. Yet the cap has applied in only two years — 1981-82 and the current year, 1986-87.

Mr. John Watts (Slough): Can the hon. Gentleman give an undertaking that no authority would wish to challenge the use of multipliers for safety nets? That is the contingency against which this Bill must provide. The fact that only caps have been challenged in the courts thus far is no guarantee that there will never be a challenge over the use of safety nets.

Mr. Davis: If the Government are concerned about being challenged in future about the use of multipliers for safety nets or caps, they can introduce a Bill to deal with the future. I object not so much to the introduction of a Bill to deal with future years as to moving the goalposts this year. I will come to that point in a moment, but first I want to emphasise that there cannot be a challenge to the rate support grant settlements of previous years.

The Minister had no answer earlier to the legal point that I raised. I look forward to a reply from his hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State. We are advised that, as a general principle of public law, the determinations of rate support grants are treated in all respects as valid unless challenged speedily and within the time applicable for a judicial review. That was established in the case of O'Reilly *v.* Mackman in 1983. At present, there are no outstanding challenges to any previous year's RSG settlement — the only year in question is 1986-87 — so it is not open to any aggrieved local authority to go to court and to ask for a judicial review for previous years. That is water under the bridge and a local authority could not do that, even if it wished to do so. That is a matter of fact. Thus, the Bill is unnecessary in respect of previous years.

As for the future, the Opposition might disagree with or vote against a Bill that introduced the use of multipliers in this way for safety nets or caps, but that is not the main challenge to the Government tonight. Our objection to this Bill is that it deals with 1986-87. That is what is unfair. Birmingham city council went to court and obtained a decision in its favour and against the Department of the Environment. In court, counsel for the Department of the Environment admitted that the Department had acted illegally. Now the Government want to change the law, and that is what is unfair. That is what we object to. It is a matter not simply of retrospection but of changing the rules.

The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) referred to moving the goalposts. In this case, Birmingham city council scored a goal, and then it was announced that the goalposts had been moved. The objectionable thing is that the goalposts were moved after we had scored. Perhaps I can put it another way. If a footballer knocks the ball into the net with his hand, instead of heading it in — we can all think of examples like that — and the referee blows his whistle and discounts the goal, the football authority does not then say that it will change the rules. It will not say that it was a goal. Indeed, if that happened, we would all say that it was grossly unfair. Yet that is how the Government have behaved. That is what the Government are doing, and I am amazed that any democratic Government should behave in that way.

The hon. Member for Southgate did not respond to my intervention as to whether Labour Ministers had changed the rules in this way. I do not believe that the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Jenkins), for example, changed the law so that he could revoke those television licences. We do not expect Governments of any party to behave like that when dealing with the rights of individuals or of citizens collectively.

I shall deal with the remarks of the hon. Member for Slough (Mr. Watts) in a moment, but I shall give way first to the hon. Member for Southgate.

Mr. Portillo: In the case of television licences, a limited number of people were affected for a limited number of weeks. But in this instance the law was thought to be one thing for five or six years. Although the hon. Gentleman and the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) have argued strongly that the advice received by them is that this does not unstitch the whole package, we cannot rely on that advice. The whole package may be unstitched, and that is why we need to make the situation clear.

Mr. Davis: If, for the purpose of argument, the Government said that they did not want any doubts or any uncertainty or any more court cases covering the years from, say, 1981 to 1985, and if they said that they could not reopen the question of all the RSG settlements made in the past, there might be a certain amount of mirth, teasing and even opposition, but the argument would be qualitatively different.

In this instance, a council went to court and challenged this year's RSG. It succeeded and obtained a judgment saying that it was right, and that the Secretary of State for the Environment had been acting illegally. It even obtained a judgment that the Secretary of State should pay the council's costs. Yet, despite that, the Secretary of State and his junior Ministers have introuduced a Bill to change the rules. That is wrong.

I have an example that should be fresh in the memory of the hon. Members for Southgate and for Slough. I believe that both of them serve on the Finance Bill Committee. As good attenders, they will remember that the Government moved a new clause in Committee only 12 days ago designed to deal with the taxation of golden handshakes. After all, this Rate Support Grant Bill is not the only example of messy draftsmanship. In 1981, the

[Mr. Davis]

Government introduced a change in the taxation arrangements for golden handshakes. We are talking about the tax levied on very big golden handshakes — the sort given not to people in the city of Birmingham but to those in the City of London. The Government agreed that a special tax should be imposed on handshakes in excess of £50,000. However, it recently came to light that they had made a mess of the legislation. The Government rightly said that they would have to change the law. The Labour party supported the original introduction of that tax and also agreed that the law should now be changed. Thus, at a very late stage the Government have added a clause to this year's Finance Bill; but they have not said that they will collect all the tax that they thought they would collect. They have not said that they would get the tax back from those few hundred people whom the *Financial Times* estimated had escaped £10 million of tax. The Treasury rightly said that it would have to pay that. Indeed, it is going further than that. Those who should not have paid tax will be encouraged to apply for a refund. The Government are going to advertise saying, "Come and get your money back." Correctly, the Government are paying the cost of the mistake estimated by the *Financial Times* to be over £10 million, but wrongly they are legislating to take £7 million away from 1 million citizens in Birmingham. That is objectionable. The Government are changing the rules. In Birmingham that action is seen to be close to cheating or legalised robbery.

When the Conservatives were in opposition they made great play of what the present Lord Chancellor called "elective dictatorship". Now the Conservatives in government say that if they make a mistake there is no point in bothering to go to court because they will introduce another Bill to take away the court's decision. That is truly an elective dictatorship.

Conservative Members will be whipped into the Lobbies tonight to support the Government and to support legislation which is grossly unfair. Indeed, it comes close to cheating. The Bill is both shabby and squalid. Conservative Members should be ashamed of voting for it.

8.51 pm

Mr. Patrick Thompson (Norwich, North): I shall certainly support the Bill because it is common sense that one must regularise the law to bring about something which is already a de facto occurrence. I shall not be misled by the hon. Member for Birmingham, Hodge Hill (Mr. Davis) who over-emphasised his case.

The Bill validates the distribution of rate support grant and clarifies or amends the law on rate support grant. With respect to parliamentary draftsmen and others, I have to say that on my reading of the Bill I cannot regard it as a clarification. However, I defer to those who are more expert than me, and I shall continue on another occasion my campaign for plainer English in legislation. I hope that the Bill will prove to be a clarification of the law, and I shall comment on the effect that block grant determinations will have on my constituency. The Bill directs the arrangements and they will have an effect in Norfolk.

My constituents are affected by Norfolk county council and by two district authorities — Broadland district council and Norwich city council. I am in a unique position to see the anomalies caused by the complexity of the rate support grant system. Broadland district council is well known as being one of the lowest spending local authorities in East Anglia. Norwich city council has a different reputation and is controlled by the Labour party. That is a distinction that I recognise more than do many of my hon. Friends.

The result of recent rate support grant decisions was as follows. In Labour-controlled Norwich, business and domestic ratepayers face an increase from 184·7p to 211·9p. In Tory-controlled Broadland the increase is from 159·1p to 187·8p. That means that although the settlement had an adverse effect on the lower-spending Norfolk and Broadland district councils, business and domestic ratepayers benefit most from Tory control.

I can illustrate that. A business in Norwich this year faces an increase of 14·7 per cent. A total of 19 per cent. of that is due to the county rate increase, whereas zero per cent. is due to the lack of change in the rates announced by Norwich city council.

Let us compare that with what happens in Cambridge. A business there faces a rate increase of 30·4 per cent. double that of Norwich. The county — under alliance control — is responsible for 33 per cent. of that increase and the city for 9 per cent. Nationally, it is evident that hung councils, or councils under alliance or any other Opposition control, impose higher rates and spend more, to the disadvantage of business and industry. It is becoming apparent that alliance councillors in Norwich and Broadland are pressing for more spending, so that the situation I have described will become even more serious in future.

The low spending shire counties had a raw deal in the rate support grant settlement because of the change in the formula in favour of the inner cities. With my East Anglian colleagues I resisted that change. We fought hard, and continue to fight, for the lower spending councils. Norwich city council received a generous settlement and was well placed to reduce rates, if it had been so minded.

Some correspondence has taken place between my hon. Friends and the Under-Secretary of State. I have letters about Norfolk county council and Norwich city council to which I shall refer briefly. One letter says:

> "In 1985/86 Norfolk budgeted to spend £225·416m and therefore received £92·705m in grant. In 1986/87 they would have received £89·370m in grant if they had increased their expenditure by 3·4 per cent., i.e. the settlement spending assumption. This slight reduction in grant of £3·335m is mainly due to the reduction in the overall amount of central money available to support local authority spending. Norfolk also lose slightly from changes made to the Government's methodology for assessing a standard need for spending on services."

I could read more from the letter, but that would try your patience even further, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Having read that explanation, it is still no clearer to me why Norfolk ratepayers face a 19 per cent. increase this year. The *Eastern Daily Press* dated 14 June carries an article headed "County careful spenders." The article states:

> "Norfolk County Council services are among the most economical in the country, according to an independent report published yesterday."

My point is simple. If that is so, it is difficult to reconcile it to the way in which the recent rate support grant settlement has worked for Norfolk. I shall not develop that further, but will refer to what is happening in Norwich, one of the two district councils. According to my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State,

"Norwich budgeted to spend £10·253 million, and therefore received £2·019 million in grants. In 1986-87, the following year, it would have received £2·921 million in grant if they had increased their expenditure by 3·4 per cent. in line with the settlement spending assumption. This increase in grant of £0·902 million is mainly due to the new assessments of the standard need for spending on services. (Grant Related Expenditure). Norwich's gain from this is partially offset by the effects of the reduction in the amount of central government money available to support local authority spending and the introduction of new grant mechanisms".

The layman — I include myself — finds it difficult to ascertain exactly what this all means for Norfolk, Norwich city council or Broadland district council. I remain convinced of two main points, however. First, Tory-controlled authorities spend carefully, which leads to low rates, while alliance and Labour-controlled authorities lead to pressures for high spending and high rates. Secondly, I am convinced that there is a strong case — I shall deploy it whenever the opportunity arises — for giving a fairer deal to authorities that try their utmost to contain their spending and to eliminate waste. I accept that there is waste in Norfolk county council spending and in Broadland district council spending, but at least they are making some attempt to contain wasteful spending, and more account should be taken of that.

There is no doubt that the system of GREAs and targets is already discredited. I have a letter dated 28 January from the then Secretary of State for the Environment, my right hon. Friend the Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker). It states:

"the unstable and complex way in which Government grants are paid, which obscures local accountability".

That is not a complete sentence, but it makes the point that the system is discredited. In future, there must be greater incentive for councils to spend carefully and wisely. Local government finance desperately needs reform, and for a number of reasons. For example, many of us who are interested in education are concerned about the effect of local government finance on the workings of the education system.

I hope that this evening my hon. Friend the Minister will give the House an assurance that active consideration is being given to a simpler and fairer system of local government finance as foreshadowed in the Green Paper. Let us hope that that is merely a start. It is my hope that from there we shall try to simplify the system to make it better and fairer, especially as it affects my constituents in Norwich, North.

9.2 pm

Ms. Clare Short (Birmingham, Ladywood): The Bill is all about the Government legalising what would otherwise be illegal underpayment of moneys. For example, the Government owe Birmingham £7 million. When discussing local government finance we talk about so many millions of pounds and billions and it might not be appreciated how large the sums really are. For example, the House will be authorising tonight the loss of £7 to every man, woman and child who lives in Birmingham. That is what it is all about. Birmingham is suffering badly, and £7 for every man, woman and child is a large sum overall. The effect of removing that money from Birmingham is that many people have lived in enormously grotty housing. There are many homes that have black mould on the walls, and we know that this has an effect on children's lungs and their breathing.

Conservative Members really are mice. Other authorities which have suffered as a result of the underpayment are almost all Tory controlled. The authorities which have been so affected do not come within the exaggerated argument that has been advanced by the Government and by Conservative Back Benchers who, presumably, have been briefed by them. They have not been in that position as a result of the rate support grant settlements over the past five or six years. I am talking instead about the effect of the cap. We cannot go back to the 1981-82 cap because of the legal authority which was referred to by my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Hodge Hill (Mr. Davis). This means that we are talking about the effect of the cap this year.

It should be understood that there has been a change in the way in which money is allocated by central Government to local government this year. The policy used to be "You cannot spend more than you always spent in the past and there will be a penalty if your expenditure increases, whatever the level of that expenditure, with no objective standard of fairness being applied." There has been a move to try to achieve an objective standard so that everyone is in an equal position according to the needs of the various areas. That means that traditionally low-spending authorities, most of which are Tory controlled Tories tend not to attend to the public spending needs of those who live in their areas, but the list, to our shame, includes Birmingham — stand to gain under the change in the formula, and the cap is all about restricting the speed at which they gain.

Birmingham is suffering and the other authorities which are suffering are Tory controlled. They are the same Tory authorities that screamed when the settlement was made. The shire counties and others were screaming because they said that they were being penalised to help the inner cities. That is a joke. Birmingham is the largest area of poverty and squalor in western Europe, yet we were told that the previous RSG would help the inner cities. Birmingham has more inner city areas than anywhere else in the country, yet it is being penalised and hurt by the RSG settlement.

Conservative Members who are not in the Chamber do not do the work, do not know or do not dare to criticise their Government. They fail to represent the interests of the authorities, which would stand to gain if the Government did not legislate in such a retrospective way. It is a fairly limited group of authorities — a maximum figure of £150 million is involved — and where are Conservative Members? The mice are not here. They will not even protest on behalf of the people who live in their areas. A large proportion of Labour Members from Birmingham have been and are present in the Chamber tonight.

Let us not let the Government off the hook by the pretence that somehow, if the Bill is not passed, the whole of the past 10 years of rate support grant settlements will be unravelled. That is false and misleading. It is wrong for anyone to suggest that that is the case. Let us put that decision and the legislation in context in terms of the Government's strategy on local authority spending.

The Government were elected in 1979 on a promise to cut public expenditure and to cut taxes. They have failed on both counts. Taxes are up. More taxation is being paid now than was paid in 1979. Central Government expenditure is up significantly. It is up most significantly because unemployment is up so massively. Unemployment

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is costly in terms of dole money, lost production and taxes and national insurance that the unemployed would pay if they were in work. Central Government spending is also up for defence and law and order, although we live with more crime and uncertainty than ever before in my lifetime.

The answer that the Government give to deal with the absolute failure of their economic strategy is to pass the buck to someone else. They have said to local authorities, "You will make the cut. You can keep our promises for us. You might have been elected on other manifestos and on promises to improve the quality of public services in your area, but it is too bad, we will stop you. We will change the law and fiddle the formula so that you cannot do what you promised, and so that we can pretend we are keeping in line with our promises."

All that is hidden under a smokescreen of pretence of extremism and excess in Labour local authorities. They are all full of loony Lefties spending masses of money on unnecessary things. Birmingham gives the lie to that. Birmingham is a low-spending authority, and it is being penalised by the legislation, which shows just how clearly the Government are looking for scapegoats, looking to pass the buck and looking to blame local authorities for the failures of their own economic strategies.

There are many ways in which Birmingham and low-spending Tory authorities which are not represented here tonight are being penalised. I shall run through those penalties briefly. As I have said, the Government have changed the rate support grant formula and moved away from a system of preventing growth — wherever the starting point was arbitrarily in previous years—to some kind of objective assessment of need throughout the country. Under this changed formula, Birmingham is being underpaid by £43 million. If £7 million is a lot for the people of Birmingham, £43 million is an awful lot for a city that is suffering desperately from the effects of a massive rise in unemployment and poverty.

The Government have taken powers and are using the cap and the safety net to phase in the introduction of the changed system so as not to allow cities such as Birmingham suddenly to have an increase of £43 million and to prevent other places from losing rapidly. The r j 108measure of Birmingham's objective need and loss is £43 million. That is bad enough, but the Government did not even use an objective calculation in deciding how to phase that change. They fiddled the figures. They fiddled Birmingham out of £7 million.

Birmingham took the Government to court, which said, "That is right, it is a fiddle. There is no objective foundation. It is not in line with the words of the legislation. That £7 million should not be taken away from Birmingham." The Government are trying to legalise that fiddle. That is no exaggeration. Birmingham has suffered the loss of £7 million and £43 million as a result of the Government's underpayment, on their own figures, of need.

I refer also to the scandal and the effect of the abolition of the West Midlands county council. It was claimed that it would save money, yet it has hurt Birmingham. The cost of the services transferred to Birmingham is £43 million, and the increased allocation to Birmingham to pay for those services is £6 million. We shall face an inevitable rates increase simply to maintain the services of the West Midlands county council. That is another of the problems imposed by the Government on Birmingham, with all their fiddling of local authorities, trying to pass the buck and blaming them for the failure of their economic strategy.

Birmingham faces another problem. It has not had a rating revaluation since 1973. It has suffered savagely since 1979 because of the Government's economic policy of destroying Britain's manufacturing base. Birmingham is a manufacturing city and our capacity to pay rates has been massively reduced by increased poverty. It is assumed that our rateable values are higher than they are and that we can afford to pay amounts that we really cannot afford. The Government give us no relief but simply introduce special legislation to take away the £7 million that is owed to us under current legislation.

If we enter into the technicalities of the formula we can find worse defects, and I am sure that hon. Members will do so in Committee. Because of the way in which the Government have set the multiplier, if it overshoots at all, Birmingham — low-spending authority that it is — will suffer more than most other big cities which are spending more and looking after their people better. For example, a £1 million increase in spending in Birmingham would cost the city in penalty £1·08 million, whereas Sheffield —a city which spends well and has been complimented by the auditors on running itself efficiently—would lose only £280,000. It appears that there is a conspiracy against Birmingham, perhaps to penalise it for not having reacted to the bribe in the rate support grant in 1983-84 and for having dared to elect a Labour council.

The effect of all this on a city with the greatest geographic area of poverty in western Europe is that the Ladywood ward in the Ladywood constituency, which was redeveloped in the 1950s and 1960s, has maisonettes and tower blocks which were badly built and not properly insulated. There is a danger of pieces of those buildings falling on people as they walk along the streets. The black mould on those flats and maisonettes, which has grown because of the lack of insulation, affects the lungs of my constituents. In that part of Birmingham, a disproportionate number of children go into and out of hospital because of the effect on their lungs. There is not enough money in Birmingham to do anything about it. That is the effect of this measure and of the other cuts imposed on Birmingham. Some of my people live in squalor. Some of the children's lungs have been permanently damaged because there is not the money to put right the housing in which they live. Conservative Members should be ashamed of themselves for supporting this retrospective measure and for not being conscious of the real needs of our cities and people.

Mr. Corbett: Does my hon. Friend recall that at the present rate of improvement of degenerating housing stock in Birmingham, because of the limits on what the city is allowed to spend, it will take the city council 604 years to deal with the houses, let alone the flats and the tower blocks?

Today, the Paymaster General and Minister for Employment made a speech in Birmingham in which he told us how the Government's wonderful new task forces were helping the inner cities. He told us how they were implementing the strategy of ensuring that local labour was employed on urban renewal projects. We would support that in Handsworth, because it would mean some of our young black people could get jobs, but the truth is

that the right hon. and learned Gentleman gave a lie to the Birmingham people—there is no money any more for urban renewal. The only time that we had the money was when the Government gave the bribe. We had lots of enveloping and we built lots of walls. That was the period when none of our local young black people were employed in fixing up the houses in which they lived. We now get an announcement from the Government that they will get employment, but there is no money or projects to employ them. The Government have done very badly by the city of Birmingham in all the moves and changes they have made that I have described. The removal of the £7 million that belongs to us is a sordid marker of that history of neglect of our city.

9.15 pm

Mr. John Watts (Slough): This evening we have witnessed one of our periodical constitutional outrage, rituals. These occur whenever there is a timetable motion before the House or whenever there is anything that can be called retrospective legislation. I think that there has been overmuch protest from the Opposition about the retrospection involved in this measure. In reality this is a fairly modest little Bill, not a major constitutional outrage, and it does nothing more than make some small and necessary running repairs to the increasingly ramshackle structure of our rate support grant system, which has proved most unsatisfactory since it first came off the production line in 1980.

One of the major problems with the existing system of grants has been the lack of certainty over grant entitlement. I know from my own experience, as the leader of a large London authority for six years, how difficult it is to indulge in any sensible long-term financial planning when, as Opposition Members have said, the goalposts can be moved so quickly and so many times within one financial year. The proposal that we should not remedy this flaw in the statute which has been detected would be to make that worse.

There is clearly a dispute between my hon. Friends on the Front Bench and Opposition Members as to whether the effect of the judgment could be to upset all rate support grant settlements back to 1981. The hon. Member for Birmingham, Hodge Hill (Mr. Davis) gave us a categorical assurance that that is not the case because he had legal advice to that effect. I would say to the hon. Gentleman that all points of law are fixed and certain until they are challenged and overturned in court. I think that that could apply just as well to the advice he has received as it must apply to the advice which my hon. Friends in the Department of the Environment had in drafting the original legislation and in its application.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Would it not do more for the Goverment's credibility with local government — I respect the hon. Gentleman's involvement in it—if on a matter such as this the Government sought to agree with local government and the perfectly respectable associations for local authorities what the legal effects of certain things would be instead of seeking to draft legislation behind their own closed doors resulting in alienation and a conflict of opinion with local government which they should be seeking to serve?

Mr. Watts: There are certain attractions in that idea. I think that the major flaw would be that there would be no way in which the associations of local authorities could bind their individual member authorities not to pursue whatever rights they thought they had through the courts. I remind the hon. Gentleman that local authorities have operated within the Government's understanding of the law for six years. It was not until this year that there had been any challenge to the use of caps, even though, as the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) reminded us, caps were also applied in 1981. Therefore, I am in favour of a more co-operative attitude between central and local government, but I do not believe that that can provide the solution in an instance such as this because there could be no way of binding all authorities to observe any agreement which might have been reached.

I accept the advice of my hon. Friend the Minister that previous years' settlements could be in doubt even though I would acknowledge that perhaps he is relying on the same legal advice as his predecessors relied upon in drafting the original Bill. Therefore, that advice may also be defective. However, on balance, I am prepared to accept my hon. Friend's advice and accept that there is a need for us to remedy this flaw in the law. After all, the Bill does no more than to confirm the situation as authorities thought it to be for six years.

The hon. Member for Hodge Hill drew an interesting analogy with the sad outcome of the England-Argentina football match last night, but he drew the wrong conclusion from it. As I see it, the situation that we face in local government finance is that, for six years, everyone has known that one cannot score a goal by bashing the ball in with one's hand, but suddenly in one match along comes a player, in this case Birmingham, who bangs the ball into the net by hand and appeals to the referee, and the latter says "Yes, that is a goal." The purpose of the legislation is to restore the rules of football as we thought they were, that one cannot score a goal by bashing the ball in by hand.

The need for the Bill provides further proof of the inadequacies of the present system. Let me mention just one of its absurdities. My Labour-controlled borough council of Slough was rewarded for having increased the borough rate by 300 per cent., from 5p in the pound in 1983 to 20p in the pound in 1985, by an increase in its rate support grant from £1·6 million to £4·6 million in the current year. I had to applaud the generosity of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on behalf of the minority of my constituents who are ratepayers, although, regrettably, only part of that beneficence was passed back to the ratepayers to whom it belonged. None the less, I could not try to defend the logic of a system that rewarded an authority that had been overspending, and increasing its spending at a rapid rate, particularly when that was at the expense of authorities that had sought to keep their expenditure under control, especially Conservative-controlled shire counties.

The present system is oversophisticated without being able to produce any sensible results. If, as some Opposition Members have argued, the system could be manipulated to reward the Government's political friends, I would criticise it less. If we could reward people who have the good sense to vote Conservative in general and local elections, perhaps such a system would have something to commend it. But the reality is that we have a system which, certainly this year, has rewarded the Conservative party's

[Mr. Watts]

enemies and penalised its friends. That is what I mean by a system that is oversophisticated but incapable of producing any sensible results.

Mr. Simon Hughes: The hon. Gentleman knows the fallacy of his argument. This year the system was used to try to reward people whom the Conservatives hoped would vote Conservative. They gave them the money and then they failed to respond. That shows how fallacious the hon. Gentleman's argument is.

Mr. Watts: If the hon. Gentleman looks at the figures for this year's settlement, he will see that the authorities that had most to gain in grant were those that were already under Labour control, not those that we were seeking to retain. However, perhaps we can pursue that matter on another occasion.

The system has also had the effect of weakening accountability because it has distorted the link between spending levels set by local authorities and the size of the rate bill that lands on the doormat. Therefore, there is an urgent need for the system to be swept away and replaced by something that would be cruder but much more readily understood. We must get away from oversophistication and go for something that is simple and certain.

The Green Paper entitled "Paying for Local Government" proposes that grant would be distributed mainly on a per capita basis. I recognise that that is not perfect, but by and large the costs that are involved in providing services are related to the total head count. In some cases, however, the major burden will be in supporting the elderly, and in other authorities it will be in providing services to the young. None the less, a per capita system would provide a fairly sensible way of distributing grant. Also, importantly, it is a system in which grant entitlement would be set before the beginning of the financial year and would not be changed, so that there could be sensible financial planning by local authorities.

Frankly, I would have preferred to see such proposals in the Bill rather than these minor running repairs which have, in the event, been presented to us. A patch here and there will hold the system together for a little while longer, but not for very much longer. Therefore, I hope that in the Gracious Speech this autumn we shall hear that the proposals to enact the changes set out in the Green Paper will be brought before us.

9.25 pm

Mr. David Clelland (Tyne Bridge): In view of the time that is available to me, I shall not try to emulate my predecessor, the late Harry Cowans, who, as the Minister implied in his opening address, had an ability to speak at great length on almost any subject. He was also very humorous.

In a recent statement to the House, the Minister referred to block grant multipliers as a complex, technical matter. That was one of many measures brought in by the Government to replace and simplify the present complex technical system of local government finance which contained such quaint features as multiple regression analysis. While "multipliers" might be a simpler expression than "multiple regression analysis", the system is no less complex than hitherto. Indeed, there are few, if any, who understand it in its entirety.

Apart from the complexity of the system, the number of changes brought about and their regularity over the past seven years has further complicated an already complex situation. It is not surprising, therefore, that, not for the first time, the Government have got it wrong and are now trying to correct the error by retrospective legislation. If this was being carried out purely in the interests of protecting councils from the damaging effects of the legal implementation of the new interpretation—it seems from what the Minister and others have said that there is some doubt about that—that, in itself, would be laudable. Even so, the Government would still stand condemned for making such a costly error in the first place and for abusing their legislative power by once again backdating the law.

The Government now intend not merely to rectify the error but to introduce new measures which further increase the already dictatorial powers of the Secretary of State and to deny Parliament and local authorities access to information which might clarify the reasons for the Secretary of State's decisions. For a Government who have recently introduced measures to allow access to information at local level, that smacks of hypocrisy of the first order. If it is fair and reasonable for local government to be open and accessible, and for people to have access to information held by local authorities, it is equally fair and reasonable for local authorities to have access to the information on which their rate support grant is calculated and the reasons behind the decisions taken by Ministers.

In paragraphs 8 and 9 of schedule 1 to the Bill, we see that the Secretary of State will be required to provide only "such explanation as the Secretary of State thinks desirable". The Minister said that the intention is not to reduce the present levels of explanation. I assume that the Minister is aware that the Secretary of State is already inclined to release only such information as he sees fit.

Newcastle upon Tyne city council has been trying for more than a year now to extract from the Secretary of State his reasons for refusing to grant disregards to the authority in respect of the years 1983-84, 1984-85 and 1985-86. As Member of Parliament for a Newcastle constituency, I have written to the Secretary of State asking for the information requested—the Minister is present and will recall it—only to be told:

> "The Secretary of State does not consider that he is under any duty to explain his reasons for refusing to grant Newcastle a disregard."

The city council is convinced that its argument is fair and reasonable and is not without precedent. Therefore, it is anxious to know why its request was refused. However, the Secretary of State has refused to explain his decision. I have now tabled a parliamentary question on the matter and await a response. Should the Secretary of State persist and refuse to answer a simple question from a Member of this House, I shall be asking whether his dictatorial powers over local authorities also extend to Parliament.

This new measure may get the Government off the hook, and it will certainly increase the power of the Secretary of State, but it will do nothing to restore the lost and damaged services resulting from the Government's treatment of local government. It is an exercise in damage limitation, not restoration. It is an attempt to deny elected Members of Parliament access to information, and it will clarify little or nothing. It is a further demonstration of the Government's arrogance in assuming that they are always

right, even when they are proved wrong. It will make things even more difficult for the local authorities and increase the already unprecedented powers of the Secretary of State. For all those reasons, it deserves to be defeated.

9.30 pm

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): I shall be exceedingly brief, as I know that it will not be long before yet another local government Bill comes before the House. We have had almost as many Bills as we have had Secretaries of State, who also seem to come and go in the night.

It is singularly appropriate that the first major Bill brought forward by the Department under the leadership of the new Secretary of State should be a piece of retrospective legislation. The Secretary of State is uniquely qualified in this respect. Indeed, he is in danger of becoming a recidivist and should perhaps appear at the Dispatch Box in a striped jersey rather than a pin-striped suit. I remind those who do not know the Secretary of State's record on restrospective legislation of the words of Mr. Justice McNeill on the question of the GLC and payments to London Regional Transport. He said that the right hon. Gentleman, then Secretary of State for Transport, had acted "unlawfully, irrationally and . . . improperly". To legalise his unlawful position, the Secretary of State brought in retrospective legislation, so he has some experience in this respect.

It falls to the Department of the Environment to bring in retrospective legislation quite regularly. A previous incumbent of the office of Secretary of State, the right hon. Member for Wanstead and Woodford (Mr. Jenkin), was caught out on planning law. Whenever the Government get into bad odour as a result of poor drafting or because they wish to move the goal posts or make political capital out of a particular situation, they can use their massive majority in the House to bring in retrospective legislation to legalise their previously unlawful position.

Let hon. Members on both sides of the House contrast that attitude with the position of elected local councillors doing their job in extremely difficult circumstances. If they are found to have acted incorrectly or unlawfully, they are pilloried in the press, dragged before the courts, surcharged and have their careers and personal positions jeopardised, while Ministers simply use parliamentary sovereignty to get themselves off the hook. The hon. Member for Enfield, Southgate (Mr. Portillo) mentioned earlier cases and I referred him to the GLC "Fares Fair" policy. Everyone thought that the GLC had acted lawfully under the Transport (London) Act 1969, but when that was found not to be the case the Prime Minister refused to allow any retrospective legislation and said that the GLC would have to live with the position in which it found itself. No sympathy was shown there, but when the Secretary of State is in trouble he can come to the House and get the legislation that he needs.

The Government pledged to take Whitehall off the backs of town halls, but since 1979 there has been increasing interference in local government affairs, centralisation all the way and the constant withdrawal of central Government funds. The Government's behaviour offends all the laws of natural justice, but natural justice has no place in the ways of the Conservatives. This is yet another example of the way in which they have managed to mess up the whole of local government. The sooner we are shot of them and can get back to some certainty in local government, the better it will be for all elected councillors and for the House of Commons.

9.34 pm

Mr. Roland Boyes (Houghton and Washington): We have heard some excellent speeches from my hon. Friends the Members for Birmingham, Hodge Hill (Mr. Davis), for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short), for Tyne Bridge (Mr. Clelland) and for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) about this squalid little Bill.

During my period as a councillor local government matters were becoming increasingly complex towards the latter end of the 1970s and money was beginning to be tight, but there is no doubt that what was happening then was as different from what is happening today as suffering from a dormant pimple is compared with a malignant cancer. Councils are under continuous assault from the Government, because of their interference in the decision-making processes of local authorities in a way that has never been known before. A great deal of that has been achieved by the introduction of mechanisms to control council spending policy and decision making. That is done by the manipulation of the rate support grant and by direct control, through rate capping and penalties on the sums that can be raised from rates in the community.

There is no doubt in the minds of many elected local government representatives that the Government's major objective is to influence and intrude in the processes for the determination of local government spending priorities. The Government are attempting through financial manipulation to impose their political will and philosophy on councillors who have been elected through the ballot box, especially on those from political parties who do not share their unproven monetarist economic theories.

The level of services provided by local government for housing, social services, recreation, education and a host of other functions is important for the vast majority of people, but is vital for the poor and the deprived. However, many councils cannot deliver the level of services which they consider necessary because of cuts in income. Since 1979 some £17·5 billion of rate support grant has been withheld, and there is uncertainty about future spending.

Local government officers, elected representatives and the community need a system which is equitable and straightforward, instead of the present controls, cuts, complexities and uncertainties. The Bill could have served to clarify rather than to confuse further, as it surely will.

As many hon. Members have said, local government finance is becoming so complex that the number who can understand all its aspects is rapidly being reduced to a small handful. Indeed, on 11 December 1984 the then Secretary of State for the Environment, who had told the hon. Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack) that he would send him "A child's guide to the rate support grant system", said:

> "Yes, it has been very helpful to me. It has helped me to understand the system, and I am not ashamed to admit it. I think that I now understand most of it."

Later in the same answer he said:

> "Obviously it is complex, but my right hon. Friend the Minister for Local Government is studying its complexity."—[*Official Report*, 11 December 1984; Vol. 69, c. 921.]

Local government finance is becoming unintelligible because of the continual interference of successive Secretaries of State, who keep changing the rules. The Bill

[Mr. Roland Boyes]

is a further contribution to the problem. It is already extremely difficult to challenge decisions because of a lack of information, and the Bill gives the Secretary of State the right to make even less information available. It seeks retrospectively to correct the way in which the Government have used multipliers to minimise the effect on an authority's grant entitlement, arising from rate support grant settlements.

In principle we do not object to the use of multipliers, provided they facilitate long-term planning. As I have said, this is becoming increasingly difficult, but it is important if local authorities are to be able to be as effective and efficient as they desire. To achieve that it is essential that future income can be depended upon not to fluctuate violently up or down. The fact that there is a need within the rate support grant system for mechanisms to be devised to stabilise the inherent major fluctuations from year to year points to a fundamental defect in the system.

In the report of the Comptroller and Auditor General on the operation of the rate support grant system, paragraph 4.50 states:

"The Audit Commission considered that there were too many unnecessary uncertainties in the grant system and that these had inhibited local government from planning ahead . . . The main uncertainties identified were the absence of forward projections of the level of grant support."

It goes on to say that the major

"Fluctuations can arise for a number of reasons and in 1986/1987 multipliers were needed for the following:

(1) to limit grant losses arising from the removal of 1985/86 safety net multipliers;
(2) to limit grant gains and losses arising from the abolition of penalties and targets;
(3) to limit grant gains and losses arising from abolition, and;
(4) to limit grant losses arising from changes in GRE methodology."

That such changes in the rate support grant settlement each year produce major changes in grant entitlement has been a constant, and criticised, weakness in the system. What is required is a process that is simple but responsive to the needs of local authorities in different areas, and stable. The need to resort to multipliers, which are difficult to understand or justify, both to local authorities and the community, complicates still further the increasingly illogical and indefensible allocation of resources between authorities.

On pages 20 and 21 the report of the Comptroller and Auditor General says:

"The multipliers are calculated by complex formulae, the broad purpose of which is to limit the effect on block grants of some, but not all, changes in authorities GREAs. The consequences are erratic . . . Because of the way in which targets have been determined over the years since 1981-82 they have no consistent relationship with current spending needs as measured by GREAs."

Three constituencies, one of which is mine, are conterminous with the borough of Sunderland, and I shall deal with an example of the consequences of using the multipliers to cap grant gains. First, I ask why the Bill is necessary. The city of Birmingham case convinced the courts that the Secretary of State had exceeded his powers in the use that he made of multipliers. The Bill gives retrospective approval to the multipliers used in the years 1982-83 to 1986-87. However, some local authorities have explained that there will be a problem in 1986-87 because of the introduction, for the first time, of grant caps. This matter should be resolved before any further action is taken. Before the Minister tells me that to redetermine the 1986-87 multipliers will cause disruption because of the need to change the grant entitlement of all local authorities, I must tell him that, due to other Government decisions, large variations have regrettably become a fact of life to local government.

This might be a suitable point to raise a question that needs urgent consideration. The Minister will recall that in 1985 some local authorities submitted to the Department of the Environment revised figures for 1985-86. These were not requested by the Department from local authorities, but, more important, no sign was given of the consequences of not sending in the revised estimates. The Department of the Environment determined grant caps for 1986-87 on the latest available information from local authorities. Those that had not submitted revised figures for 1985-86 were found to be at a disadvantage compared to those who had submitted new data. Why and how did this occur?

If the Department of the Environment knew that this would happen, why did it not invite all local authorities to submit revised figures? Does this not mean that some local authorities are being treated more favourably than others? Will the Secretary of State invite all local authorities that have not yet done so to submit revised figures and, in addition, when he has them to hand, will he recalculate the multipliers for 1986-87? If this is not done, is there not a possibility that we might have to face further retrospective legislation because of local authorities taking action in the courts?

The fine details in the Bill will be contested in Committee. In this debate, my hon. Friends and I have simply set out our dissatisfaction with the fact that the law is being amended in this way, because retrospective legislation is, in itself, unsatisfactory, especially as it has been done, as I illustrated, during a period when multiplier calculations are being made. It is also unsatisfactory because the Bill does not do what it seeks to do — to clarify what is a far too complicated system.

Because the Bill involves retrospective legislation and will lead to greater confusion rather than to greater clarification, and because we are concerned about the fact that the Secretary of State is seeking wider powers to reduce the amount of explanation that is to be included in rate support grant reports, we shall oppose the Bill this evening.

9.44 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mrs. Angela Rumbold): Predictably, this evening's debate has ranged around a number of subjects. We have had a good go at the horrors of block grant, although the hon. Members for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) and for Tyne Bridge (Mr. Clelland) did not suggest that we should begin all over again with regression analysis. At least they were willing to accept that the present system has brought about some improvements. Nevertheless, they went on to tell us of immense horrors.

My hon. Friends the Members for Enfield, Southgate (Mr. Portillo), for Norwich, North (Mr. Thompson) and for Slough (Mr. Watts) said that they thought that the Government could have done better on the block grant arrangements. There was also an interesting discussion of retrospective legislation. That evoked a large number of

memories on both sides of the House. It was, if I may so describe it, a navel examination of our past mistakes regarding retrospective legislation.

A great deal of indignation has been expressed about the introduction of the Bill because of its effect on local government. Indignation was voiced by the hon. Member for Houghton and Washington (Mr. Boyes), and by the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) in his usual explicit manner. However, I shall deal with what the Bill is trying to achieve by the block grant multipliers.

Multipliers have been used in every rate support grant settlement since 1981-82 to protect local authorities from sharp losses of grant resulting from certain factors. We have always thought it right to set a limit on grant losses I stress losses — resulting from our own decisions about the way in which grant-related expenditure assessments are calculated. In two years when there were exceptional changes in grant arrangements we have also put a limit on gains, using cap multipliers. We did that in 1981-82 when the block grant was introduced. We used caps again in the 1986-87 settlement when targets and holdback were removed to help to mitigate the results of the abolition of the Greater London council and the metropolitan county councils.

The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) suggested that we might be legislating for the sake of it, but that is not the case. I would not want to claim that local government has always accepted the precise safety nets and caps that we have applied, but there has always been a good deal of agreement over the way in which caps and nets should be set. We have been fairly proud of this.

I intend to deal in more detail with some of the points that have been raised on caps, safety nets, retrospection and other matters. It has been suggested by a number of hon. Members that the reason for the 1986-87 multipliers being challenged is that the cap on grant gains operated unfairly on some authorities, especially Birmingham. I do not accept that argument. There are two sorts of caps.

First, we made it clear in July 1985 that we thought it was right to limit windfall gains resulting from our decision to dispense with targets and holdback for 1986-87. I remind the House that that decision was welcomed. That was surely perfectly reasonable. I see no reason why some authorities should be allowed to benefit from unlimited gains at the expense of all other authorities.

The second type of cap applied to the effects of abolishing the GLC and the metropolitan county councils. We made it clear on many occasions that we thought that abolition should be neutral in its effect on ratepayers. Again, I can see no argument why ratepayers in some areas should have benefited from the fact of abolition, while others suffered losses.

The hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) asked whether Birmingham would receive the additional grant that it was seeking for 1986-87. Birmingham challenged the cap multiplier determined for it in the 1986-87 settlement. The main grounds for the challenge were in the legal shortcomings in the existing legislation, which this Bill is designed to correct. There was no challenge to the reasonableness of the cap.

I want to explain the point that the hon. Lady tried to make during a number of interventions about the way that the cap operates. Section 59(6)(*a*) contains the power to determine cap and net multipliers and provides that they may be determined for

"limiting the change in the amount of block grant payable to an authority for the year from the amount payable in the previous year."

Before the Secretary of State can exercise the power to cap, he must be satisfied that there would have been an unreasonable increase in the amount of grant payable unless he exercised that power. Whether he nets or caps, the Secretary of State is limiting the amount of grant payable year on year and there is no difference in the nature of the power. If it was not exercised properly for Birmingham on the basis of a year by year comparison for caps, it was not exercised properly for nets. Therefore, the power is exercisable on the basis of the principles applicable to all authorities. If it is invalid for one authority, it is equally invalid for any other authority that has had a cap or net multiplier determined for it.

Mr. Nick Raynsford (Fulham): Does the Minister accept that this extraordinary complexity, with a need for all these parentheses and adjustments, simply illustrates the total nonsense of the framework for local government finance operated by this Government?

Mrs. Rumbold: I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman finds this so difficult. It is a complex matter. I am sure he understands that it needs careful explanation to the House.

Ms. Clare Short: I am sure that the Minister does not mean to obfuscate about how the £7 million figure arises for Birmingham. The Secretary of State estimated a base grant of £158 million for 1985-86 using contrived assumptions, whereas his own projected grant entitlement for 1985-86 was expected to be £165·2 million. The difference between those two amounts means that Birmingham has lost £7 million. It is to do with reasonableness. It is not simply an accident in calculation such as the Minister appeared to imply.

Mrs. Rumbold: I shall come to the detail of that in a moment. The fact is that in the settlement Birmingham stood to gain substantially from the removal of targets and holdback. Birmingham ratepayers also stood to gain from the abolition of the West Midlands county council. If no cap had been applied, Birmingham's grant would have soared from the £165 million it was being paid for 1985-86 to as much as £224 million. That gain, of course, would have been at the expense of all other authorities.

We took the view that windfall gains were undesirable, and we therefore put a limit on those gains, with the result that Birmingham's grant settlement was about £185 million, but that was still about £20 million more than it was actually being paid for 1985-86.

Mr. Straw: Does the Minister accept that, while it is generally accepted by local authorities and the Department that for the purpose of setting safety nets notional spending is acceptable, for the purpose of setting caps the Department has previously always taken the difference between actual spending in one year and actual spending in the following year?

Mrs. Rumbold: I can explain to the hon. Gentleman why we did it a little differently this year.

I wish to deal now with the matter of safety nets. We tried to achieve a balanced package of nets and caps. The safety net protected individual authorities that would otherwise have suffered sharp losses, and the caps

[Mrs. Rumbold]

prevented large gains for individual authorities at the expense of all other authorities. The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey asked me to name other authorities that would have had large gains. I shall turn that question around because, while attention has been focused understandably on the authorities that have been capped, it is also important to remember the other side of the coin. If we had not applied the safety nets, Bedfordshire county council would have lost a further £8 million of grant, Surrey county council would have lost a further £10 million of grant, in London, Greenwich borough council would have lost a further £20 million and Tower Hamlets would have lost no less than £59 million. If we had done nothing to correct the shortcomings of the law, the basis of this protection would have gone and those authorities would have faced unmanageable losses of grant, as I am sure the hon. Gentleman will acknowledge.

Mr. Simon Hughes *rose*——

Mrs. Rumbold: No, I shall not give way. I must get on.

The hon. Gentleman also asked whether the 1986-87 safety net and cap multipliers would be redetermined in the light of later information. The hon. Member for Houghton and Washington also mentioned that matter. That point has also been raised by other people and authorities. Since the budgets for 1985-86 have been revised, it is believed that if the settlement multipliers were recalculated on the new figures the authorities would get more grant than they are currently receiving in 1986-87, as the hon. Gentleman said. Therefore, the Bill makes it completely clear that safety nets and caps are to be calculated once and for all at settlement time. The Secretary of State will no longer have the power to redetermine multipliers and to set nets and caps, except to correct errors in the original calculations. Of course, Ministers will be prepared to meet representatives of Avon county council at a mutually convenient time.

As my hon. Friend the Minister mentioned, there are a number of cases where one could quote retrospective law: the Law of Property (Joint Tenants) Act 1964, which amended the law with respect to land invested in joint tenants, the Housing Finance (Special Provisions) Act 1975—all introduced by a Labour Government—the Aircraft and Shipbuilding Industries Act 1977, and the one I like the best, the Indian Divorces (Validity) Act 1921. That was passed to remedy the consequences of the decision in the case of Keyes *v* Keyes. A number of persons who thought they had been divorced in India were not divorced at all, so those who subsequently remarried were guilty of bigamy. The Act retrospectively validated such divorces. As the hon. Member for Blackburn talked about expectations, I ask him whether those expectations might have been dashed——

Mr. Straw *rose*——

Mrs. Rumbold: No, I shall not give way.

On a more serious note, I do understand that retrospective legislation always smacks of moving the goalposts after the start of the game. But I must tell the hon. Member for Birmingham, Hodge Hill (Mr. Davis) and my hon. Friend the Member for Slough, who pinched my point about moving the goalposts, that the RSG settlements for each year between 1981-82 and 1986-87 were made according to an interpretation of the law which was widely accepted.

Grant entitlements for previous years are at risk because we still have to make supplementary reports for the rest of the years in question. Those reports would necessarily involve the use of the multiplier powers which, as we have explained, would have to be recalculated in the way required by the Birmingham judgment and thus create total uncertainty as to grant entitlements if we did not have the Bill.

The rules for judicial review provide that proceedings must be commenced as soon as possible, and in any case within three months of the decision complained of. A decision on a multiplier in, for example, the fourth supplementary report for 1983, to be laid at a future date, could enable a local authority to challenge the original determination of the multiplier in the main report for that year.

I was asked about the London borough of Greenwich. That error arose from a misallocation in the RSG settlement for 1986-87 of inherited highways expenditure. *[Interruption.]* We have suggested that a safety net of 2p at ratepayer level would be appropriate—the equivalent of about £290,000 for Greenwich. No final decision has been taken on the level at which the safety net should be set and we shall consider all representations, including those from Greenwich, before reaching a final decision —*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Rumbold: As my hon. Friend the Member for Slough has said, unfortunately serious shortcomings have been identified in the existing law on block grant multipliers. It is for that reason we have brought the Bill before the House this evening. I ask the House to support the Bill.

Mr. Tony Banks: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Is it in order for hon. Members who have not attended the debate to come into the Chamber late and to spend all their time talking and gossiping during the Minister's concluding speech?

Mr. Speaker: There was as much noise inside the Chamber as at the Bar of the House.

Question put, That the Bill be now read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 246, Noes 180.

Division No. 231] **[10.00 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert	Boscawen, Hon Robert
Aitken, Jonathan	Bottomley, Peter
Alexander, Richard	Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Ancram, Michael	Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Arnold, Tom	Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Ashby, David	Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*	Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*	Bright, Graham
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*	Brinton, Tim
Batiste, Spencer	Brooke, Hon Peter
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony	Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Bellingham, Henry	Bruinvels, Peter
Bendall, Vivian	Bryan, Sir Paul
Benyon, William	Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Biffen, Rt Hon John	Buck, Sir Antony
Biggs-Davison, Sir John	Budgen, Nick
Blackburn, John	Bulmer, Esmond
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter	Burt, Alistair
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas	Butcher, John

Butler, Rt Hon Sir Adam
Carlisle, John *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Clegg, Sir Walter
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Cope, John
Corrie, John
Couchman, James
Cranborne, Viscount
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Fletcher, Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Glyn, Dr Alan
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony
Greenway, Harry
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Gummer, Rt Hon John S.
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(N'folk SW)*
Heddle, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jackson, Robert
Jessel, Toby
Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith
Key, Robert
Knowles, Michael
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Rondle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
Madel, David
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Antony
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morris, M. *(N'hampton S)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Mudd, David
Murphy, Christopher
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Oppenheim, Rt Hon Mrs S.
Osborn, Sir John
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abgdn)*
Pawsey, James
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Porter, Barry
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Price, Sir David
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raffan, Keith
Rathbone, Tim
Rees, Rt Hon Peter *(Dover)*
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rippon, Rt Hon Geoffrey
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Sumberg, David
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Terlezki, Stefan
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Wall, Sir Patrick
Waller, Gary
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Francis Maude and
Mr. Gerald Malone.

NOES

Abse, Leo
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Alton, David
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Anthony
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'mline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Buchan, Norman
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell, Ian
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Carter-Jones, Lewis
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clelland, David Gordon
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S)*
Cohen, Harry
Conlan, Bernard
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cox, Thomas *(Tooting)*
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Edwards, Bob *(W'h'mpt'n SE)*
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Garrett, W. E.
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Golding, John
Gould, Bryan
Gourlay, Harry
Hancock, Michael
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Janner, Hon Greville
Jenkins, Rt Hon Roy *(Hillh'd)*
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kilroy-Silk, Robert
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey

Loyden, Edward
McCartney, Hugh
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McGuire, Michael
McKelvey, William
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Robert
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meadowcroft, Michael
Michie, William
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Park, George
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Penhaligon, David
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ryman, John
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Short, Mrs R. *(W'hampt'n NE)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Cyril *(Rochdale)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Torney, Tom
Wainwright, R.
Wallace, James
Wareing, Robert
Weetch, Ken
Welsh, Michael
White, James
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Winnick, David
Woodall, Alec
Wrigglesworth, Ian
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Chris Smith and
Mr. Ron Davies.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Bill read a Second time, and committed to a Standing Committee pursuant to Standing Order No. 42 (Committal of Bills).

Lord Chancellor (Salary)

10.12 pm

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen): I beg to move,

That the draft Lord Chancellor's Salary Order 1986, which was laid before this House on 3 June, be approved.

As the title of the order before us suggests, it is concerned only with the salary proposed for the Lord Chancellor. This arrangement for setting the amount payable to the Lord Chancellor is of only recent origin. I shall turn later to our past consideration of the order. First, I propose to deal with the order itself. I hope that it may then be helpful if I say a few words to remind the House why the Lord Chancellor's salary, uniquely among ministerial salaries, is fixed in this way.

The terms of the order are quite straightforward. They provide for the revocation of the Lord Chancellor's Salary Order 1985 and for an increase of £2,400 in the salary payable to the Lord Chancellor. This would have effect from 8 July this year, and would raise the amount due from £77,000 per year to £79,400. This order is needed because of the——

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): Does the Leader of the House recall the many debates that we have had in recent weeks on wages councils? The £2,400 increase in the Lord Chancellor's salary is precisely the annual salary of young workers in hotels, shops, catering establishments and hairdressing establishments, which Ministers considered too high and argued should be cut. How can the right hon. Gentleman justify an increase in one year in one Minister's salary which is the same as the annual salary of young workers who are told that they are pricing themselves out of jobs?

Mr. Biffen: If the hon. Gentleman had fully acquainted himself with the recommendations of the Top Salaries Review Body—I am sure that he has—he would realise why the sums to which I referred are included in the order.

The order is needed because of the link between the salary of the Lord Chief Justice and that payable to the Lord Chancellor. This link between the two salaries dates back to 1983. Before that time, the Lord Chief Justice and the Lord Chancellor were paid the same amount. In 1983, however, the TSRB departed from its previous recommendations in this respect. Its report concluded that "having regard to the pre-eminent position of the Lord Chancellor in the judiciary and his responsibilities as a whole . . . a more appropriate relationship would be established if he were paid rather more than the Lord Chief Justice." The principle of this recommendation was accepted by the Government and has since been accepted by the House. I believe that it represents a most appropriate way of taking into account the different roles of the Lord Chancellor in presiding over the other place, in being a Minister and head of a Department and in being the constitutional head of the judiciary. It does mean, however, that the Lord Chancellor's salary has to obtain the agreement of both Houses annually, while the salaries for Ministers and other office holders can be set for four years at a time. Although this may seem a cumbersome and complicated way of proceeding, there is no obvious simple alternative which would remove this requirement yet retain the link.

The Lord Chief Justice's salary is settled annually when the Government decide what action to take to implement the recommendations of the Top Salaries Review Body. This year my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister announced on 22 May how the Government proposed to act in respect of both the TSRB and the other review bodies which report annually.

In respect of the TSRB, the Government decided that the recommendation should be scaled down somewhat to an average 4 per cent. to take effect from 1 July 1986. This means that the effective increase in the pay for this group in 1986-87 is 3 per cent.—broadly in line with inflation. From 1 July, the Lord Chief Justice will thus receive an increase of £2,400 which raises his salary from £75,000 to £77,400.

The House can see from this that the terms of the order reflect very closely the change to the Lord Chief Justice's salary—the difference remaining being the £2,000 more which is payable to the Lord Chancellor.

Mr. Gerald Bermingham (St. Helens, South): Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that, when we talk of 10 per cent. of £100 and 10 per cent. of £10,000, the percentage is equal but the sums involved are different? Would it not be fair, at the top end of the scale, to award a sum of money rather than a percentage? When percentages are allowed, the rich get richer and those at the bottom do not keep up quite so much.

Mr. Biffen: I think that the hon. Gentleman suggests a proposal which would effectively narrow the differentials

within the pay scales concerned. The recommendations made by the Top Salaries Review Body, which was accepted by the Government, maintains, broadly speaking, the differential arrangements. I think that the House would wish to be careful before producing salary arrangements which further depress differentials in that instance and, in my view, more generally.

The modalities of this arrangement mean that this is the fourth time that the issue has come before the House since this formula was devised in 1983. In that year, the Lord Chancellor's salary was like those of other office holders, set out in the Ministerial and Other Salaries Order. This was approved by the House on 26 July of that year without a Division. The following year, the Lord Chancellor's Salary Order was taken on 20 July with motions relating to Members' office, secretarial and research allowance and the motor mileage allowance. On that occasion, the right hon. Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams) and I had the distinction of being the only two contributors to the debate to comment on the Lord Chancellor's salary.

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark (Birmingham, Selly Oak): Those of us who do not have the pleasure of being lawyers do not understand the great difference between the Lord Chancellor and the rest of us crude politicians. The Lord Chancellor may, in some theoretical way, be head of the judiciary, but he is at heart a politician who, at the Prime Minister's wish, or displeasure, is possessed or dispossessed of office. Why does the Prime Minister get one sum of money, because she is Head of the Government, but judges, Lord Chancellors and barristers who are politicians as well argue that they are on Olympian heights? Why does the Lord Chancellor, as one of the members of the Government, need to give a wretched example to the rest of the people by needing £79,400 a year? That must be nonsense and wrong, and most of us could not support it.

Mr. Biffen: My hon. Friend made precisely that point last year, only more briefly.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: I shall make it every year.

Mr. Biffen: My hon. Friend implied that the Lord Chancellor was a "crude politician"—I noted the words carefully. The Lord Chancellor's warmest friend and his most inveterate opponent would concede that he is a man of the utmost political distinction. But he has legal responsibilities. The legal responsibilities of his office were argued a few years ago in the reports of the Top Salaries Review Body. I can do no better than commend them to my hon. Friend.

Once again, the 1984 order could hardly be said to be controversial and the right hon. Member for Swansea, West said that the Opposition would not oppose the motion. Although the House did divide on the issue, the order was passed with the significant majority of 108 votes to 14.

Mr. Bermingham: What about last year?

Mr. Biffen: I think that the hon. Gentleman, who makes that comment gracefully but sedentarily——

Mr. Bermingham *rose*——

Mr. Biffen: It is all right, there is no need for the hon. Gentleman to make the point at greater length. I think that we all recollect—none more so than me—that there was an understandable elasticity to the debate last year. It considered not so much the Lord Chancellor's salary as the political wisdom of behaving in the way in which the Government did with respect to the Top Salaries Review Body's report.

Mr. Bermingham *rose*——

Mr. Biffen: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will allow me to continue.

I accept at once that our debate on this order last year was different both in character and in the level of interest it aroused. This, I believe, owed much to the fact that the debate was used by the House to express its views about the Government's implementation of the TSRB's overall recommendations. This evening, I believe—I think that I still believe—that we are in a calmer situation. Indeed, we may well remind ourselves that the only issue before us tonight is whether to approve the order. On previous occasions, the House has clearly shown its acceptance of the principle behind this order and, in these circumstances, I believe that it would be perverse to oppose the mechanism needed to implement what has already been approved. I commend the motion to the House.

10.24 pm

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): This is an important debate, even though we are discussing the tip of the iceberg of public sector pay. Indeed, when the history of the decline and fall of the second Thatcher Government comes to be written, I am sure that last year's debate on the Lord Chancellor's salary order will have a special place.

As the House will recall, that event had a double significance. First, in seeking the approval of the House for a 16·6 per cent. increase in the Lord Chancellor's pay, taking his salary from £66,000 to £77,000 per year, the Government demonstrated more clearly than on any previous occasion that they were operating a manifestly unfair and totally contradictory incomes policy, with high monetary increases for the most favoured, those covered by the Top Salaries Review Body, with a 3 per cent. norm for the great bulk of public sector employees, with 5 to 6 per cent. for nurses and teachers, and a deliberate policy of pay reduction for the lowest paid, those covered by wages councils. Secondly, on that occasion over 40 Tory Back Benchers voted with the Opposition against the Government, and many more abstained. The order was passed by 249 votes to 232, a majority of 17. Although the order was discussed after 10 o'clock, the Lord Privy Seal and myself spoke to a nearly full House of Commons.

This year we have a somewhat less tense situation, with an attendance, I would guess, of about 50 hon. Members. We have a very different order and a very different background of public sector pay decisions. The nurses, the doctors and the armed forces were all recommended by their pay bodies increases of between 7·5 and 8·2 per cent. from this April. The Government have simply reduced that by the expedient of postponing payment from 1 April to 1 July, thus cutting the pay increase of the groups this year to 5 to 6 per cent.

The Top Salaries Review Body, which recommended an average of 6·5 per cent. increase, is to be more severely reduced to an average of about 3 per cent. Thus, the Lord Chancellor's salary, which, by recent convention, as the Lord Privy Seal reminded us, is linked to that of the Lord Chief Justice and should stand at £2,000 above his, would

[Mr. Peter Shore]

have been £81,000 today if the Government had accepted the Top Salaries Review Body recommendation. The order before us contains the lower figure of £79,400, an increase of 3·1 per cent. not the 5·2 per cent. that was recommended.

The House knows that, like last year, the Lord Chancellor does not want the increase and will not take it anyway. However, the Government's reasons for departing this year from the course they pursued last year does need some examination and explanation. According to the Top Salaries Review Body report, paragraph 30, the basis of its award was as follows:

"Last year we were concerned to establish the appropriate structure and salary levels; our aim this year is to keep them up to date."

Taking account of comparator increases the report says:

"we consider that salary increases for the groups in our remit should this year be near the lower quartile of increases for the comparators rather than the median."

Inevitably, the question arises why last year the Government insisted on the 16·6 per cent. increase recommended by the Top Salaries Review Body, when this year they recommend only three fifths of what has now been recommended.

Last year when replying to our debate the Lord Privy Seal was emphatic that

"these great issues of top people's pay, which are full of great political difficulty, are best vested for their recommendation in an outside body such as the Top Salaries Review Body."

He concluded with the bold and defiant words:

"Whatever timing is resolved, it is always a matter of embarrassment and acute unease . . . There is no easy way out of this or any of the other major issues of politics. We are not here to hide behind any passing popular fashion. We are here to provide leadership as well. I do not resile from that observation. We are not in the business of paving-stone politics on this or anything else. Confronted with these difficulties, it is our obligation to give a lead and not to cringe and follow."—*[Official Report*, 23 July 1985; Vol. 83, c. 1008-9.]

This year the Lord Privy Seal has struck a very different chord. It is not so much the trumpet as the tin whistle; it is the Government who must now determine top salaries, not the TSRB—the despised and rejected alternative of what the right hon. Gentleman described last year as politically decided pay determination. Quite simply, I applaud the change. I welcome the right hon. Gentleman in his present mood and presentation. I pay tribute to the revolting Back Benchers of last year, who helped the Opposition to drive it home to the Government that manifest unfairness in public sector pay determination is simply unacceptable.

Mr. Derek Conway (Shrewsbury and Atcham): The right hon. Gentleman rightly refers to the Government's stance the last time we debated the issue. Will he say whether the 40 Conservative Members who went against the party line on that occasion will have more support from Her Majesty's Opposition this time than last time?

Mr. Shore: I shall come to that. Nothing that happens tonight should detract in any way from the warm tribute that we all wish to pay to the revolting Back Benchers of last year. *[Interruption.]* I was there voting with them.

Before I conclude, I want to draw attention to a longer-term problem that is rapidly emerging. The Lord Privy Seal must be aware, as is the House, of the pay explosion that is taking place in top salaries in the private sector. On 15 June 1986 *The Sunday Times* published its annual survey of salary increases of industries' top earners. It reported:

"the top 100 received an average pay increase of 28 per cent. last year. With 5 per cent. inflation at the end of last year and earnings increasing by about 7·5 per cent. they did very nicely in the wages battle. Their average salary is £188,000 per annum."

It is not just in the top levels that the pay explosion is taking place. During the past year, as the City has prepared for this autumn's big bang, the financial services sector has massively increased no only salaries but a whole range of fringe benefits. In the vocabulary of pay increases, the golden hello has now taken place alongside the golden handshake. What is unique to top salaries in the private sector is that they are self-determined. It is the chief executives and the boards of directors of companies who determine their own worth and their own rewards.

I shall not vote against the order, but I conclude with a warning to the Government.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Shore: No, I will not.

The Government will need to look again very closely at the whole workings of the TSRB, if we are to avoid next year or the year after another huge and unacceptable increase in public sector top salaries, propelled upwards to ever more dizzy heights by the explosion in private sector comparator pay.

10.33 pm

Mr. Gerald Bermingham (St. Helens, South): It may be that my right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) will not vote against the order, but I shall. I hope that many other hon. Members will. Again we see in this award the way in which the Top Salaries Review Body reacts. I take on board what was said by my right hon. Friend about the private sector. It reflects much that is wrong in our society.

I do not object to the principle of quantum meruit—the labourer being paid as much as he deserves. What I object to is the little cartel that we see, which gleans a lot for the few, and ignores the many. I object when that occurs in the public and private sectors. In the private sector, as my right hon. Friend said, we have seen it in the City, with the golden hello and the golden goodbye. People are beginning to move from here to there, with a hello and a goodbye, and a hello and a goodbye. A vast amount of money goes into their hands, and a vast amount of money is taken out of society, which could have been paid to those who work in those organisations.

I accept that tonight's debate is about the Lord Chancellor's salary. I hope that any comment that I make will not be taken personally.

Mr. David Ashby (Leicestershire, North-West): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Bermingham: I shall give way in a moment.

I apply to the Lord Chancellor the same argument of quantum meruit as I apply to any one else who is governed by the Top Salaries Review Body.

Mr. Ashby: On the hon. Gentleman's theme that a labourer is worth his pay, has he any comment to make on the fact that the pay increase for the Lord Chancellor is a little less than that which he originally intended giving

to the Bar before that was stopped? I understand that the hon. Gentleman is a member of the Bar. Has he any comment to make on that point?

Mr. Bermingham: It is well known that I am a member of the legal profession. I hope not to bring the legal profession into dispute over the question of the Lord Chancellor's pay review. I have not sought to do that. The hon. Member for Leicestershire, North-West (Mr. Ashby) is also a practising barrister and he may be egging me on to suggest that perhaps the rule of quantum meruit ought to be applied to the Lord Chancellor in respect of his determination in relation to the legal aid apportionments. Had a little more realism been shown in that respect, perhaps many members of the legal profession would have and could have said that they felt that the administrative part of the Lord Chancellor's occupation was properly performed.

I must not trespass down that road too far as I realise that many hon. Members would bring me to order for doing so. It would detract from the principle that I seek to advance tonight.

Mr. Ashby: Does the hon. Gentleman not agree with this if he thinks that the Bar is worth more than was originally offered—and I am sure that that is his view—is the Lord Chancellor not worth the increase offered in the review?

Mr. Bermingham: The hon. Gentleman has missed the point. I am not trying to debate the merits of the Bar's case—which I fully support. I seek to debate whether the Top Salaries Review Body, in fixing the Lord Chancellor's salary—which is the notional subject of the debate—and in fixing the salary levels of many other senior civil servants and public office holders, has the right criteria. I immediately concede that those who serve in the judiciary need to be adequately paid, just as those who serve in the judiciary ought to be properly paid when they seek to administer justice in one form or another. Perhaps the Leader of the House will listen carefully to my next point. If those who serve justice—whether they be solicitor, clerk, articled clerk, pupil barrister or whatever, are not properly paid, justice will suffer.

Mr. Bill Michie (Sheffield, Heeley): What about the workers?

Mr. Bermingham: I should like to return to the concept of how we fix public sector payments. If we take the basic principle of what is needed by way of salary matters, we must consider how they apply. I concede that I am concerned at what is happening in the private sector and how that could once again become a drain on the public sector. However, there is a more fundamental argument at stake. I concede that the Lord Chancellor combines many functions. He is Speaker of the House of Lords, and I trust that the House will appreciate that none of my remarks are personal. That role of the Lord Chancellor is a political function. At the same time, he fulfils the role of a Member of the House of Lords in a judicial capacity as Lord Chancellor—as head of the judiciary and appointments. That is a different function. Tonight's salary order debate seems as good a time as any to ask whether there ought now to be a divorce between the Lord Chancellor's traditional and legal functions.

Mr. Stuart Randall (Kingston upon Hull, West): We are discussing a proposed salary increase of between 16 per cent. and 17 per cent. for the Lord Chancellor—

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): Order. Is this an intervention?

Mr. Randall: Yes, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am asking my hon. Friend, who is a very dear friend of mine, how he squares increases of that magnitude, which he seems implicitly to support in some cases, with the 3 per cent. or 4 per cent. that the Lord Chancellor constantly asks people in industry to accept.

Mr. Bermingham: That is a very interesting question if I understood it aright. Putting it simply, the increase sought by the Lord Chancellor this year is 3 per cent. Last year it was 16 per cent. I am arguing that the 3 per cent. should be 0 per cent. because there comes a time when one has to consider whether the salary suggested matches the job being done. I can advance this only in respect of the Lord Chancellor today, but I have the same reservations about all the other senior pay rises.

There comes a time when we have to consider how people are paid in this country. That is why I put this to the Leader of the House in an intervention earlier. It is all very well to use percentage points, but 10 per cent. of £100 is £10 whereas 10 per cent. of £10,000 is £1,000. There is a different way of looking at the whole subject of senior pay rises. I concede at once that there must be a basic figure, and a fairly substantial one, but once one goes above that if one continues to use percentage figures one increases the gap between the highest and the lowest paid in real terms to an extent that is both unacceptable and unfair.

I put it to the Leader of the House again that last year was a warning shot across the bows. The tragedy is that a second shot has not been fired this year. The House decided last year that it would not agree to very senior salaries ultimately reaching almost obscene levels of £80,000 or thereabouts. Perhaps this year some of us will reiterate the principle that we struck last year. We do not believe that there has to be an automatic increase at the top every year. There comes a time when we have to accept that the ceiling has been reached and that the money can be better spent elsewhere.

At a time when many functions in the legal world—law centres, for example—are in dire straits and in danger of closure, it seems wrong to increase the Lord Chancellor's salary still further into the alpine heights of unreality from the point of view of people who live and work in the real, everyday world where £20, £40 or £50 is a real and meaningful sum.

I hope that some hon. Gentlemen will ultimately agree with me tonight and oppose the Lord Chancellor's salary increase. I say that with no disrespect for the present incumbent, but merely with great critisicm of the principle on which the salary scale is based.

10.44 pm

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): I hope that the House will reject the Lord Chancellor's salary increase. This is an occasion when it would be valuable to the health of democracy if the House were televised, because British people living in enormous poverty would be able to see a group of Members of Parliament voting one person a salary of nearly £80,000 a year. I cannot imagine how

[Mr. Jeremy Corbyn]

anyone can be worth that salary. The gentleman in question is a pensioner to boot, but I do not know whether he also receives an old-age pension.

At the other end of the public sector salary scale, Ministers lecure health workers that they are causing irreparable damage to the Health Service by the size of their pay claims, local government workers that they are causing cuts in local government services by demanding the princely sum of two thirds of average industrial earnings, and young workers that they can live on £25 a week.

The principle should be that if a person is being paid such a high salary, he certainly does not need any increase whatever. It is disgraceful that the House should be prepared even to consider giving him an increase. It is an example of double standards of the first order that the Government should be prepared to lecture the majority of people on the need to tighten their belts and to make sacrifices for the good of the economy and the country, while at the same time they pay £80,000 a year to one Minister.

Mr. Michie: Would it not be more just if the Government gave every low-paid worker a £53,000 a year rise instead of giving a rise in this instance?

Mr. Corbyn: My hon. Friend is correct. In reality, while the Government talk about our rising living standards, they do not intend that the living standards of the majority of the population should improve. If they did, 4 million people would not be unemployed and pensioners would not face the prospect next month of the princely increase of 40p a week.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must address himself to the merits of the increase for the Lord Chancellor.

Mr. Corbyn: It is difficult to address myself to the merits of the Lord Chancellor's increase, because I can see no merits in it. I can see only demerits. I was merely drawing an analogy between the Lord Chancellor, who will receive £80,000 a year — I do not believe that anyone earns that sum — and the many elderly people who are the same age as him and who have also worked hard for many years to the benefit of the community, but who will receive an increase of 40p a week in their pension. That is disgraceful.

It is a shame that the order is being debated at this late hour and that most of the country is unaware of it. When it becomes clear that the Government are more interested in giving £80,000 a year to this gentleman than in settling the ancillary staff's pay claim, or giving pensioners or young workers a decent rise, people will once more oppose the Government. We may not be victorious in tonight's debate, but it will contribute to the nails in the coffin of the Government, who have continually shown themselves to be concerned only with looking after their wealthy friends in the police, the armed forces and the judiciary, and with imposing the lowest possible living standards on pensioners, the unemployed and low-paid working people.

10.49 pm

Mr. Nick Raynsford (Fulham): I, too, hope that the House will reject the order on an important point of principle. Like many hon. Members, I am conscious of the difficulties encountered in recent years by law centres, which try to serve the poorest in our society. My constituency is not the only one where a law centre has been threatened with closure during the past 12 months. Indeed, the law centre in my constituency has only just survived with assistance from the local authority. Many law centres in other parts of Britain have had to close or lay off staff or run their operations under the threat of closure because of a lack of adequate funding, which can be traced back to the Government's failure to ensure a proper base for the funding of this important legal service for poor people.

That principle should guide the House to say that, because of the Government's failure to ensure that such services are made available to the poor, the Lord Chancellor's salary should not be increased this year. That would be a mark of the House's concern about that failure. I hope that the order will be rejected.

10.50 pm

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): I rise alongside my comrades and colleagues to oppose the order. It is an obscenity, at 10.50 pm, to be discussing an increase in the salary of one of the highest-paid public servants in Britain when, in recent weeks in the same Chamber, I and my hon. Friends have tried to defend the rights of 500,000 young workers, each of whose annual earnings are the same as or less than the increase in the Lord Chancellor's salary. There is no merit — the Leader of the House did not answer my question on this — in one individual receiving an increase of £2,400 a year when 500,000 young workers, who receive salaries of only £2,400 or less a year, are told that they are pricing themselves out of jobs.

Mr. Corbyn: Is my hon. Friend aware that the amount that the Lord Chancellor is due to be paid in one week is more than a YTS worker receives in an entire year? Could that, by any stretch of the imagination, be fair?

Mr. Nellist: I had intended to make that point later, but I shall refer to it briefly now.

If the report of the Top Salaries Review Body and this order are about parity, providing people with the necessary incentive and getting people of the right calibre into jobs, those on the youth training scheme, whose allowance in April 1978 was £19·50 a week, should be receiving £44·06 a week if their salaries had been increased by the average increase in wages. If the House holds dear the principle of democracy and even-handedness, it should say that what is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander. Tonight we are told that it is worth while increasing the Lord Chancellor's salary in line with inflation, but not the salaries of YTS workers.

I agree with the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Fulham (Mr. Raynsford) about law centres. After all, the Lord Chancellor is the titular head of the legal system. Only a week ago, I received a letter from the citizens advice bureau in Coventry, which works with the Coventry legal and income rights service, saying that one old couple living on the Stoke Aldemar estate in Coventry, South-East were discovered to have been underpaid £33.40 a week by the DHSS. Through the work of the citizens advice bureau, they received back payment of £1,500. If the energy evident among Tory Members tonight, when we are discussing an increase of £2,400 in the salary of one

individual, was demonstrated more regularly in hunting out the thousands, if not hundreds of thousands, of pensioners and others who are underpaid by about £1,000 million, the stature and reputation of the House might be enhanced.

Mr. Corbyn: Is my hon. Friend aware that the DHSS has cut the number of inspectors who chase after companies which have gone bankrupt, leaving workers —

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I have great difficulty in relating what the hon. Gentleman is saying to the subject before the House.

Mr. Corbyn: I was asking my hon. Friend whether the head of the legal service should be concerned about such companies not paying workers' national insurance contributions, and whether it should be the job of the DHSS to follow up these cases.

Mr. Nellist: I can find many uses for £80,000 a year — for example, employing six or seven more wages inspectors to chase up the 9,000 companies in the wages council sector which were found to be not paying proper wages, but of which only two were prosecuted. We might open the whole debate and discuss the implications of the legal system. On one side of the scales that hang above the Old Bailey we could put the 11,000 miners who were arrested during the miners' strike and in the other the only two employers out of 9,000 who were prosecuted for paying their workers illegal wages. If Lord Hailsham is worth £80,000 a year, he should at least be doing something to prevent such things from happening. Those should be the priorities of the Government's chief public servant. The £2,400 for an increase in the salary of the Lord Chancellor could have gone to help those on YTS and others who are on a low wage because of the Government's policies. There are 8,000 registered millionaires in Britain. It will not be long before Lord Hailsham is one of them if his salary is raised by this amount every year.

Under this Government, 1 million people earn more than £20,000 a year. The Government's tax cuts have given somebody on £100 a week a £1 decrease in his net tax bill over the past seven years to set aside the increase in indirect taxes. Those on £1,000 a week, which is less than the Lord Chancellor will be getting after tonight's order, have received a £330 net decrease in their tax bill. That shows the Government's priorities.

I do not normally quote from the *Official Report* of some time ago, but I shall do so tonight. I have returned from a meeting being held between the 7 o'clock and 10 o'clock votes. It is a somewhat historic quote, but I think that hon. Members will see its relevance to today.

"It is interesting, because it would appear that the capitalist classes to-day are having a larger profit out of the slump than they did out of the boom. And while, at one end of the scale you have wage cuts down to the very bone, until millions of our people in full work are forced down to practical destitution and to a standard of living considerably below the subsistence level, you have, on the other hand, these fabulous dividends and you have, as everyone knows who goes about the West End, ostentation, luxury, extravagance, and waste of every description, which is being paid for by the blood and sweat of the workers. It is said that the country cannot afford a living wage for all its workers. It can afford a very large number of people, rich and super-rich people, who contribute absolutely nothing by their labour to the community."—[*Official Report*, 7 March 1923; Vol. 161, c. 639.]

Those words come from the maiden speech of Dr. Alfred Salter, the Labour Member of Parliament for West Bermondsey. There is foretelling in those words. Those words, uttered 63 years ago, apply precisely to the idea that the Lord Chancellor's salary ought to be increased by £2,400 when 8·5 million workers in this country do not even receive a living wage.

11.4 pm

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): I do not think that I can entertain the House by drawing a connection, as did the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist), between the Lord Chancellor's salary and his activities in the miners' strike, of which I was hitherto unaware. However, I wish to put before the House what I perceive to be the views of many in the legal profession — and I am one — on this substantial increase in the Lord Chancellor's salary.

It is not that the Lord Chancellor does not deserve to have a substantial salary, because, as head of the judiciary, of course he does. It is not that one opposes the concept of the Top Salaries Review Body, with its independent assessment of what is the correct professional salary for somebody holding the august post of Lord Chancellor. As you will be aware, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is a fact that there are many underpaid, experienced lawyers in this country, particularly some members of the Bar carrying out criminal legal aid work, who are pleading with the Lord Chancellor to introduce into their fee assessments a similar element of independence as he himself has in his own salary.

However, I do not wish to indulge in special pleading for them. Rather, I wish to look for a moment at the position of the Lord Chancellor in relation to other legal institutions. If one regards the legal system of this country as a pyramid, it is the Lord Chancellor who is at the top of that pyramid. If the stature of the Lord Chancellor in terms of salary increases, it must increase only in proportion to the pyramid beneath.

Let us look for a moment at what has been happening to some of the other parts of the pyramid that is the edifice of our legal system. The Government quite rightly introduced the independent Crown prosecution service. When we were discussing in Committee the Prosecution of Offences Bill we were told by the Attorney-General that the Crown prosecution service would attract recruits of a sufficient standard of excellence, so that some of the best young lawyers in this country would join it. This would mean that prosecutions, however difficult, would be presented competently and without having to rely upon thinly spread resources.

The fact is, as we have discussed in the past in the House, that the Crown prosecution service salary structure is inadequate and that it has not been possible to recruit a sufficient number of people — although some have been recruited—of the right calibre. It is an insult to the Crown prosecution service that such an enormous and disproportionate increase should be given to the Lord Chancellor when it is not being given the appropriate basis upon which to staff its service.

We have seen cuts in legal aid which reduce the number of people who are eligible for legal aid when they have been injured at work or in road accidents, or when they face divorce proceedings or other litigation. These are cuts in both money and real terms. They, too, make this salary increase for the Lord Chancellor seem to be wholly

[Mr. Alex Carlile]

disproportionate. We have seen law centres being decimated by this Government's policies. Therefore, while the Lord Chancellor's salary is being increased, some centres are having to close, while even the luckier ones are having to cut their services very substantially.

In rooms downstairs I have tonight seen representatives of the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux, who have made representations to hon. Members of all parties about the inadequacy of the funding of that part of the voluntary sector that deals with legal services. Yet, disproportionately, we see the Lord Chancellor's salary being increased in this way.

It is not the principle of the increase in the Lord Chancellor's salary which is so objectionable. Rather it is the singling out of the Lord Chancellor's salary from the Government's treatment of all the other legal services which I have mentioned which is greatly offensive to the legal profession, to those working voluntarily in the legal sector, and to right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the House.

11.5 pm

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): I have not been prompted to speak by the fact that the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist) quoted one of my predecessors who was Member of Parliament for Bermondsey in the 1920s and for whom I have more than a sneaking regard, although he was not a Member of the Liberal party — at least, he was not ultimately, although he started off in the Liberal party.

This is the only debate that we can have on the salary of a member of the Government and that is sad. I do not approve this year, as I did not approve last year, of the Lord Chancellor, who is already substantially paid, being given more money. I oppose it, not just on a point of principle, given the gross inequities of pay in Britain, but also in regard to his carrying out of responsibilities as head of the judiciary.

The Lord Chancellor has been justifiably criticised for responding totally inadequately, through the inadequate funding of the legal aid system, to the needs of people who have insufficient private finance to pursue their own legal remedies. He has been criticised, quite rightly, for not responding to the fact that many law centres will now not be funded and many people at the bottom end of the economic scale will not have the wherewithal to challenge, particularly in areas of welfare law, matters of fundamental importance to them, be they on housing or in other areas.

There is also one area that I am not aware has been mentioned. The Lord Chancellor has not responded, as head of the judiciary, to the massive need that there is in Britain for the funding of people in other forms of legal forums — in tribunals, and, in particular, at inquests. Until the Lord Chancellor does his job properly and makes sure that people in all walks of life have equal access to the legal remedies that are designed to be available, we should not give him anything that compliments him on his tenure in his job as head of the judiciary.

A family of constituents of mine are trying to obtain representation at an inquest looking into the death of their son while in custody in Devon. They have not had 1p of public funding to help them in an inquest of several weeks' length. It is unacceptable that this so-called civilised society cannot help people to obtain legal remedies when they do not have the means. The Lord Chancellor should have exercised some sort of social responsibility together with his judicial one. He has failed abysmally.

11.8 pm

Mr. Biffen: This has been a most good-natured and wide-ranging debate and it would be a courtesy to the House if I just uttered two or three sentences by way of conclusion.

Those of us with longish memories and who can recollect all the nocturnal orders that were issued under the Prices and Incomes Act 1966 will realise that there was a curious yearning for the entertainment that those episodes conferred in the way in which the debate this evening fairly quickly got into the wider track of wages councils, law centres, the miners' dispute, millionaires and then a charming reference to Dr. Salter, who, like the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes), I know only by repute. He was a formidable personality and a great evangelist for temperance, a man of great reputation and almost a legend in Bermondsey.

But I want to be wholly pedantic and narrow and speak solely to the order on which the House is invited to vote, but in so doing to draw attention to three points. If the House is satisfied on those three points, it must have no doubt about supporting the motion. But if the House and the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) are not so satisfied, they will have to vote otherwise.

I turn to the sum now proposed for the Lord Chief Justice, who is the regulator in this matter since his pay ultimately gives rise to what is paid to the Lord Chancellor. Do we think that a touch above £77,000 a year is a reasonable sum, given that the Judiciary can ultimately only be recruited from the Bar and that we must take account of the best earnings obtained by the most successful at the Bar? No one has seriously questioned that sum.

But the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey will reject the motion on the basis that the figure is too high. I understand that in the populist world of Bermondsey that may gather a few votes——

Mr. Simon Hughes: Not just in Bermondsey either.

Mr. Biffen: But in the real world we tread a dangerous path if membership of the Bar makes membership of the Judiciary relatively unattractive.

We must also judge whether the £2,000 or so that is a token sum to distinguish——

Mr. Nellist: Token?

Mr. Biffen: —yes, token. It distinguishes the role of the Lord Chancellor from that of others in the profession because he is its leader. I believe that that leadership is properly reflected in that sum, and that it was judged to be so by the Top Salaries Review Body. The House has been wise to abide by that recommendation.

The hon. Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham) argued that there should somehow be a nominal figure at the top end of the judicial profession in order consciously to compress differentials within that element of the public sector. My hon. Friend the Member for Leicestershire, North-West (Mr. Ashby) made the point well. That argument starts with the judiciary, is extended to the Civil Service, and then spreads to the

nationalised industries. If the hon. Gentleman supposes that the public sector can be insulated from the differential pattern of the private sector, he is living in the illusionary Fabian world shared by the alliance and the Labour party.

We should have none of that, and should give the order our whole-hearted support.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Question is, That the draft——

Mr. Bermingham: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: ——Lord Chancellor's Salary Order 1986, which was laid before this House on 3 June, be approved. As many as are of that opinion——

Mr. Bermingham: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I beg to move, That the Question be not put, and that the previous Question be put.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I understand that there is not a previous Question at this stage. I have put the Question——

Mr. Bermingham: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I have put the Question on the order.

The House proceeded to a Division——

Mr. Bermingham *(seated and covered)*: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I refer you to page 388 of "Erskine May", where you will see that the matter of the previous Question being put is a procedural matter. It is a perfectly proper Question. I am entitled to put it. It was last put in 1943, and it should take priority over the Question on the order. You have denied me my parliamentary right to put that Question, and I ask that the matter be now rectified.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I have the appropriate page. The hon. Gentleman is quite right, but he talked about the previous Question, when he should have moved, That the Question be not now put. I did not hear those words, and the hon. Gentleman did not put the Question in that way.

Mr. Bermingham: Further to the point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You cannot put the formal Question unless you are permitted to put it. You attempted to put the formal Question, even though I was on my feet attempting to raise a point of order.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I put the Question before I saw that the hon. Gentleman was on his feet.

The House having divided: Ayes 120, Noes 29.

Division No. 232] **[11.15 pm**

AYES

Alexander, Richard
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Ashby, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, John
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Bruinvels, Peter
Butcher, John
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Cash, William
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Cockeram, Eric
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
Durant, Tony
Evennett, David
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Gower, Sir Raymond
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Gummer, Rt Hon John S
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Heddle, John
Hind, Kenneth
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Jackson, Robert
Key, Robert
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Maples, John
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Morris, M. *(N'hampton S)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Murphy, Christopher
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Osborn, Sir John
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Raffan, Keith
Rathbone, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Rowe, Andrew
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Twinn, Dr Ian
Waddington, David
Waller, Gary
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watson, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Michael Neubert and
Mr. Gerald Malone.

NOES

Ashdown, Paddy
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bermingham, Gerald
Bruce, Malcolm
Buchan, Norman
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Clay, Robert
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Dixon, Donald
Duffy, A. E. P.
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Loyden, Edward
Michie, William
Nellist, David
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Penhaligon, David
Pike, Peter
Raynsford, Nick
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Cyril *(Rochdale)*
Wallace, James
Winnick, David
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Tony Banks and
Mr. Jeremy Corbyn.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Lord Chancellor's Salary Order 1986, which was laid before this House on 3rd June, be approved.

Representation of the People

11.23 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. David Mellor): I beg to move,

That the draft Representation of the People Regulations 1986, which was laid before this House on 13th May, be approved.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): With this it will be convenient to take motion No. 5:

That the draft Representation of the People (Scotland) Regulations 1986, which were laid before this House on 15th May, be approved.

Mr. Mellor: The motions relate to England, Wales and Scotland only, and I can be fairly brief.

The regulations give effect to principles which were determined by the House in the exhaustive consideration that was given to the Representation of the People Act 1985. They are significant because they carry into effect the extension of the franchise that was agreed by the House and make provisions for declarations to be made by British citizens overseas. The consequent provisions will, for the first time, enable many of our fellow citizens who work abroad serving the national interest to vote in elections for a period of five years in the constituency in which they were last registered.

The regulations give effect to a further fundamental change in our arrangements, which is to permit absent voting for those who are away on holiday. As a result, all the absent voting arrangements are changed—we hope materially for the better—in the detailed regulations that are set out. However, I apprehend that if I were to go into great detail about them, I would not necessarily carry the House with me. I hope that it may be taken on trust that detailed and, I believe, simple and straightforward arrangements are made in the regulations.

Part III of the regulations, which deals with the registration of electors, contains a number of useful changes relating to the identification of names included for the first time in the draft register, which will assist in the necessary scrutiny of the register by other electors and the political parties.

Part V of the regulations deals with the issue and receipt of postal ballot papers to be combined at combined elections which, taken together with part VI, which contains a completely new set of provisions to govern the conduct of elections where polls are combined, gets away from the difficulties which we found on a number of occasions about combining certain parliamentary elections with Euro-elections and certain parliamentary elections with local elections.

The regulations were properly and fully canvassed with the party organisations before they were laid before the House. I believe that they reflect the principles which we have enshrined in legislation. Many of them are significant and, I believe, worthwhile changes in our election procedure and will enhance the quality of our democracy. On that basis, I commend the regulations to the House.

11.26 pm

Mr. Robin Corbett (Birmingham, Erdington): I make it clear, on behalf of my Labour colleagues, that we welcome the regulations. As the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department has said, they put into the law those matters which have been the subject of debate and agreement between the parties. The first quick point I shall make will not be new to the hon. Gentleman. I still hope that in amendments which we propose to make, one of these days, to the main Representation of the People Act, we shall include proposals to limit expenditure by national political parties in their favour at general elections.

It seems to be a gigantic hole in the regulations that we quite properly control expenditure at the local level regarding expenditure limits for each elector, yet, nationally, parties can spend whatever money they can lay their hands on urging electors to support a party. I hope and expect that most hon. Members will agree when I say that that smacks of Britain moving to an American-type presidential election system, where in my view, a candidate's election depends very much on the size of his pocket or purse. In that sense, a candidate tries to buy his election. None of us want to see that happen in this country.

It seems to me that it is a hole in our regulations where, in the conduct of elections, no limits are imposed on what can be spent to promote, nationally, the image of one party or another. I say that in respect of the hon. Gentleman's party, my party and every party.

Regulation 28(3) deals with information from householders. It raises the fine from £100 to £400 for a householder who does not do what he is obliged to do under the Act in giving information of people who live in the household and who should be on the register of electors.

I have no objection in principle to increasing the fine. I do not want to make heavy weather of the Government's proposals for a poll tax or, as they call it, a community tax. I understand that the electoral register will not be used for the register of ratepayers, but we have been told that the register of ratepayers will be based upon it. We do not want—and we hope that the Government agree—people to feel that, if they do as they are supposed to do under the Representation of the People Act 1983 and properly register their names on the register of electors, they will face the jeopardy of the poll tax.

It would be wrong to have a knock-on effect whereby people are inhibited from properly registering to exercise their vote and are afraid that, in doing so, they will be lumbered with the poll tax. I should like the Under-Secretary of State to assure the House that the Government do not intend to implement the provisions of regulation 29(3) and to introduce a fining system to penalise those who do not register. I do not necessarily expect the hon. Gentleman to answer tonight because, to be fair, that is not within his departmental responsibilities.

We have to keep the two aspects separate. We must preserve the electoral register. All hon. Members and members of political parties have a resposibility, if not a duty, to encourage people who are eligible to have their names on the electoral register to be satisfied that, when they have filled in the appropriate form, they will be entitled to a vote at local elections, parliamentary elections and elections for the European Assembly and that nothing else will happen to them.

11.32 pm

Mr. Tim Rathbone (Lewes): I welcome the proposals overall, but I should like to point out some drawbacks. Many Conservative and Labour Members were discontented with the limited granting of overseas votes. My hon. Friend the Member for Corby (Mr. Powell) and other

Conservative Members were vociferous in claiming in perpetuity the right of British people living abroad to vote for the Government of their country, which remains their country wherever they live and for however long they live there. However, this measure is a step in the right direction, as is the granting of holiday votes.

Mr. William Powell (Corby): Is my hon. Friend prepared to go so far as to say that the Conservative party's policy should be to extend the franchise to overseas voters beyond the five-year period and that we should campaign for that in the future?

Mr. Rathbone: I could not agree more with my hon. Friend who was another supporter of that sentiment during our previous debate on this matter. If my memory serves me correctly, the Government said that they would consider how the policy worked — however it was measured — and, if it worked so properly, they would extend the period. That was certainly the innuendo, if not the commitment. I therefore endorse my hon. Friend's comments.

It is fascinating that, in the closely packed 88 pages of the regulations, great emphasis is placed on the precision with which we should conduct our elections — for example, the way in which declarations of identity should be made. Flick open any page and find attached detailed advice and direction as to how elections should be conducted. My hon. Friend the Minister mentioned that the purpose of the Representation of the People Regulations 1986 is to enhance the quality of our democracy. The tragedy is that, precise though the regulations are, all they do is ensconce even further the completely arbitrary nature of the electoral format used in this country under which, more times rather than less, a Government are returned who are non-representative of the majority of people. It is a marvellous Anglicism, it maybe British — let me embrace all of those from north of the border and from over the seas, especially the Irish sea — that we spend all our time here debating and adopting motions which will make what we have work perfectly with great precision, without any credence being given to whether what we have working is what ought to be working.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford) *rose* —

Mr. Rathbone: I plead with my hon. Friend the Minister, as a meteor of good sense in Government, as he has proven himself to be on so many other subjects, however embarrassing it might be to embrace this meteor, to carry into Government circles the argument for the adoption of more proportionate systems of election in this country than we have had over the years.

Mr. Cash *rose*——

Mr. Rathbone: I hope that my hon. Friend will forgive me if I do not give way. I want to make my speech short because I want to carry the House with me.

I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will take my message to heart as representative of a large body of opinion on Conservative Benches on the benefits of electoral reform, which is not embraced only——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is going a little wide of the order.

Mr. Rathbone: I agree, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am going as wide as can be because I am denigrating the order for its value in its essence as opposed to in its application.

11.37 pm

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): It did not surprise me to witness the cosy embrace between the Parliamentary Under-Secretary and the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett). I agree with the hon. Member for Lewes (Mr. Rathbone) about the electoral system. Regulation 100 contains the clear proof and manifestation of the snug cartel which exists between the Labour and Conservative parties as they attempt to outwit the electorate with an outdated and outrageous electoral system — and they know it. *[Interruption.]* It was very encouraging to hear an expression of opinion so clear and strong in its condemnation of that form which we see in regulation 100, which perpetuates the present system, coming from behind the Parliamentary Under-Secretary.

Part II of these regulations deals with overseas voters' declarations. Again, I find myself in total agreement with the hon. Member for Lewes. It is extraordinary that people who live and work within the European Community, even people who live and work for British companies or organisations within the EEC and who are putting forward British interests for more than five years, are to be deprived of their right to vote. The United Kingdom is a signatory to the United Nations covenant

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. and learned Gentleman is going very wide of the order. I remind him that we are discussing the administration of a policy which has already been decided by the House.

Mr. Carlile: I am directly referring my comments to regulation 23, which deals with the content of an overseas elector's declaration. In my view, it is highly regrettable that regulation 23 and that section of part II of the regulations does not contain provisions which enshrine what ought to be the rights of British citizens under international law to be able to vote in British elections. The regulations deprive bona fide British citizens of their right to vote, largely because of criticism that has been made of a small number of criminals who have outwitted the British police. It is a great shame that honest citizens should be deprived of their rights as voters because of that.

Part III of the regulations deals with registration and electors' lists. There is no provision in the regulations, particularly regulations 31 to 36 inclusive, to ensure that people who have many residences vote only in the place where their main place of residence is. In my constituency in rural Wales, and indeed in many other constituencies that are holiday areas, and also in London, where there are many second homes — not least those in which some of us live, at least during the small hours — there is the opportunity for tactical voting not only in the constituency but between constituencies. It is highly regrettable that the regulations do not contain something that brings that to an end.

I should like to deal next with some rather less general and more technical matters, which I hope will not necessitate your scanning the regulations further, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to see whether I am still in order. I should like to ask the Minister whether he is satisfied with the arrangements contained in the regulations for the filling in by voters of forms for registration as voters. At present the forms are distributed in the summer, in August, and have to be in by October. Some of those forms are returned quickly in August, but others are returned rather late. Because of the two-month gap that can arise, or at least

[Mr. Carlile]

the two-month spread for return of registration forms, particularly in areas where the population is rather mobile, such as many areas of London, the register is bound to be inaccurate by the time it comes into existence. I ask the Minister to consider whether it might be better to have a national registration day or week, which would ensure that there was not that span of time during which registration forms could be returned, but a shorter time, so that the register was much more accurate.

Secondly, I should like to ask the Minister about the practice for combined polls. I understand that in some parts of the country, when there have been combined polls — more than one election on the same day — there have been difficulties in the way in which ballot papers have been handed out. In some places, where there were two elections, the polling clerk has simply proffered to the elector two forms, one for each election, to take into the polling booth. In other places, the polling clerk has asked the elector whether he wishes to have a form, a polling paper, for one election or the other, or both. I hope that in the future arrangements will be made — pursuant to the regulations — to ensure that there is a standard practice. That may sound, and perhaps is, a somewhat pedantic point, but I can tell the Minister that it has caused real difficulty. I understand that there is some litigation in being at present because of the lack of standard practice for multiple polls.

The final question that I should like to put to the Minister, who I know will, as ever, be extremely helpful in his answers, is about the practice of distributing marked registers. I understand—although I have never done this myself,—that it is possible to obtain a marked register after an election has taken place. That is a register that is marked to show which voters have voted. That may be a questionable practice. One may ask whether marked registers should be available after elections. I am concerned as to whether it is proper that candidates should be able to find out who has voted. Apparently it is possible to obtain these registers at the moment. However, there are widely varying practices as to the time within which marked registers are made available to candidates after the election.

That matter is considered to be important by those who are involved in the management of elections. Is the Minister satisfied with the arrangements for handing such registers to candidates after elections have taken place? If the registers are to continue to be available, will the Minister ensure that there is a standard period within which the registers, if required, must be made available to candidates?

11.46 pm

Mr. Roger Moate (Faversham): I warmly welcome these regulations. They constitute a major and significant extension of the franchise and in many ways they are historic. I share the disappointment of my hon. Friends who have regretted the five-year limitation on overseas voters, and I believe that many people abroad have a deep and fundamental right to vote in general elections in this country. I hope that at some stage we shall see that five-year period extended further or, preferably, extended without limit. That is a fundamental right of British people who live abroad and who still have a fundamental allegiance to their country.

I especially welcome the extension to the right of absent voting to people on holiday. I have always thought that it was a gross injustice for individuals to lose their vote because they had the audacity to plan a holiday without consulting the Prime Minister of the day or the date of the general election. These are welcome extensions and I have no doubt that the House will accept the regulations.

We should all be disappointed at the fairly low poll among service voters. I hope that the Minister will give some assurance that the new arrangements in the regulations will facilitate service voting and encourage a higher percentage poll among such voters.

The Representation of the People Act 1985 provides for candidates to dispatch their election addresses post free and unaddressed. That is an important extension. All hon. Members will be familiar with the great envelope writing exercise of hundreds of thousands of party workers. The Act states that the Post Office will be obliged to distribute unaddressed election addresses to every voter.

Schedule 4 to the Representation of the People Act 1985, under the heading

"candidate's right to send election address post free"

states:

> "One unaddressed postal communication, containing matter relating to the election only and not exceeding 60 grammes in weight, to each place in the constituency which, in accordance with those regulations, constitutes a delivery point for the purposes of this subsection".

The object of that is clear. On balance it will be welcomed as it will mean that workers' energies can be directed into other more fruitful activities. It would be disappointing if the object of that provision was thwarted by a narrow definition of a delivery point. I have examined the regulations carefully for the answer to that, and I have raised the matter in correspondence with my hon. Friend the Minister because, if the Post Office stated that it was only prepared to deliver unaddressed communications to a central point, that would be unsatisfactory for the candidate as he would have to address every envelope to every elector.

Large blocks of flats, military barracks, old people's homes, and so on, usually have one central delivery point. If the Post Office insisted on delivering only to that point there would be no guarantee that the election addresses would be delivered to every elector. The object of the provision is clear, and I am sure that my hon. Friend the Minister wishes it to be used in general elections, but it would be most helpful if he would explain where in the regulations the obligation is laid upon the Post Office to deliver one unaddressed postal communication to each elector, or at least to each residential unit, which is the basis on which most people arrange such deliveries. It is a small point, but I suspect that, like many other small points in these massive regulations, it could have a considerable effect on the way in which the next general election and other elections will be organised.

In general, however, I hope that the whole House will give a warm welcome to this extension of the franchise.

11.51 pm

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): I do not know why Conservative Back Benchers are so anxious to ensure that escaped train robbers and people living in overseas tax havens to avoid paying tax here nevertheless have the right to vote in our elections. I do not share that enthusiasm, but I support the general thrust of the regulations, which are clearly intended to make it easier for

people to vote if for reasons beyond their control they cannot get to their local polling booth. I understand that that is the purpose of the regulations, particularly with regard to holidaymakers, and it is obviously a good thing. I just hope that it will work that way.

I should like to deal briefly with the slight variations in the powers and discretions of electoral registration officers in England and Scotland. I have been a little worried about the situation in the Lothian region, part of which I represent and part of which is represented by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland. In the past, obtaining a postal vote seems to have involved something of an obstacle course, even under the present regulations. People who registered as absent voters due to disability and had the appropriate forms signed by their doctors before one election assumed that their registration would continue in perpetuity but discovered just before the next election that they had to go through the whole rigmarole again because the registration officer had wiped the slate clean. That seems unfortunate.

Before the recent regional elections there was an equally curious situation when the electoral registration officer made it clear that he was rationing application forms for absent votes. Political parties had to obtain them in tens rather than in the hundreds required in some of the larger districts. Exercising one's right to vote should not involve an obstacle course, and I sincerely hope that the regulations will be administered in the spirit in which Parliament clearly wishes them to operate.

I have one final detailed point. Regulations 45 and 46 in respect of Scotland provide that the electoral register must be set out on the basis of parliamentary polling districts. Some of us have found, in our constituencies and in by-elections elsewhere, some very peculiar parliamentary polling districts. They seem to be based on ancient parish boundaries where drove roads over the hills once connected a remote farm to some outlying village. Such drove roads no longer exist and people can find they have mile long trips to get to a polling station. It is a pity it is so difficult to bring the boundaries of polling districts up to date to enable people to vote at the polling station most convenient to them.

But for those observations, I add my welcome to the regulations.

11.55 pm

Mr. Gary Waller (Keighley): I wish to address my brief remarks to regulation 66 which relates to section 7(1) of the Representation of the People Act 1985 which applies to absent voters.

We all agreed that it was right that those who were on holiday and unable to vote should be able to exercise their democratic right to vote in their absence. The difficulty was in determining what was a holiday, and in the end it was decided that anybody who had reasonable cause not to be able to go in person to the polling station should be able to claim an absent vote.

Regulation 66 requires an applicant to set out the reasons why his or her circumstances are such that he cannot reasonably be expected to vote in person. There is difficulty in determining what is reasonable. As far as I know, there is no guidance to registration officers on what could be considered reasonable. It may be argued that this will have to be developed in case law, but I cannot see many such cases coming to court and learned judges determining what is and what is not reasonable. At a general election different registration officers may have different ideas about what is reasonable.

Someone may say that he wants to visit his grandmother who lives 50 miles away and will not be back in time to vote that day, for example, and may claim that he has a reasonable case for an absent vote. When canvassing, all hon. Members have come across people who say, "I don't think I'll bother." When pressed, they add, "Well, I shall be going to a football match as soon as I get home from work and I might have a drink or two after the match. I don't think I'll have time to vote when I get back." If I were an unscrupulous candidate I might say that that could be considered reasonable and that the voter should be able to claim an absent vote for that cause. It may be difficult for a registration officer to draw the line.

It would be possible to manipulate elections, if one were prepared to be unscrupulous and to work fairly hard, especially in elections where the turnout is low — for example, at some local government or parish council elections, which are equally important to the democratic process.

I hope that the operation of the regulations will be carefully monitored and that reasons given will be analysed to ensure that different registration officers apply similar reasoning for granting or withholding the absent vote. Granting the vote to people who are genuinely on holiday is certainly to be welcomed, but I fear that we may be drawing the lines so widely that the whole process of electoral law could come into doubt.

11.59 pm

Mr. Peter Bruinvels (Leicester, East): I welcome the regulations but regret the fact that the ballot is still not secret. Yet again, the polling officer will write down the number of each person who enters the polling station, and, when the person votes, it is, therefore, not a secret ballot. In Malta, ballot boxes have been opened and the boundary commissioners have changed constituencies and wards at the next elections. I should have much preferred a genuine, secret vote.

There is still no safeguard for the proper stamping of all ballot papers by the polling officer. In Leicester, at the general election, several ballot papers were ruled invalid because they were improperly stamped. I see no regulations governing that. Perhaps my hon. Friend the Minister will reassure the House that such problems will be avoided in the future.

Like some Opposition Members, I do not approve of overseas electors being able to vote after more than five years' absence from Britain. Unless people are working abroad indefinitely, their country is here and, after five years, they should decide whether they remain abroad and become disfranchised or return to the United Kingdom and vote as before.

On regulation 53, I urge my hon. Friend to remind all registration officers that it is in order for Members of Parliament to receive free copies of the electoral register. In my constituency, the registration officer is trying to charge me £16·50 for the 1986 register. Indeed, I received a reminder only last Thursday. I should be grateful if my registration officer were reminded of that point.

[Mr. Peter Bruinvels]

The part IV regulations regarding absent voters have been greatly welcomed. Under regulation 63, holiday-makers can now vote. That commitment was given before the original regulations were introduced. We raised the matter immediately after the 1983 general election.

Regulation 29 deals with form A — "Return by Occupier as to Residents." At each general election we see pictures in the newspapers of children aged about two holding their official polling cards. There are regular misunderstandings, with parents placing on the register children who should not be there. The form makes it clear. It states:

"Please do not include . . . People under 16."

That should be emphasised much more strongly in the registration forms. Indeed, I urge my hon. Friend to make mandatory the checking of the register once it has been compiled. Each occupier of a house should check the register to see whether everyone mentioned on it is entitled to vote. The period for checking is 28 November to 16 December. Similarly, I hope that the ethnic communities can be reminded of their duty not to place people aged under 16 on the electoral roll. Regulation 29 does not make that clear enough.

Declarations of identity are liable to possible misinterpretation under regulation 79*(a)* and *(b)*. The witness could be in dispute. Although I understand the operation of that regulation, I urge my hon. Friend to make it clear that it is a serious offence to encourage someone to vote who is not authorised to vote. This is a great problem in Northern Ireland with personation. I hope that the provision can be applied under the English regulations.

With regard to the return and declaration of election expenses under regulation 12, most hon. Members stick closely to the requirements for filling in forms L and M as soon as possible within the necessary period. However, I am suspicious that not everything is included.

The requirements on polling cards should make it clear that outside a polling station the purported marked-up ballot paper that is handed out to members of the public as they go in should not appear to be a genuine polling card. This should be properly looked into.

Combined polls come under regulation 100(2)*(e)*—

"Modifications of parliamentary election rules"—

and control of them is imperative. We had a recent case of a by-election and a local election in Surrey on the same day. I note this regulation because there was great confusion as to how many votes people had. It was two for the local election and one for the by-election. In all these cases, we have to assume that people do not understand their legitimate rights of voting. We must be not patronising, but more forthcoming on the right to vote.

I urge my hon. Friend to look again at the serious matter of personation. Many constituencies have small majorities. We must warn people that personation is contrary to the law, just as it is to vote often, early and at least twice. It is a privilege to vote in any election, and we must also——

Mr. Alex Carlile: It is a right not a privilege.

Mr. Bruinvels: It is a right, but also a privilege. We are British, and this privilege is one of the few things left in this country for which we do not have to pay.

I urge a reminder that in parliamentary elections one cannot vote for two candidates. The regulations are fine in detail, but a full explanation of them is also required.

12.6 am

Mr. Mellor: With the leave of the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I have enjoyed the debate, and I am grateful to the House for the warm welcome that has been given to the regulations.

I thank the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) for speaking with typical courtesy and brevity. The limiting of expenditure is a major decision that I suspect that the House is a long way from making, but we noted his point. The Green Paper on local government finance makes it clear that the electoral register will be one of the sources of information available to local authorities when they compile the community charge register. The question of liabilities and sanctions relating to it is still under consideration, and I shall ensure that my right hon. and hon. Friends in the Department of the Environment are clear about the marker that the hon. Gentleman has put down.

I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Lewes (Mr. Rathbone) for the attractive way in which he made his speech, although I am afraid that for this particular meteor to plunge into the darkness of electoral reform would be a little unwise, particularly at this time of night. However, I note what he says. Again, this is a major issue of policy that lies outside the regulations, but we have all heard what he said and noted his sincerity.

My hon. Friend also made a point about the limited grant for overseas voting. Our position is clear. We wanted a longer period. Originally, we proposed seven years. In the legitimate interest of obtaining the agreement of the House, so that we would have an unopposed Third Reading for such a major change in electoral arrangements, the period was brought down to five years. I am speaking only for myself when I say that I hope that the House will take an early opportunity to return to this point. After we have demonstrated what a good idea this change is, with the successful carrying through of a large number of people working overseas who have voted in an election, I should want us to broaden the period that is allowed.

The hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile), who almost blotted his copybook in the last minutes of the debate, made six points in a thorough and interesting speech. The first three were policy points, and part of the ritual incantations that the Liberal spokesman —the hon. Gentleman has the honesty to agree with me —has to make on these occasions. What can I say except that we cannot agree with them? He made three detailed points to which I can respond. On registration, one could say that there is already a national registration day on 10 October, because everything relates to where people are on that date.

As to whether or not electoral registration officers send out the forms too early, that matter is within their discretion. However, I take the point, and during our discussions with the EROs I shall ensure that the hon. and learned Gentleman's point is made known to them.

The hon. and learned Gentleman also referred to combined polls and mentioned differences in practice. Our view is that without any form of interrogation a voter should be handed all the relevant ballot papers for the elections that are taking place that day. In the event of that

practice not being followed in some areas, perhaps the hon. and learned Gentleman will provide me with further and better particulars.

As for the marked register, the argument is that public inspection of the marked register is an important safeguard so that electors may satisfy themselves that the election is honest—that the individual who voted was the person who should have voted. That point was raised in the interesting contribution of my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels). That is the basis for the inspection and it is provided for in schedule 1 to the 1983 Act. As to the period within which public inspection should be allowed, that lies within the discretion of the EROs. We should be reluctant more tightly to circumscribe their discretion, but we are prepared to consider complaints about the way in which individual EROs go about their business in the interests of proper administration.

My hon. Friend the Member for Faversham (Mr. Moate) referred to service voters, a point that concerns many hon. Members. The take-up of service votes is reasonably low. However, that matter is slightly outwith the regulations. Our view is that whether or not an elector chooses to exercise his franchise is a matter for him. There is no good reason in practice for the low take-up rate, and I do not believe that anything could easily be done to improve it. The arrangements for service voting are precisely the same in every material particular as for other voters.

My hon. Friend also raised an important point about the delivery of unaddressed election material through the post. We regard this as a useful service for some candidates, who may not have available dozens of elderly ladies to scribble addresses for them—a delightful sight in our committee rooms. The Post Office's criterion for a delivery point is that the place in question must be permanently and separately occupied and accessible to the general public and that it must have a separate letter box and a separate address. That should mean every point to which a postman, if a properly addressed letter came into his hands, would deliver. However, that would exclude buildings in multiple occupation where there is one main letter box. That is why it can never be quite so thorough if one has to rely on unaddressed material as it can be if the material is addressed to somebody. I should not expect the Post Office to seek to wriggle out of an obligation by suggesting that, as a normal part of a postman's beat, unaddressed material was not, in fact, an address for the purpose of these arrangements. I believe that the regulations have been appropriately drawn.

It may just be the mellowness that descends upon me at this time of night, but the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) made what was almost a sensible speech. I have waited for seven years in this House to hear such a speech, and I do not know what has come over him. The rationing of the supply of applications for postal votes is a matter for discretion. More can be and, indeed, are supplied, if requested. As for the definition of polling district boundaries, that is a matter for the returning officer, although most of them consult and will accept—as happened in my constituency—representations made by the parties, if it appears that the polling district is not conveniently drawn for the electors. In my constituency, electors had to cross a busy arterial road and it was determined that they should no longer have to do so. I hope that in most areas that sort of give and take goes on and sensible results come out of it.

I want to assure my hon. Friend the Member for Keighley (Mr. Waller) that we keep in close touch with representatives of the EROs and will be told if any particular difficulties arise. The discretion is fairly tightly drawn in the sense that the main Act provides that an absent vote is available only if a person

"cannot reasonably be expected to vote in person".

That is certainly not synonomous with "cannot be bothered to vote". We expect that the EROs will exercise their discretion.

As to reasonableness, without descending into lawyers' pedantry it would generally be the case that any attempt to define reasonableness further is self-defeating. It is better to rely on the good sense of people who conduct their often rather onerous responsibilities effectively. The number of complaints about EROs is limited, despite all the difficulties that they encounter. We are happy that they are capable of applying good sense to that test of reasonableness. Once again, if difficulties arise that cannot be sorted out through the usual channels, we can always return to this, but I believe that we have drafted a framework which will enable proper sensible, individual decisions to be taken on a case-by-case basis.

Mr. Jeremy Hanley (Richmond and Barnes): Before my hon. Friend finishes, does he agree that almost certainly more members of the ethnic minorities fail to register to vote either as a result of a deliberate act by the landlord or through errors of omission, than there are those who put down the names of their children under the age of 18, either for deliberate or accidental reasons?

Mr. Mellor: Yes. The under-registration of ethnic minorities is a problem that we have sought to address through a real effort that we have made pursuant to the report of the Select Committee on Home Affairs on which my hon. Friend now sits. There is marked under-registration, I am relying on my memory, a fallible instrument, but it is around 7 per cent. nationally, and as high as 16·4 per cent. in inner London, I was rather shocked as an inner London Member to discover. The Home Office has been going through a series of seminars for EROs and has taken other steps to try to ensure that that figure is tackled and reduced.

Particular problems exist for the ethnic minorities. As a result of this exercise, EROs are more conscious than perhaps they were of ways in which that can be dealt with, and I hope that we shall see an improvement. We have certainly worked hard to try to obtain that. On that basis I commend the regulations to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Representation of the People Regulations 1986, which were laid before this House on 13th May, be approved.

Representation of the People

Resolved,

That the draft Representation of the People (Scotland) Regulations 1986, which were laid before this House on 15th May, be approved.—*[Mr. Mellor.]*

Representation of the People

12.17 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Nicholas Scott): I beg to move,

That the draft Representation of the People (Northern Ireland) Regulations 1986, which were laid before this House on 19th May, be approved.

I should emphasise that the regulations apply only to parliamentary and not to local government or Assembly elections which are covered under separate legislation. The main purpose of these regulations is the same as those which have already been moved and approved by the House, which is to extend the franchise to our citizens overseas and to allow holidaymakers an absent vote.

I do not wish to delay the House by recounting arguments which have already been put forward by my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department, but I shall, of course, respond to any points that are made about the particular impact of the regulations on Northern Ireland.

Of particular importance to Northern Ireland — the House may think of subsidiary importance to the main thrust of the regulations — is regulation 13, which amends the list of specified documents which have to be produced in order to obtain a ballot paper at elections in Northern Ireland. It is proposed, under regulation 13*(a)*, that for the words "Article 12" we should substitute the words "Articles 8 and 12" to provide for an approved provisional driving licence as well as a full driving licence to be acceptable as a specified document, and under regulation 13*(b)* that

"a British seaman's card issued in accordance with regulations made under section 70 of the Merchant Shipping Act 1970,"

should also be acceptable. Those proposals are made in response to representations that we received in Northern Ireland after we had established the original list of specified documents. They represent a modest move in response to the representations that we received.

I commend the regulations to the House.

12.19 am

Mr. J. Enoch Powell (South Down): This is not an occasion for the Ulster litany of complaint against substantive legislation by Order in Council, for this is a statutory instrument made under United Kingdom legislation. Nevertheless, it is appropriate that these Northern Ireland regulations should be considered in their own right, since there are appreciable differences between them and those that apply in the rest of the United Kingdom. Some of the reforms introduced by the principal Act will have a somewhat different impact in Northern Ireland.

In Northern Ireland the functions of registration and returning officer are carried out by the electoral and deputy electoral officers, who are responsible directly to the Secretary of State. Therefore, in Northern Ireland the Secretary of State is in a more direct relationship with what happens on the ground and has, in a sense, a more intimate responsibility. Consequently, there are several points of a policy character to which it would be reasonable to invite the Minister to address himself. Intimation of some of the points that I intended to raise was given at the end of last week, and I hope that it reached the Minister in time for him to be able to consider them.

There is one matter of special concern to Northern Ireland. I am referring to the measures that were included in the principal Act, I think in section 10, in the event of the Secretary of State forming the view that it was necessary to make special arrangements to prevent abuse in the context of absent voting.

Between now and the point at which these regulations come into force and are applied at a parliamentary election we are unlikely to glean any more experience from the working of elections. Therefore, it seems reasonable to suggest that the Secretary of State should be able to make up his mind and say whether he intends to use the powers contained in section 10 to bring schedule 1 into operation. I do not think that anything in the argument that occurred while debating the 1985 Bill or in the experience of the 1985 local government elections and the series of recent parliamentary elections has led to the conclusion that the elaborate precautions provided for in the first schedule will be necessary.

Indeed, that schedule is in a sense the vestigial remains of the original intention — which, fortunately, with the assistance of the House, was aborted — to deprive Northern Ireland of some of the advantages of the extension of absent voting which the principal Act made possible. It would be a pity if that increased facility were restricted by the use of section 10 and schedule 1, and I hope that if not tonight, at least in good time before the likelihood of a parliamentary election, the Secretary of State will say whether he intends — I hope not — to invoke those safeguards.

I come to matters of slightly less importance, which are significant to those concerned with the running and organisation of elections. Reference was made in the previous debate to the availability of forms. Regulation 5(2) does not contain any requirement that the forms used shall be exactly the same as the prescribed forms. They may be forms substantially to the same effect so that in practice, if candidates and their organisations are prepared to reproduce approximately the same forms as those set out in the schedule, there can be no question of candidates or electors being disadvantaged by a shortage of forms or, as in some cases, the unwillingness of electoral officers to provide an adequate number of forms.

Linked with that are the forms in connection with the claiming of absent and proxy votes, which are not prescribed in the regulations as I understand them. It will, therefore, be possible for candidates and their agents to compile forms which include all the particulars prescribed under the regulations and, provided that all those particulars are covered by the applications made on behalf of electors, the applications and claims should be valid.

If I have construed the regulations correctly, we have escaped from what has sometimes seemed to be the unnecessary red tape surrounding electoral forms. Both when they are prescribed, and when they are not prescribed, in schedules to the regulations it should be competent and possible for an efficient electoral organisation to provide for the elector to avail himself of all the facilities which are extended to him under the regulations.

Regulation 8 is headed "Misnomers". There is a slight puzzle about it. We all understand that a register should not be invalid because of an obvious mistake in the register — either because of an obvious mistake in the description of a place such as a town or street, or because of an obvious mistake in the spelling or printing of the name of an elector. I wonder whether that result, that an

"obvious mistake" — I am obviously using layman's language — will be ignored and will not invalidate the document or list in question, is achieved by the expression "such as to be commonly understood."

Often, the consequence of an error of that kind is precisely that it would not be "commonly understood". What we are trying to strike at under this article is that which is an error, and nothing but an error, and which any reasonable person would admit was an error. I wonder whether we have yet got the wording correct in the regulations for the purpose of defining what we understand to be the intention of regulation 8.

An important change for Northern Ireland is made in regulation 31. Hitherto, during the registration season, a draft register of electors, called the list of electors, has been published on distinctively coloured paper and has been the basis of the work on claims and objections and the production of a register as nearly correct as possible to come into force in February.

As I understand the regulations, that practice might be continued, but there is an alternative option to use the same procedure of three lists, A, B and C, which has been normal on the mainland for many years. It would be helpful if at an early stage, if not tonight, an indication were given about the policy which will be pursued in exercising that option in Northern Ireland. Clearly the option should be exercised in the same way by all registration officers. It should be a policy decision taken for the Province as a whole.

I do not think that anyone will disagree with me when I say that I believe that Northern Ireland interests would be served by going over to the Great Britain system of lists A, B and C. With the Great Britain system of A, B and C it is far easier to check whether a name has been inadvertently omitted from the existing register or whether all the names that should be added to the new register are to be so added. This is what the B list and the C list do for those who are concerned with elections on the mainland.

It would be an advantage in Northern Ireland if, instead of being confronted every November with a complete list, take it or leave it, as it were, which is the draft of the new register, those concerned with elections had the B list and the C list, as is made available on the mainland. Anecdotally, I would benefit myself from the availability of the B list, as it has been my custom ever since I have been a member of the House to call at every new house whose residents appeared on the new register. There has always been the convenience of having it served up on toast, as it were, on the B list. I do not urge that as the main reason, however, why I hope that that option will be preferred. I hope that the preference of the option will be adopted as a matter of policy for the Province as a whole and that the Secretary of State will, as soon as possible, indicate that that will be so.

Finally, I refer to regulation 66, to which reference has already been made in the context of the corresponding regulations for England and Scotland. Under the new dispensation, we shall no longer distinguish between several grounds of application for an absent vote, which have previously been differentiated. The provision for absent voting at a particular election covers those who are absent on holiday, those who are absent by reason of an exigency of their employment, it not being a normal incident of that employment, and those who are absent for some special personal reason. In addition — this is the matter that I want to emphasise — it covers those who have moved their residence during the currency of the current register. All these positions are picked up by the omnibus provision in the principal Act, which is implemented by regulation 66.

Hitherto in Northern Ireland — we were grateful to the House for preserving the facility for an absent vote due to change of residence — there has been a precise definition of the geographical nature of the movement of residence which would entitle to an absent vote. In most cases, and certainly in the constituencies that I have contested, a move from one ward to another, irrespective of the actual distance involved, qualified for a postal vote. I do not think that that qualification, quite in that form, will apply under the new regulations and the new law, but it is necessary — at any rate it is highly desirable — that electors, candidates and those concerned with elections should have as clear an idea, as possible well in advance, of the sort of distance that will be taken into account by registration officers as rendering unreasonable the requirement to go to the allotted polling station.

This is more than a quibble and it is more than a complaint of the use of "reasonable" in the regulations. There should be a uniformity of standard applied in this respect between one constituency and another. For instance, it would be unreasonable that a registration officer in one area would regard 20 miles as a minimum distance of remove to qualify for a postal vote, whereas another officer might accept a claim where the distance was as little as 15 or 10 miles.

In constituencies such as those in Northern Ireland where considerable geographical difficulties are interposed by change of residence over a relatively short distance, I think that some guidance issued generally to registration officers, and known and settled in advance, for the Province as a whole, would result in greater fairness and would assist candidates and potential candidates in enabling the maximum number of electors to secure an absent vote.

I end on that note, because it is one of the characteristics of electioneering that our business in electioneering is to secure as many votes as possible for those who otherwise might not have the means to exercise them. Great effort will be devoted in the next year or two — certainly in Northern Ireland and, so far as I am concerned, in my constituency — to identify those who qualify at the moment for a standing absent vote and who are potential claimants for an absent vote for a particular election.

If that work is to be done effectively, we must have more definitions than the regulations provide of the interpretation that will be placed upon them by registration officers. That interpretation must be applied throughout the Province and adequate publicity must be given to it. I think that there might be adequate advance consultation on those points with the political parties concerned. I see that I have the Minister's assent on that point. Therefore, I shall conclude by saying something on which I shall also probably have his assent.

The work of the electoral officers and the deputy electoral officers in Northern Ireland over the past 12 or 13 years has produced a progressive improvement in the accuracy of the electoral registers, which are the essential basis of all fair and democratic elections. These officials devote themselves with considerable dedication to the improvement of the quality of the registers for which they are responsible. It must be said that the results that they

[Mr. J. Enoch Powell]

achieve mark a perceptible improvement from one register to another. In the past 13 years I do not think there has been one new register with which I have been concerned which has not represented an improvement on its predecessors.

We need the regulations. We need the interpretation of the regulations and the guidance for which I have asked if candidates, their agents and all those concerned with electors are to co-operate with the electoral officers in securing not merely an even more accurate register but the maximum list of absent and proxy voters under the new law as it will be when the new regulations come into force.

12.38 am

Mr. Scott: I am grateful to the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) for initiating a separate debate because, as he rightly said, there are distinctive characteristics to the regulations which affect Northern Ireland. I echo his warm tribute to the chief electoral officer and other officials concerned with elections in Northern Ireland. They have made successive improvements in the accuracy of the register in Northern Ireland. That work will continue. I hope that we have not yet come to the end of that road of improving the accuracy of the register.

I take issue with the right hon. Gentleman about the chief electoral officer being responsible to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. The chief electoral officer is the returning officer in every constituency in Northern Ireland. He is not directly responsible to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. His responsibility, as returning officer and as registration officer, is to the law, as it is in the United Kingdom as a whole. He is responsible only to the law, and not to any Minister, for the way in which he answers for those responsibilities. At the end of the day, it would be for the courts, not Ministers, to decide whether he had discharged his responsibilities properly.

The right hon. Gentleman went on to raise a number of points. I am grateful for the fact that I was given, albeit by a somewhat circuitous route, notice of the points that he was likely to raise. The first point concerned schedule 1 to the Representation of the People Act 1985 which, as he said, empowers the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland to provide by order for a special polling station scheme to operate in the Province in certain circumstances. I emphasise that it was envisaged that those powers would be used only if there were evidence of serious abuse of postal voting facilities or if there were a risk of such serious abuse being imminent. If we were ever to move in that direction, the order implementing those provisions would need the prior approval of both Houses of Parliament. I can confirm that the Government have no present intention of activating the provisions of schedule 1.

Mr. J. Enoch Powell: The hon. Gentleman will understand that it would be clearly unacceptable if there were to be a snap decision with a relatively short time to run between the order being passed and the election taking place. Obviously, that would be avoided in the light of the general description of the Government's attitude to this matter which the hon. Gentleman has stated.

Mr. Scott: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman, who will, of course, know the background that convinced the Government that it was necessary to have these powers in reserve. We differ on the need for the specified documents being introduced to counter the possibility of electoral abuse. There was always the danger that those who had hitherto exploited the weaknesses in the law to personate votes in Northern Ireland might move to exploit the absent voting provisions. These are reserve powers. We have no intention at the moment of using these powers. In order to do so, we would need the approval of both Houses of Parliament.

The right hon. Member referred to the forms that are used to register and to provide for absent voting claims. He described the present arrangements as smacking somewhat of red tape. I have had complaints from various sources in Northern Ireland of a shortage of those forms. It is clear that under regulation 5(2) party organisations and others can reproduce their own facsimile forms and pro formas for those purposes.

The only word of advice to parties that I would put on the record is that, if they are to produce their own pro formas for registration or for absent voting purposes, I hope they will liaise with the chief electoral officer and make absolutely sure that the documents are in the proper form and provide all the required statutory information so there can be no question about their validity when presented.

The right hon. Gentleman went on to raise a point about misnomers in regulation 8. In a sense, I have to stand by the fact that this wording is precisely that of section 50 of the Representation of the People Act 1983. Although it is difficult to describe this point exactly, any reasonable man would quickly understand what we are talking about. We are saying that a simple mistake in the course of the preparation of any such list should not invalidate the status of that list for the purposes of electoral registration. That has endured for the past three years without question. These regulations repeat that. If the right hon. Gentleman or any of his colleagues felt that there was a substantial danger of this causing any difficulty in terms of registration and if they were prepared to write to us, we would consider whether there was any real danger of that occurring. At the moment, I perceive none, and certainly no one has raised it since that provision was inserted in the 1983 Act.

The right hon. Gentleman's penultimate point was on the question of draft registers. He said that he preferred that system, which he perceived to be common on this side of the water, of the A, B and C lists. I have to tell him that already on this side of the water the movement is away from those procedures, with which he is even more familiar than I. Certainly it was the system with which I was familiar in my early days in the House. Already in Scotland no provision is made for the old A, B and C lists. It is moving to the system of draft registers which are proposed in these regulations. In England and Wales already well over a half of the constituencies are now covered by the new system of draft registers. The choice is for the chief electoral officer alone. It is his judgment. There is no question that in having the system of draft registers Northern Ireland is being treated any differently from England, Wales or Scotland.

Mr. J. Enoch Powell: I wonder whether this is a matter on which it would be helpful for the chief electoral officer to seek views with the aim of arriving, at as early a date as possible, at a system which would be generally

acceptable in the Province. There is a real practical difference between the operations which are required in one system and in the other. Clearly, it is desirable that we should know where we stand as soon as possible. Also, where we stand should be of the maximum convenience to as many people as may be. Therefore, if that could be promoted, it would help.

Mr. Scott: At the beginning of this short reply I recognised the independence of the chief electoral officer and his responsibility to the law, not to Ministers. I am sure that if representatives of the political parties in Northern Ireland wished to make representations to him, the chief electoral officer would take them into account in coming to his decisions.

Finally, the right hon. Gentleman referred to absent voting. I acknowledge that there is a change in the regulations as they affect Northern Ireland. However, the change is bringing them entirely into line with the practice in Great Britain. It will be for the returning officer to make up his mind as to whether there is a case for an elector not being able to get to his allotted polling station. It is an attempt to say that rather than someone having an automatic entitlement to be moved from one ward to another, the returning officer should be able to take into account a whole range of matters and make up his mind.

If the right hon. Gentleman's point is that there should be some general guidance across the Province as a whole, I shall certainly draw his remarks to the attention of the chief electoral officer—who is, after all, the registration officer throughout Northern Ireland—to see whether it is possible for him to produce some sort of common guidance. Again I emphasise his independence, but I shall certainly draw that to his attention. I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for providing me with the opportunity to clarify some of these points. I commend the regulations to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Representation of the People (Northern Ireland) Regulations 1986, which were laid before this House on 19th May, be approved.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Merchant Shipping

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 79(5) (Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments &c.)

That the draft Merchant Shipping (Cargo Ship Construction and Survey) Regulations 1984 (Amendment) Regulations 1986, which were laid before this House on 22nd May, be approved.

That the draft Merchant Shipping (Passenger Ship Construction) (New and Existing Ships) (Amendment) Regulations 1986, which were laid before this House on 22nd May, be approved.

That the draft Merchant Shipping (Fire Protection and Fire Appliances) (Amendment) Regulations 1986, which were laid before this House on 22nd May, be approved.

That the draft Merchant Shipping (Musters and Training) Regulations 1986, which were laid before this House on 22nd May, be approved.

That the draft Merchant Shipping (Life-Saving Appliances) Regulations 1986, which were laid before this House on 22nd May, be approved.

That the draft Merchant Shipping (Radio Installations) (Amendment) Regulations 1986, which were laid before this House on 22nd May, be approved.

That the draft Merchant Shipping (Chemical Tankers) Regulations 1986, which were laid before this House on 22nd May, be approved.

That the draft Merchant Shipping (Gas Carriers) Regulations 1986, which were laid before this House on 22nd May, be approved.

That the draft Merchant Shipping (Life-Saving Appliances Regulations 1980) (Amendment) Regulations 1986 which were laid before this House on 16th June, be approved.

That the draft Merchant Shipping (Dangerous Goods) (Amendment) Regulations 1986 which were laid before this House on 16th June, be approved. — *[Mr. Archie Hamilton.]*

Question agreed to.

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY DOCUMENTS

Definition of Fishing Vessel Characteristics

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 80(5) (Standing Committees on European Community documents.)

That this House takes note of European Community Document No. 4676/86 laying down definitions of fishing vessels' characteristics and measurements; and supports the Government's view that, whilst harmonisation in this field is generally to be welcomed, Community legislation should not, as far as possible, impose further burdens on the fishing industry.—*[Mr. Archie Hamilton.]*

Question agreed to.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Ordered,

That Mr. Bernard Conlan be discharged from the Trade and Industry Committee and Mr. Richard Caborn be added. — *[Sir Marcus Fox, on behalf of the Committee of Selection.]*

AGRICULTURE

Ordered,

That Mr. Nicholas Baker be added to the Agriculture Committee.—*[Sir Marcus Fox, on behalf of the Committee of Selection.]*

EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND ARTS

Ordered,

That Mr. Sean Hughes be discharged from the Education, Science and Arts Committee and Dr. Mark Hughes be added. — *[Sir Marcus Fox, on behalf of the Committee of Selection.]*

ENVIRONMENT

Ordered,

That Mr. Michael Stern be added to the Environment Committee.—*[Sir Marcus Fox, on behalf of the Committee of Selection.]*

SCOTTISH AFFAIRS

Ordered,

That Sir Hector Monro be discharged from the Scottish Affairs Committee and Mr. Alexander Pollock be added.—*[Sir Marcus Fox, on behalf of the Committee of Selection.]*

Bolton (Hospital Facilities)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Archie Hamilton.]*

12.48 am

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): I am grateful for this opportunity to put the case for Bolton's new hospital facilities. With permission, I shall give 77 different reasons why they are so desperately needed.

I have been applying for an Adjournment debate since the end of April, when the people of Bolton were dismayed to learn that there was to be an 18-month delay to the start of work on Bolton's already long overdue additional hospital facilities. I must express in the strongest possible terms my dissatisfaction over both the delay itself and the stated reason. It is said to be the result of overscheduling by the North-Western regional health authority in its 10-year plan, announced last year. Apparently, the North Western regional health authority has planned an over-commitment in the earlier part of its plan. Everything is said to be certain in the 10th year of the plan, but over-commitments have been planned in the fourth year, such that

"Districts must appreciate that delays must occur . . . by up to 2½ years".

The latest programme is now said to be realistic.

Therefore, I now call on the Government to carry out an urgent inquiry into the scheduling arrangements for capital spending in the regional health authority, and if necessary to review the provision of funds to enable construction of Bolton's new facilities to commence without delay.

I have been pressing the need for those new facilities since I was elected. The then Minister for Health, the present Paymaster General, stated during his visit in the general election of 1983 that

"Bolton's case is burnt into my mind".

We were pleased when in June of the following year, my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary's predecessor, the present Minister for Housing, Urban Affairs and Construction, visited Bolton to see for himself the existing facilities, which are split between the two sites of the general hospital and the royal infirmary. As a result of that visit, when I gave him a four-page list of reasons why Bolton needed the new facilities, an urgent review of the timetable for the long-promised improvements was put in hand. It was with great relief that the people of Bolton heard in April last year that Bolton's case had been accepted by the regional health authority, with a programmed start date of January 1988 for the £16·5 million phase 1, and 1994-95 for the £17 million phase 2.

The importance of the project lies not only in its significance to the health of the people but in its impact on the town's general morale and economic well-being. Employment in Bolton's National Health Service has risen from some 3,500 in 1979 to 4,500 currently. Even after efficiency savings of £400,000 due to competitive tendering, the projected new facilities contribute to a forecast further increase of 600 NHS jobs in Bolton, including 400 nurses. In a town with such high unemployment, the importance of such a project cannot be overestimated.

Historically, Bolton, along with other towns on the north-west of the Greater Manchester conurbation, has been deprived of health services while resources have been concentrated on the teaching hospitals in the centre of Manchester under the influence of powerful medical and teaching lobbies. As a result Bolton, along with Wigan, Bury and Oldham, has poor facilities and capital stock. However, while capital developments are in progress at Bury and Oldham, Bolton has fallen far short of its requirements. Both my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, West (Mr. Sackville) and I invite the Minister to visit Bolton to see for himself the pressing need for work to start now, without delay. As I shall describe, the evidence is overwhelming.

Managing for years on a make do and mend basis, Bolton is now over 12 per cent. short of its resources allocation working party allocation, and 18th out of 19 in the RAWP league table in the north-west region. By 1993, if activity targets are achieved, the district will be at only 80 per cent. of financial target allocation, representing a shortfall of £9·5 million a year.

Bolton health authority, serving an area of some 54 square miles, has 1,315 beds, but they are split between two main sites—the general hospital has 872 beds and the royal infirmary 233 beds. Those two sites are approximately one and a half miles apart, and together provide for the acute and emergency admissions.

The split between the two sites causes difficulties and confusion. For instance, the casualty reception is at the royal infirmary, but the coronary care unit is at the general hospital. In consequence, ambulance drivers may make mistakes, and skilled anaesthetists, together with paediatricians and surgeons, have to spend time travelling from one hospital to another. The accident and emergency unit at the royal infirmary is one of the two busiest in the north-west region, with 72,000 attendances in 1984.

Despite being so busy and having to serve the needs of a population of a quarter of a million, Bolton is the only district in the north-west without proper intensive care facilities and without specially trained staff. On present projections, it will be 1994 before Bolton gets its target of 13 intensive care units. Meanwhile, there are but three high dependency beds at the infirmary. The one at the general hospital is only partially equipped by voluntary donations from the Women's Royal Voluntary Service.

How many such districts are there in the south-east of England which do not have intensive care facilities? What would the people in my hon. Friend the Minister's constituency of Wycombe say if their hospital had no intensive care facilities?

Both the region and the Department know that childrens' lives are at risk without centralised children's services. There is an acknowledged need for 10 operating theatres, but we have only seven. On a visit last Saturday, I found that two out of the three operating theatres at the general hospital are so seriously substandard that a temporary facility is having to be provided until a full upgrading scheme can be afforded. The air conditioning system is no longer properly operative, and there is therefore a potential risk of infection.

The need for improved health services in Bolton is undeniable. The mortality figures show that the expectation of life in Bolton is significantly below average. People born elsewhere in England can expect to live one or one and a half years longer than people in Bolton. Why should that be so? There are a number of contributory factors. Bolton's climate, which benefited its cotton industry, is not so good for its inhabitants. The atmospheric pollution in Bolton has only recently been

reduced. Historically, Bolton had the highest sulphur dioxide concentration in the north-west but now peak levels only occasionally exceed the recommended level of 60 microgrammes per cubic metre. Unfortunately, Bolton's rivers, the Tonge and the Irwell, are still among the worst polluted rivers in the north-west, whose rivers are among the worst in the country.

Two reports have highlighted the deficiencies in Bolton's health. In 1980 the Black report found that Bolton was among the 10 worst areas in the country as measured by standardised mortality rate. The second, the Holland report of 1983, placed Bolton 97th out of 98 for areas of the country which suffered above average "avoidable" deaths from preventable diseases for the period 1974-78. In the next four-year period, 1979-83 the town was still placed in the bottom third of the country.

These reports show the effects of socio-economic factors, which are further revealed by estimates that 1 per cent. of hospital bed days are accounted for by elderly patients without suitable homes to return to. The district medical adviser has said that it would take decades for Bolton's health to overcome these difficulties and for Bolton to be rid of its image as a sick town.

The people of Bolton are not suffering from a failure to see the doctor. The number of prescriptions shows that Bolton's population takes nearly 9 per cent. more medicines per head than the country as a whole, at a cost 4 per cent. higher than the England-Wales average.

The evidence that Bolton needs improved health services is overwhelming. Indeed, on this evidence, Bolton requires above average facilities. The DHSS approval for phase 1 established an essential need for 17 different facilities—accident and emergency, dispensary, fracture clinic, out-patients department, X-ray, rehabilitation, ear, nose and throat, and dental out-patients, theatres, in-patient acute beds, coronary care and intensive therapy beds, day care unit, staff changing, administration departments, medical records, kitchen, staff dining room and doctors on-call accommodation.

The waiting time for a consultation with a rheumatologist is 39 weeks, and ophthalmic waiting times are substantially above the national average at 15 months. As for staffing levels, there is a shortage of staff for mental illness patients. For consultant radiologists, the district is within the worst 5 per cent. in the country, based on work load in 1984-85. For in-patient hospital treatment rates, Bolton again comes near the bottom of the North-Western regional health authority league tables—16th out of 19 for district specialties.

Excluding mental handicap, there is a shortfall of 241 hospital beds, of which 42 are general medical, and 27 are orthopaedic. So the principle of equal access to health care is possible only if Bolton's patients are referred to other districts.

At 12 per cent. below the target set by RAWP, Bolton is short of £3 million on general revenue, and a further £3 million on revenue related to capital. On capital account, Bolton's deficiency is £21 million, the second worst in the region, which is again acknowledged in the commitment to phase 1 of the planned expansion to the general hospital for which some £16·5 million is budgeted. The region's outline strategy report calls for cash to be allocated on an efficiency basis. Bolton already shows a lower than average cost per patient, perhaps, as I found on Saturday, because some beds are occupied by three or four different patients each day. We are pleased with the recently completed geriatric facilities, and the Princess Anne maternity unit has long been held up as a paragon to other districts. The unit had a throughput of 3,000 per annum when it opened in 1977, increasing to more than 4,500 by 1985.

Besides making efficient use of National Health Service facilities the people of Bolton have also provided voluntarily. In the past two years £130,000 was successfully raised in an appeal for new medical equipment, and for many years the WRVS has provided many hundreds of volunteers for hospital services. Bolton's initiatives for care in the community were accepted by the previous Minister for Health as some of the best in the country.

In conclusion, I trust that the Government will accept that resources must be found to fund the much-needed new facilities without further delay. Bolton with its split sites is in an impossible position to plan if resources are not made available to go ahead with phase 1 as soon as possible. Surplus capacity in the new oversized boilerhouse and duplication of units in the present old buildings require extra staff and expenditure without patient benefit. The general hospital is the right site for development as the infirmary lacks rooms and the general is the only site large enough for construction of the required services.

The history of promises for the building of the phase 1 extension of the general hospital started in the 1978 when it was promised that the extension would begin in 1984. By 1980 the date had slipped to 1985 and in 1981 it slipped a further year to April 1986. In 1983 it was scheduled to begin in October 1986, to be completed in 1989. Last year it was scheduled to start in January 1988, but we are now told that it is to be further delayed, with a start date scheduled for September 1989 and completion three years from that date.

An early start must be made on the X-ray and pathology units which, with the most recent delay to phase 1, means extra costs of some £830,000. There will be ultimate economies from the provision of day care and centralised facilities, but I am sure that my hon. Friend the Minister would wish to support both the very necessary and long overdue capital investment and the allocation of revenue to run it. By calling for a review of capital programming in the North-West regional health authority and by restoring the original schedule the Government could save not only many hundreds of thousands of pounds of extra costs incurred as a result of the delays but, most importantly, the health of the people of Bolton.

I call upon the Government to ensure that construction work starts without further delay.

1.2 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mr. Ray Whitney): I am happy to have the opportunity to respond to my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham). I am sorry that he has had to wait since April for this debate, but he made excellent use of the opportunity once it arose.

My hon. Friend is extremely concerned about the plans to rebuild Bolton general hospital. Before going into detail about that, I should like to say a word or two about the very large scale of investment in the Health Service in the north-west region under the present Government. As my hon. Friend knows, he and we can be justly proud of our record on this. The region is better funded and better managed and is treating more patients than ever before.

[Mr. Ray Whitney]

Since 1978-79, Health Service spending in the region has increased from £380 million to £807 million in 1984-85 — a growth in real terms of 19·8 per cent. Taken together with the region's allocations for 1985-86 and 1986-87, expenditure in real terms in the region is forecast to rise by 23 per cent. compared with an average of 19 per cent. for health authorities in England as a whole. Those figures include the recent £50 million increase to take account of particular pressures from the National Health Service review body pay awards. This growth comes from real growth in Health Service resources and from redistribution from historically well-off regions in the south to the north.

If we look at how the north-west region has moved towards its resource allocation working party target, we see that in 1977-78 it was 11 per cent. below and that it has advanced to 0·8 per cent. below this year. That comes from making better use of existing resources. The region estimates that its cost improvements for 1985-86 will be 2·3 per cent. That includes cash releases, through efficiency, of £10·721 million. I understand that Bolton is making its contribution to this picture. For example, on domestic services £600,000 will be released this year alone through competitive tendering for additional health services in the area. Two contracts have been awarded: one in-house, covering the Bolton general hospital, and one to Crothalls, an outside company.

In addition, the region has had and continues to have the second highest capital allocation in England. This year it amounts to £71·517 million. On a per capita basis the region's basic capital allocation works out at £14·89 for every man, woman and child in the region, and compares with the average for England as a whole of £12·70.

The Government's investment is enabling us to tackle the legacy of health services problems in Bolton and elsewhere in the region. Let us be clear what the problems are. They are not with the services provided. All who work in Bolton's health services — my hon. Friend gave a figure of about 4,000 — give good service to Bolton's people. The problem relates to the amount of service that they can provide. Health services are indeed unequally spread across the region. Bolton people find it harder to gain access to health services than do people in the best served north-western districts, notably south Manchester and Trafford. That is not new. The problem was among the backlog of unattended needs left behind by the Labour Government, and we must face it now. The Government care about Bolton, which is why we have proposed that there should be development of Bolton general hospital.

We have already given approval in principle of phase one, and the regional health authority plans a second phase. The total redevelopment costs will be more than £38 million. It is an ambitious hospital building and rationalisation programme. Work on phase one will begin in 1989. Other preparatory work must be done before then — for example, drains must be laid. The phase one development will include 148 acute beds, eight intensive therapy beds, four X-ray rooms, an accident and emergency department, three theatres and seven coronary care beds at a total cost of £16·541 million.

My hon. Friend referred to problems about timing, but before the work can be carried out much has to be done. Resources are having to be released from over-provided districts, and the region has had to produce a manageable capital programme. That has certainly given the impression of slippage, to which my hon. Friend referred. As he said, the region's capital programme was overcommitted in the early years because the regional health authority was advised that, for planning reasons, overcommitment can act as an incentive to progress and assist in responding to slippage, so that maximum use is made of capital allocations.

Whatever the reasons for the approach, the result was an over-ambitious capital programme. To have rebuilt Bolton's general hospital at the date previously suggested would have depended on other planned and equally necessary schemes suffering delays unforeseen when the programme was drawn up. So a capital programme on that basis was over optimistic and always at risk of disappointing someone. Morever, recent experience of the construction industry, at least in the north-west region, is that delays are not occurring to the same degree. The regional health authority decided that overcommitment was no longer the right way to cope with slippage. That has been the subject of discussion between the region and Ministers. The region has produced a programme which is affordable in successive years, not overcommitted and realistic. There is no need for further conjecture, and I assure my hon. Friend's constituents that they have a date for the hospital rebuilding which is as firm as possible. We can all look forward to it with confidence.

I understand the pressures to which my hon. Friend referred, but I ask him to note that, in addition to the general hospital rebuilding, there has been much capital spending in Bolton in recent years. Indeed, it totals £16 million since 1982. For example, a mental illness unit is being built at a cost of £1·9 million. Next year, £320,000 will be spent upgrading the X-ray department, and £773,000 on expanding a pathology laboratory. They are demonstrations of our commitment. I recognise that my hon. Friend would have wished progress to be much faster. I hope that he accepts that the earlier forecasts were made with the best of intentions. I understand the disappointment that they caused, but I hope that he accepts that the movement of the revenue funding and the commitment to the steadily increasing capital funding — an increase on an already significant amount of capital expenditure — will bring Bolton up to the standards that he and I want for his constituents.

I hope that my hon. Friend accepts that we are moving in the right direction and that significant increases in resources are being devoted to improving health care in Bolton, to which he referred so effectively. I ask him to carry back to his constituents my commitment that the timetable that has now been established has every prospect of being adhered to.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twelve minutes past One o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 24 June 1986

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

ABERYSTWYTH HARBOUR BILL
Considered; to be read the Third time.

FELIXSTOWE DOCK AND RAILWAY BILL
Order for consideration read.
To be considered upon Thursday.

HARROGATE BOROUGH COUNCIL BILL *[Lords]*
Order for consideration read.
Amendments agreed to.
To be read the Third time.

BROMBOROUGH DOCK BILL *[Lords]*

CLIFTON SUSPENSION BRIDGE BILL *[Lords]*
Read a Second time, and committed.

BLYTH HARBOUR BILL *[Lords]*
Order for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time tomorrow.

Oral Answers to Questions

EMPLOYMENT

Clean-up Campaign

1. **Mr. Bruce** asked the Paymaster General how many jobs he estimates the proposed clean-up campaign will create.

3. **Mr. Terry Lewis** asked the Paymaster General if street cleaning is presently included within the framework of the community programme.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Ian Lang): My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment has recently announced a new environmental improvement initiative which it is estimated will initially provide work for up to 5,000 long-term unemployed people through the community programme together with additional opportunities for volunteers. A very wide range of worthwhile activities can be undertaken through the programme provided they involve work which would not otherwise be done and bring practical benefits to the community.

Mr. Bruce: I am sure that those who are unemployed will be grateful for the opportunity to take up work. However, does this scheme not show how much out of touch the Prime Minister is with the reality of what is happening in Britain and that the opportunity should have been taken to restore some civic pride in Britain and give local authorities the resources to clean up their own streets?

Mr. Lang: I think that the scheme as envisaged, details of which will be announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment in due course, contemplates a much wider sphere of activities than would be confined within local authority activities.

Mr. Lewis: Is the Paymaster General aware that 155,000 jobs have been lost in local government in the manual sector, many of them street cleaners and the like? Rather than give youngsters skivvying jobs, would it not be a good thing to give rate support grant back to local government and let it do the job properly?

Mr. Lang: As I have just explained, the work planned for the initiative does not, to a large extent, fall within the scope of local authorities. The proposals will be wide ranging in their effect and I believe that they will have the wide and strong support of the vast majority of the people of this country.

Mr. Speller: When my hon. Friend helps to promote this excellent campaign, may we also ask that the resources be directed to the areas where unemployment is at its highest, such as the coastal areas of the west country, and that we look to that as well as to the over-employed south-east?

Mr. Lang: I thank my hon. Friend for his support. It will be a matter on which potential sponsors of individual projects within the overall programme can approach the board with their proposals. I am sure that they will receive sympathetic consideration.

Mr. Freud: Is the Minister aware that there are 331,000 people under the age of 25 who have been unemployed for over one year? Will he give precedence to those people when he is looking at applicants for community employment?

Mr. Lang: The community programme is specifically designed to help the long-term unemployed. Therefore, they will receive favourable treatment in that context.

Ms. Clare Short: Is the Minister aware that everyone in the country, except it seems the Prime Minister, is aware that our streets have been becoming dirtier and tattier for many years because of the squeeze on local authority expenditure and privatisation, which has reduced the number of people who are cleaning our streets? The answer is not to take on a trendy business man to take on more and more unemployed people at very low rates of pay and then dump them back into unemployment, but to give more money to local authorities to employ people on a permanent basis to do the job properly and reduce the numbers who are unemployed.

Mr. Lang: The hon. Lady is wrong. Local authority spending needs are fully taken into account in setting the level of expenditure for rate support grant purposes. The intention of the programme is not to replace the activities of local authorities as regards their refuse and litter collection. That remains their duty, and they will continue to have sufficient resources to carry that out. Nor will there be substitution for existing jobs under the community programme, the rules of which are specifically designed to avoid that.

Mr. Hancock: How long will the schemes last, and how will the clean-up campaign work with local government? Will it be an integral part of local government responsibility to find areas for these people to clean, or will the process be completely separate?

Mr. Lang: The hon. Gentleman will need to await the full details of the scheme from my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment. However, there is no reason why local authorities should not also become involved in the project.

Trades Union Congress

2. **Mr. Hoyle** asked the Paymaster General if he has any plans to see the Trades Union Congress to discuss industrial relations.

The Paymaster General and Minister for Employment (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): I have no plans at present to meet the Trades Union Congress to discuss industrial relations.

Mr. Hoyle: Why is it that neither the Secretary of State for Employment nor the Paymaster General will meet the TUC, yet they will meet any reactionary small employer? Why will they not meet the representatives of employees? Does it mean that the Government's policy is one of confrontation rather than consultation?

Mr. Clarke: The hon. Gentleman will agree that we have the best industrial relations that we have had for generations. The figures for the past 12 months show that the number of hours lost through industrial disputes is the lowest we have known for 24 years, and that the total number of strikes is the lowest for 50 years.

Mr. John Townend: If in the distant future my right hon. and learned Friend meets representatives of the TUC, will he discuss with them the adequacy of the safeguards for trade union members who wish to contract out of the political levy? Will he make it clear that if the undertakings given previously are not fulfilled the Government will not hesitate to change the law and move to contracting in rather than contracting out?

Mr. Clarke: We believe that members of trade unions have an undoubted right not to pay a contribution to a political fund if they do not wish to do so. We trust that the unions, some of whom have been less than frank with their members in their recent campaigns on political funds, will now carry out their obligations and make it clear to members that they do not have to pay for party political activities of which they do not approve.

Mr. Winnick: What about the right of working people to belong to a trade union? Is the Paymaster General aware that if he met the TUC it would express to him its strong opposition to the way in which people are being penalised at GCHQ for the mere crime of wanting to belong to a trade union? Why have the Government taken that democratic right away from our fellow citizens?

Mr. Clarke: I think that about 99 per cent. of employees at GCHQ have accepted the new conditions of service. The people who were recently disciplined in accordance with the Civil Service code originally undertook to accept those conditions and to renounce trade union membership, but went back on that undertaking.

Mr. Stokes: Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that industrial relations are now generally so good in our factories and that there are so few strikes that industrial workers can often set a good example to other professions with a less good record, such as the National Union of Teachers?

Mr. Clarke: I agree. Those industrial workers would be well advised to listen to the speeches of the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott), who continues to reiterate the Labour party's determination to repeal all of what he describes as Tory anti-trade union laws.

Mr. Prescott: Will the Paymaster General accept that more working days have been lost during this Government's period of office than during a comparable period under the Labour Government? I repeat that we shall repeal all that legislation. If the Paymaster General is so concerned about individual rights, why does he not reconsider his decision not to consult the TUC about the right of employees to belong to a trade union, the right of the printers to redundancy payments and the right to return to work when one has been found innocent, as is the case with the miners in the light of the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service decision?

Mr. Clarke: It seems that the Labour movement is having difficulty in describing what it is prepared to draw up as the individual rights of trade union members. I shall wait for some further formulation of the Labour party proposals before I comment on what the hon. Gentleman says. He is clear that he will repeal all the legislation and deny people the access to the courts that we have provided when they are aggrieved by union misconduct.

As to the total number of working days lost, the hon. Gentleman repeats a figure that he knows is entirely inflated by one dispute — the miners' strike, for which the Labour party argued throughout. Were he to repeal all the trades union legislation, the general picture of industrial relations would cease to reflect the improvements about which I have already told the hon. Member for Warrington, North (Mr. Hoyle).

Two-year YTS

5. **Dr. Michael Clark** asked the Paymaster General what proportion of the funds allocated to the two year YTS programme will be used to assist young people to obtain skills and qualifications in engineering and science.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. David Trippier): About one-third of all entrants to YTS in 1985-86 joined schemes covering engineering and science. We are very conscious of the need for sufficient numbers of young people to be trained to secure the future of these vital sectors.

Dr. Clark: I thank my hon. Friend for that reply. As science and engineering are so vital to the British economy, as there is a shortage of potential employees with these skills, and as there are so many fine young people on the YTS who would benefit from science and engineering training, will he ensure that the expenditure on training in these skills is at least maintained, and possibly enhanced?

Mr. Trippier: I welcome my hon. Friend's question. It gives me an opportunity to pay a warm tribute to him for the interest that he shows in the YTS in general and in his constituency in particular. He has a valid point. We find the figures that I gave in answer to the substantive question very encouraging.

Mr. Madden: Have the Government not done immense harm to engineering and science by reducing the moneys available to such institutions as Bradford university and by presiding over the decimation of engineering apprenticeships?

Mr. Trippier: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman had framed his supplementary question before hearing my answer to the substantive question. The figure that I gave was extremely encouraging, and the trend shown by the figure is strengthening and developing all the time.

Mr. Rowe: Will my hon. Friend confirm that the experience of many of the admirable experiments that he has been carrying out shows that many young people who did not have formal qualifications from school have shown themselves remarkably adept at learning the skills needed in our modern society? Will he also confirm that worrying skill shortages are developing? Will he assure us that the YTS is being used imaginatively to bridge those two concepts?

Mr. Trippier: I give my hon. Friend precisely that assurance. It is one of the main aims of industry in 1986 that we should, wherever possible, match the skill shortages to those people coming off the YTS. Having seen the number of places that are available and the take-up, which exceeds 90 per cent., we are very encouraged.

Mr. Sheerman: If the Minister is genuinely interested in figures, has he seen the estimate by the Engineering Industry Training Board that we shall be short of 4,000 apprenticeships a year in engineering? Has he seen the figures given by Institute of Manpower Studies, which show that there is a lower level of employees in manufacturing industry in training than ever before? In 1967, 5·5 per cent. of employees were in training; in 1982 the figure was 3·2 per cent., and now in 1985, only 2 per cent. That means that there are only 112,000 young people in training in the whole of manufacturing industry. Is this not a condemnation of the Government's policies, and is it not time to have a comprehensive, compulsory training programme to get our country back to the training skills that it needs?

Mr. Trippier: Why does the hon. Gentleman refer to a training board that is compulsory? I cannot understand the connection between it and his question, because the training board that he mentioned is statutory, and is remaining.

I am sure that the hon. Gentleman would not wish to mislead the House — I know him too well for that. However, the ITBs said that that situation would occur unless more engineering employers invested in training instead of seeing it as cost.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that for the latest period for which statistics are available 71 per cent. of the YTS leavers in my constituency have gone into work and that one of the reasons for this great success is the emphasis on technology and science?

Mr. Trippier: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's question. Obviously we are looking forward to the time when the two-year YTS increases the percentage of people who find full-time employment.

Manpower Services Commission

6. **Mr. O'Brien** asked the Paymaster General if he will make a statement on the reorganisation of the Manpower Services Commission.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The commission is reorganising in order to improve the management and delivery of our policies and programmes. From 1 July it will have three operating groups. These will be the employment and enterprise group, the vocational education and training group, and the skills training agency. They will be backed by two support groups providing personnel, finance and management services.

Mr. O'Brien: Is the Paymaster General aware of the concern that is felt about their future by the skills training agency and the skill training centres, because the guarantee that was given to them terminates this year? Will the Paymaster General assure us that there will be no decrease in the number of skill training centres? May we also be assured that there will be a future for the centres? Furthermore, is the Paymaster General aware of the problems, emanating from his Department, of local members of the Manpower Services Commission because insufficient information is being made available to local organisations, such as Age Concern?

Mr. Clarke: There are two distinct points in the hon. Gentleman's question. First, skillcentres have been put on a trading account basis, which we believe will give management the incentive that it requires and to which it will respond in order to gear its training to the requirements of the labour market. The total amount of adult training that we are able to give and the number of people who are receiving adult training with Government assistance have been increasing. As to the second part of the hon. Gentleman's question, we are disseminating as much information as we can about all the Government's policies relating to job training and job opportunities. I commend to the hon. Gentleman and to Age Concern "Action for Jobs". That publication sets out very clearly the full range of the Government's measures on enterprise and employment.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that Governments can do only so much? It is amazing that this very morning I received a letter from the wife of a constituent. He is a man with 35 years' experience, but because he is over the age of 52 the firm to which he applied for a job would not take him on, although it had vacancies. It is not just a matter of young people. Firms sometimes need to be encouraged to recognise that older people need job opportunities as well. There is nonsense about all this somewhere.

Mr. Clarke: I find that case as startling and disappointing as does my hon. Friend. Some of the people who are experiencing the greatest difficulty in our society are those who are above the age of 50 who have suffered redundancy because of industrial change. I am glad to say that our network of job clubs is expanding. It is providing jobs for about two-thirds of the people who join them, because they are motivated to seek work. I am glad to say that job clubs achieve surprising success for many of the older workers who approach them.

Mr. Wainwright: Will the Paymaster General ensure the appointment to these reorganised manpower quangos of some of those who are currently registered as unemployed,

or who have recently become unemployed, so that these committees may learn at first hand about the problems that they are trying to tackle and so that the Conservative party may practise the supremacy of the consumer, which it so frequently preaches?

Mr. Clarke: I hasten to add that these are not new committees. This is a reorganisation of the Civil Service staff of the Manpower Services Commission to enable the commission to be in an even better position than it is in at the moment to deliver the prgrammes which we have drawn up. Certainly there is a growth of employment within the MSC because of the emphasis that we are placing on its work, but I am glad to say that it is the general economy that is contributing each quarter to the continuing additional growth and additional new jobs that we are now experiencing.

Sir John Farr: Is my right hon. and learned Friend satisfied that the MSC programme dovetails properly with existing training programmes for skilled employees? I have in mind that in some big cities, such as Leicester, there is a desperate shortage of knitters and overlockers. They need a five-year training course. Will my right hon. and learned Friend satisfy himself that the MSC two-year programme, which is to be welcomed, dovetails effectively with this training?

Mr. Clarke: I very much hope that the MSC arranges matters in such a way that it does. I know about the particular problem in Leicester, where employers are unable to get the skilled and trained staff that they require. I know, too, that the MSC has been discussing with local employers how the knitting industry in particular can remedy that deficiency.

Mr. Park: Does the Paymaster General realise that his reply about the skillcentres adjusting themselves to the requirements of the labour market is much too facile? Does he not realise that, in order to change courses, very often one needs to train the trainers in the first place, or to go out and obtain different trainers? New equipment may be needed. The right hon. and learned Gentleman is putting that on a commerical basis. Where will the funds come from to do such gearing as a result of commercial demand? The Minister's hon. Friend has just said that sometimes courses need more time than they are given.

Mr. Clarke: It is not a commercial objective that one has in mind, except to the extent that training in skills is designed to fit people with the qualifications they require to find jobs that might be vacant in the local industry. If the hon. Gentleman continues to visit skillcentres, as I am sure he does—I visit them from time to time—he will find that they are responding to the challenge of changing the pattern of their employment and are finding exciting new tasks to perform for local industry in providing the skill shortages.

Mr. Budgen: Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that many Conservative Members will applaud his new proposals for reverse discrimination in favour of young blacks in inner city areas? When my right hon. and learned Friend next adopts some of the more controversial measures of the Labour party, however, will he give us a little more notice so that we may loyally adapt our rhetoric to support him.

Mr. Clarke: My hon. Friend is adopting rhetoric which I have never used. If he moves on from his initial indignation to study what I said in Birmingham yesterday, he will find that we were describing a policy of positive action to improve the employment possibilities in the district of Handsworth. The district of Handsworth has a multiracial population. Therefore, any success in our policies will have a multiracial effect. I am sure that my hon. Friend would not disapprove of that.

Mr. Evans: Will the Paymaster General tell the House whether extra funds will be made available to the MSC to enable it to carry out the various functions outlined in its new corporate plan? For instance, will extra funds be made available to assist the long-term unemployed, hundreds of thousands of whom are aged over 50 years? Specifically, will additional funds be made available for the MSC's programme of training and retraining, which is so essential?

Mr. Clarke: Since the Conservative party has been in government the MSC has received an enormous increase in the funds available to it for its work in the employment field. The budget of the MSC is continuing to grow. It is being expanded expressly, among other things, for the benefit of the restart programme, which will bring individual help to all the long-term unemployed in this country.

Alnwick and Amble

7. **Mr. Beith** asked the Paymaster General whether he has any plans to increase the present range of measures available to stimulate the creation of employment in the Alnwick and Amble area.

Mr. Lang: We have no plans at present to increase the considerable range of measures available to stimulate the creation of employment in the Alnwick and Amble area. We are convinced that the new package of measures announced by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer in his Budget statement will significantly benefit Alnwick and Amble as well as the rest of country by accelerating the growth of enterprise, boosting employment opportunities for the young and helping the long-term unemployed find work.

Mr. Beith: As the considerable range of measures to which the hon. Gentleman referred excludes all those available exclusively in development areas, will he use the figures available to his Department to convince the Department of Trade and Industry that, as prophesied, the unemployment rate in the Alnwick and Amble area has remained as high as and often higher than that in development areas and that further measures, including access to European funds, are clearly necessary in that unemployment black spot?

Mr. Lang: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman understands that a wide range of criteria, including the unemployment rate, industrial and occupational structures and changes in the labour supply, are taken into account in deciding on the designation of assisted areas. I draw to the hon. Gentleman's attention a number of measures that are applicable in his constituency—the YTS, the community programme, the enterprise allowance scheme, the job release scheme and the young workers scheme. All those schemes are detailed in our "Action for Jobs" booklet. The hon. Gentleman may also like to know that the restart programme began in his area yesterday.

American Tourists

8. **Mr. Ron Davies** asked the Paymaster General what is the latest estimate of the number of tourists from the United States of America in the current year; and how this figure compares with 1985.

Mr. Trippier: Figures for the international passenger survey are available only for the first quarter of 1986 and show an increase in the number of visitors from North America of 15 per cent. We have no precise details as to the levels of American tourism subsequently. The British Tourist Authority, from its contacts with the industry, has advised that, if present levels continue throughout the year, there may be a reduction of up to 15 per cent., but there are signs of an early upturn in business and the BTA is hopeful that over the year as a whole last year's record level of American visitors may be maintained.

Mr. Davies: If the figure of 15 per cent. is correct, will the hon. Gentleman confirm that it will mean that this year the British tourist industry will lose about £150 million? Was it not clear in retrospect that the Government's involvement in the American bombing of Libya would inevitably lead to retaliation and to a loss of trade and jobs in this country? If the hon. Gentleman finds that loss acceptable, will he explain why the Government reject economic measures against South Africa, precisely because jobs will be lost in this country?

Mr. Trippier: The hon. Gentleman may have framed his supplementary question before he heard my answer. I made it clear in the latter part of my answer to the substantive question that we hope—British Airways has made this point—that by the end of the year there will be a recovery in the number of American visitors. To put the whole matter into perspective, it is important for the hon. Gentleman to accept that even if the 15 per cent. decrease in the number of visitors coming to the United Kingdom were to be the worst case, it would mean a drop of only 3 per cent. in real spending in the tourism sector.

Sir Kenneth Lewis: Does my hon. Friend agree that the shortage of American visitors to this country has little to do with the fear of terrorism but might have something to do with the not very satisfactory weather which we have from time to time? Does he agree that, above all, it is to do with the high value of the pound compared with the dollar? Will my hon. Friend make representations to hotels in London and other places to bring down their prices, because they are outrageously high?

Mr. Trippier: My hon. Friend makes a number of points. First, I should have thought that no American ever came to this country because of our climate. I think that we can dispense quickly with that reason. *[Interruption.]* There may have been an exception or two this year, but in normal circumstances the Americans certainly do not come because of our climate. Secondly, I think that the exchange rate is a factor. Thirdly, I believe that many people who have studied this subject in the past few weeks have got it wrong, in that they have assumed that the problem lies with the fact that a number of Americans are worried about whether the destination is safe. I suggest that they are more concerned about travelling on the aeroplanes than about safe destinations.

Mrs. Clwyd: If the hon. Gentleman is so confident about the recovery from the reduction in the number of American tourists, will he explain why the Prime Minister grovelled on American television, begging American tourists to come here?

Mr. Trippier: I must apologise to the hon. Lady because I do not think that I heard correctly the last part of her question. She may have been saying that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister made a statement on her way to the Tokyo summit to the effect that Britain was a safe destination. I should have thought that the hon. Lady and her right hon. and hon. Friends would support that. Certainly my right hon. Friend's statement helped to dispel the fears in the minds of some people who were concerned about coming to the United Kingdom.

Mr. Terlezki: Does my hon. Friend agree that the reduced figure for tourists is due to Labour propaganda, which plays into the Libyans' hands? Nationally and internationally, Labour supporters are the main contributors in stopping American tourists from coming to this country. They are as much at fault as the Libyans.

Mr. Trippier: Certainly some of the statements by Labour party spokesmen on this matter have not helped one iota. In addition, they have done nothing to assist our campaign with the British Tourist Authority in the United States and they take every opportunity they can to rubbish tourism generally.

Mr. Soames: Does my hon. Friend agree that we should do everything we can to persuade the Americans that we are serious about tourism in this country? Does my hon. Friend agree that, to that end, the decision of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport to cancel the heli-link between Gatwick and Heathrow does nothing to promote the interests of tourism?

Mr. Trippier: I must apologise to my hon. Friend about that. It is not a matter for me, but I shall certainly draw those remarks to my right hon. Friend's attention.

Long-term Unemployment

9. **Mr. Michael Forsyth** asked the Paymaster General what proportion of those registered as unemployed find work within the first six months; and if he will give details of the assistance being given by his Department to the long-term unemployed.

Mr. Lang: In 1985 around two thirds of those becoming unemployed left the unemployment count within six months. Under our restart programme everyone who has been unemployed for more than a year will now be contacted with an offer of positive help towards employment.

Mr. Forsyth: Will my hon. Friend confirm that, while we may tend to think of the unemployed as a static and unchanging group, 25 per cent. find jobs within four weeks, and 36 per cent. within six weeks, while half of them do so within three months and 82 per cent. find jobs within a year? Are we not therefore forced to the conclusion that among the long-term unemployed there must be at least an element that constitutes the black economy? Will my hon. Friend tell us the result of the pilot scheme that was carried out on the long-term unemployed in selected areas?

Mr. Lang: My hon. Friend is right in the facts that he gave to the House. With regard to restart pilot schemes, the fact that we have decided to extend them nationally

speaks for itself. The House might also be interested to know that as a result of the trends to which my hon. Friend has referred about 30,000 people in this country get a job every working day.

Mr. Ashley: Is the Minister aware that the assistance given to the long-term unemployed is hopelessly inadequate and that this probably reflects the Government's real attitude toward them, as distinct from the rhetoric of the Secretary of State? Although this assistance should be increased, is he aware that the real hope to be given to them is to provide them with the prospects of jobs? What is the Minister doing about that?

Mr. Lang: The right hon. Gentleman is wrong. May I refer him to our community programme, which is our main programme for the unemployed. It is being doubled in size. With regard to our restart programme, it is extending nationally and more than 90 per cent. of those interviewed have been given a positive offer towards employment. That demonstrates our commitment to the long-term unemployed.

Mr. Lord: I congratulate my hon. Friend on the restart programme, which will do everything possible to help the long-term unemployed. Because of the great interest that it has aroused, may I ask the Minister to publish the results of the scheme as quickly and as widely as possible?

Mr. Lang: I will do what I can to assist my hon. Friend. It is probably too soon to give a complete summary of the effect of the scheme so far. Suffice it to say that it is the most substantial effort that has ever been made in this country to help long-term unemployed people, who will benefit considerably from the schemes.

Mr. Prescott: Can the Minister help the House in the confusion over some of his replies? In an earlier answer he said that about 16 per cent. of those on job restart schemes had been offered something. The Minister has also mentioned the figure of 90 per cent. The Paymaster General, in a speech to the Institute of Directors, said that of all those on restart programmes, 90 per cent. are offered jobs. This does not seem to be borne out by the facts. Is this not another example of rhetoric racing ahead of the facts?

Mr. Lang: I must repeat to the hon. Gentleman that more than 90 per cent. of those who have been interviewed so far have been given some sort of offer under the restart programme. This can cover a wide range of activities, including a place on the community programme, or a training programme. In Crawley, which was one of the pilot areas, the hon. Gentleman might like to know that a third of those who were interviewed were offered a job vacancy.

YTS Leavers

10. **Mr. Jim Callaghan** asked the Paymaster General what is his estimate of the number of the current year's YTS leavers who will not find full-time employment.

Mr. Trippier: We do not predict or estimate results in advance and it would be wrong to do so, but survey results covering those who left YTS between April and December 1985 show that around 60 per cent. had found employment and some two thirds had entered work, further education or further training.

Mr. Jim Callaghan: Is the Minister aware of the depth of real concern among parents, the youth of the country and the careers service about the lack of jobs for those youngsters who complete the YTS scheme? Will he tell the House exactly what the Government intend to do in the immediate future to provide real jobs for all our youngsters?

Mr. Trippier: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman would accept that no one, or no party, has a monopoly of concern about these youngsters who cannot find jobs immediately. That is precisely why we have introduced the new workers scheme. As part of the restart scheme under the action for jobs programme, we are of course very anxious to help these people.

Mr. Lyell: Is my hon. Friend aware that not all of us read the Paymaster General's Birmingham speech yesterday with liver-tinted spectacles and that some of us see much good sense in enabling those who have learnt skills on Government training schemes to put them into effect in a practical and commercial setting?

Mr. Trippier: I am sorry that my hon. and learned Friend did not have the opportunity to read the newspaper reports of the speech made yesterday by my right hon. and learned Friend the Paymaster General. However, if he had read them, he would no doubt have been impressed, as a whole new world would have been opened up to him.

Long-term Unemployment

11. **Mr. John Evans** asked the Paymaster General what is the total number of unemployed in the United Kingdom; and how many of them have been unemployed for more than 12 months, two years and three years, respectively.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: On 10 April 1986, the latest date for which figures are available, there were 3,325,000 unemployed claimants in the United Kingdom. Of these, 1,357,000 had been unemployed for over one year, 845,000 for over two years and 567,000 for over three years.

Mr. Evans: Will the Paymaster General acknowledge that the appalling unemployment figures, which have grown remorselessly since the Conservative party took office, are a disgrace to a civilised society? Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman accept the suggestion of the Employment Committee that those who have been out of work for more than three years should be offered a job for 12 months? The chairman of the Manpower Services Commission has accepted that as a feasible proposition. Will the Paymaster General give some concrete help to those 560,000 people who have been out of work for more than three years?

Mr. Clarke: I accept that the figures show that we must continue the pace of new job creation, if possible at an accelerated rate, in order to get on top of the demographic pressures, which mean that all the time more young people and women are entering the labour market. The hon. Gentleman will know that there has been an increase in the total number of jobs in every quarter since 1983. We expect that to continue, and we also expect our record to continue to be better than that for the rest of the EEC. That is obviously the Government's main effort at present.

We are about to have a debate on the Select Committee's proposals, which have been modified in the

light of the Government's initial response to them. I shall be explaining to the House that our restart programme and our expanded community programme already offer very tangible help to the long-term unemployed at a very considerable cost to the taxpayer.

Mr. Ralph Howell: Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that in my constituency, which has above average unemployment at almost 15 per cent., one of our biggest problems is the recruitment of labour? Is it not ironic that that should be the case when 3·3 million people are classified as claiming unemployment benefit, even though we know that many of them are not genuinely unemployed? Has my right hon. and learned Friend experienced similar labour shortages in his constituency?

Mr. Clarke: I suspect that the situation in my constituency is rather similar to that in the constituency of my hon. Friend. However, under our restart programme, we shall be approaching each of the 1·4 million people who are registered with us as being long-term unemployed. We shall be able to steer them towards the growing number of job vacancies that are notified to us, as well as towards training and a whole variety of other measures designed to get them back into work. Of course, if someone is not genuinely available for work, he should not be receiving benefit and he should not be registered as unemployed. We shall seek to ensure that that is so.

Mr. Lofthouse: Will the Paymaster General now revise the travel-to-work area boundaries in mining communities such as mine, where there has been a rapid growth in unemployment as a result of the savage pit closure programme?

Mr. Clarke: The south Yorkshire area *[Interruption.]* The west Yorkshire has been very badly affected by the recent inevitable changes in the coal industry. Obviously that area will benefit in particular from the programme of help that we set out in "Action for Jobs", and from the sort of support that we are about to offer through the restart programme.

Enterprise Agencies Scheme

12. **Mr. Kenneth Carlisle** asked the Paymaster General how many new businesses have been started under the auspices of the enterprise agencies scheme.

Mr. Trippier: As regards the number of businesses assisted by local enterprise agencies, survey information collected on behalf of Business in the Community in May 1985 indicated that 83 agencies replying to a question on this had helped 8,269 new businesses. That survey is being repeated this year, funded by my Department, and it is hoped that more comprehensive information may become available.

Mr. Carlisle: May I thank my hon. Friend for his recent visit to Lincoln and for his great encouragement of our enterprise agency? Does he accept that the figures that he has given show that enterprise agencies encourage jobs? During my hon. Friend's visit to Lincoln, he saw how a derelict building had been converted by the enterprise agency, using the community programme, in order to provide start-up units for new businesses. As there are thousands of derelict buildings around the country, could not that idea be developed further for the creation of new businesses and jobs?

Mr. Trippier: I was very impressed when I had the opportunity to visit my hon. Friend's constituency and see what his local enterprise agency was doing, particularly with the innovation centre that I had the privilege to open. I think that he is absolutely right. We have perhaps learnt our lesson in the last few years in that it is a little silly to look for purpose-built premises of a certain size. We should rather be trying to look for space that is, say, little more than a garage space, often in a derelict building, to convert to the appropriate use so as to give the people whom we are seeking to encourage the first foot on the rung of the ladder of enterprise.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Hirst** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 24 June.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House I shall be having further meetings later today. This evening I hope to have an audience of Her Majesty the Queen.

Mr. Hirst: Has my right hon. Friend had time today to read the article in the *Daily Telegraph* by Norman Stone, Professor of Modern History at Oxford, pointing out that sanctions have never yet succeeded in altering the domestic policies of any country? Will she reaffirm her Government's commitment to an early ending to apartheid and to the economic and political advancement of all races in South Africa, and will she resist any measures that destroy the jobs and living standards of black people in that country and the jobs of thousands of people in this country?

The Prime Minister: I gladly confirm what my hon. Friend has said. We seek an early end to apartheid and the advancement of all races in the political government of South Africa, and we seek, further, the suspension of violence on all sides in return for negotiations to achieve the end defined by my hon. Friend.

Mr. Hattersley: May I first congratulate the Prime Minister on wisely changing course and agreeing to the meeting between the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, and Mr. Oliver Tambo. May I go on to assure her that, if she follows the logic of that decision and decides to stand out against the extreme Right-wing pressure on her Back Benches, the Opposition will support that change of course. If she continues either to prevaricate about sanctions or to pretend, as she did a moment ago, that they will not change the policy of the regime in Pretoria, how does she propose to bring about a change in South Africa?

The Prime Minister: May I point out that my hon. Friend's purpose in seeing Mr. Tambo will be to tell him that suspension of violence on all sides is essential to peaceful change in South Africa. The right hon. Gentleman talks about change of course. He has changed course perhaps more than anyone else. As a Minister of State at the Foreign Office, he said:

"I do not believe that a policy of general economic sanctions would be in the interests either of the British people or of South Africa."—[*Official Report*, 7 July 1976; Vol. 914, c. 1354.]

Mr. Hattersley: I am grateful and flattered by the Prime Minister's interest. On that exact point, does she understand that the sanctions that will be most effective are not general economic sanctions but financial sanctions? Let me therefore ask a specific question. If the international community loses faith in the South African economy and withdraws capital from South Africa, will she and the Chancellor bolster up the Pretoria regime by rescheduling South African debts?

The Prime Minister: I gather from the right hon. Gentleman that he is against general economic sanctions against South Africa. I am grateful to him for making his position clear. We, too, are against general economic sanctions, as I have made clear on many occasions. We have carried out the measures that I indicated last time. We shall now consider the position with our EEC and Commonwealth partners.

Mr. Hattersley: We are all used to the combination of prevarication and bluster that *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Hattersley: On this occasion *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. These interruptions take up time.

Mr. Hattersley: On this occasion, the Prime Minister's technique does more than its usual damage to her electoral prospects. Does she not realise that by prevaricating about the racist regime in South Africa she is giving it comfort and support and encouraging its continuation?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman is talking nonsense in his usual blustering fashion. Moreover, he knows that the debts are not Government to Government, but commercial.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: Bearing in mind the old saying that those who live in glass houses should not throw stones, will my right hon. Friend tell those members of the Commonwealth, such as Zimbabwe, to put their own houses in order before calling for sanctions against South Africa?

The Prime Minister: The system of apartheid must end, and I do not believe that general economic sanctions would help it to end. They would be highly damaging, both to black interests in South Africa and to employment in this country. In the end, there will have to be negotiations between the South African Government and black South Africans, and we should keep our eye on that purpose and do everything possible to achieve it.

Mr. Steel: Does the right hon. Lady agree that the advantage of the suggestion in the report of the Commonwealth Eminent Persons Group that intercontinental air links with South Africa should cease is that that is specific and easily policed? Is she further aware that gesture politics, which the right hon. Lady so despises, also include the gesture of doing nothing or being seen to be dragging one's feet—the most impossible posture of all for any Government?

The Prime Minister: To do anything about air links would be very damaging, not least to some 800,000 people in South Africa who have the right to come to this country. I note that the right hon. Gentleman does not share the views of his right hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen), who in an article on 24 March 1985 said:

"Total or even selective trade sanctions will not succeed."

Mr. George Gardiner: While none of us expects my right hon. Friend to reveal in advance the proposals that she will put to her colleagues in The Hague this week, can she assure us that nothing that she does there will be at variance with the policies and the principles that she has described and hitherto defended resolutely in this House?

The Prime Minister: I shall do my level best at the European economic summit, as at the Commonwealth conference, to bring about change in South Africa through a process of negotiation between the Government of South Africa and full representation of the black population, in the absence and suspension of violence.

Q2. **Mr. Hardy** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 24 June.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Hardy: As NACODs is holding its annual conference this week, may I remind the right hon. Lady that at last year's conference members of the association still believed that she knew what she meant by the use of the word "sacrosanct"? In order to keep the record straight and to maintain the international regard for the integrity of her office, does she now accept that she, her Government and their new knight seriously misled both the House and my association?

The Prime Minister: No, and the hon. Gentleman knows that.

Mr. Nicholls: Does my right hon. Friend agree that one of the many false assumptions about South Africa is that Bishop Tutu speaks exclusively for black Christians, or even the majority of them? Is she aware that while Bishop Tutu has a congregation of less than 150,000, Bishop Makoena of the Independent Reformed Church has a following of more than 4·5 million? Is it not essential that any steps that we take against South Africa have the effect of supporting moderate black leaders such as Bishop Makoena who is vehemently opposed to sanctions and not undermining their position?

The Prime Minister: It is absolutely vital to support moderate leaders in South Africa. It is also vital to support those many industries that have been in the forefront in trying to break down apartheid. To introduce sanctions against them would be to defeat the very people who have been trying to bring about the required change in South Africa.

It would be utterly callous to put large numbers of black South Africans out of work, to create unemployment in their country, and then to create additional unemployment in this country.

Q3. **Mr. Straw** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 24 June 1986.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Straw: As the Prime Minister has claimed in the House today that sanctions would be highly damaging to British employment levels and has suggested that up to 150,000 jobs in this country might be at risk, how does she square those claims with the fact that when I asked for details of the likely effects on jobs and output in the United Kingdom of different levels of economic measures,

sanctions and of the non-imposition of sanctions on South Africa. I was told late last night in a parliamentary answer by the Minister for Trade that
"the information was not available"?
Does that answer not show that the Prime Minister's own claims about the effects on unemployment are simply scare tactics?

The Prime Minister: If the hon. Gentleman looks back he will find answers from me about how the figures are calculated. They are calculated by the general value of exports from this country to South Africa and the number of jobs that that would normally be equivalent to.

Sir John Biggs-Davison: Have Her Majesty's Government, with other Commonwealth Governments, any contingency plans to deal with the collapse of the economy of Zimbabwe and other neighbours of South Africa in the event of the intensification of sanctions against the Republic of South Africa?

The Prime Minister: No, Sir. As my hon. Friend is aware, that is a matter that could concern us a great deal, because so much of the imports of Zimbabwe and the other front-line states, and the exports from these countries, have to go by the roads or the rail bridge at Beitbridge between Zimbabwe and South Africa. Any major sanctions would have devastating effects on the future of those countries.

Q4. **Mr. Eastham** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 24 June 1986.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Eastham: As the Prime Minister is a leading voice in the Commonwealth, may I draw her attention to the recent terror bombing incident by the South African Government against three independent African countries, which are also members of the Commonwealth? Other than making a protest, will the Prime Minister tell the House what representations she is making to South Africa regarding compensation? Will there be any retaliatory action against South Africa?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman has heard me say in the House before that we replied very sharply indeed to South Africa — *[Interruption.]* — about those terrible bombing incidents, which were responsible for bringing to an end the effective operation of the Eminent Persons Group. Without those incidents, that group had a chance of getting through to negotiations, with a suspension of violence on all sides.

Mr. Faveli: Does my right hon. Friend agree with Mr. Russell Hopkins, a consultant surgeon recently appointed as the general manager of a hospital in Cardiff, that doctors cannot demand with total honesty more cash for the Health Service until waste has been eliminated?

The Prime Minister: As my hon. Friend is aware, we are doing our level best to secure the more effective use of resources in the Health Service. Resources have increased enormously under this Government, from £7·75 billion in 1979 to £18·75 billion this year. Last year the efficiency savings amounted to £150 million. Those savings were ploughed back into the Health Service to secure more treatment for patients.

Q5. **Mr. Strang** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 24 June 1986.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Strang: Will the Prime Minister accept that the ultimate responsibility for nuclear safety must lie with the elected Government? Is she aware that the two-month delay in the commissioning of Torness announced by the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate is quite inadequate? After Chernobyl, is it not clear that we need a national plan if not a national emergency force to cope with such an accident? Would it not be the height of irresponsibility to go ahead with the commissioning of a new power station before the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate, the Health and Safety Executive and Government Departments have had the chance to complete their post-Chernobyl reviews?

The Prime Minister: I was asked an identical question last week. Our Nuclear Installations Inspectorate is one of the best in the world. It has a superlative record. Not long ago some of the hon. Gentleman's colleagues were preferring the AGR to any other type of reactor.

Mr. Dykes: Does my right hon. Friend entertain the hope that the first ministerial contact with Mr. Tambo of the African National Congress will be the precursor to further contact with what is essentially a moderate nationalist movement and its domestic equivalent, the United Democratic Front? Will she and others bear in mind, in their proper exhortations to both sides to renounce violence, the fact that the majority of the violence emanates from the South African security forces?

The Prime Minister: I have already said that my hon. Friend's main task, when seeing Mr. Tambo tonight, will be to say that there must be a suspension of violence on all sides. That is essential to peaceful change in South Africa, and she will reiterate that most strongly.

Sheepmeat (Caesium Levels)

3.30 pm

The Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Malcolm Rifkind): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement on the control on the movement and slaughter of sheep in Scotland.

The results of tests on sheep in slaughterhouses in Scotland, the latest findings from which were published yesterday, give no cause for concern. We now have results of tests on young lambs in Scotland. These results are being published today. Generally, they are satisfactory. No readings have been obtained comparable to the highest in north Wales and Cumbria, but there are five readings over 1,000 bq/kg for caesium-134 and caesium-137 together, which is the limit at which, by international recommendation, action should be considered. One of these readings, the lowest of the five, comes from Easter Ross and, at 1,017 bq/kg, is within the margin of sampling error. Three of the other readings were found in Dumfries and Galloway, including the highest at 1,272 bq/kg, and the remaining reading is from Arran.

The animals tested were only two to three months old and will not be ready for market for some weeks yet, by which time the level of radioactivity may be expected to have declined well below the 1,000 bq/kg level. I can say categorically therefore that there is no danger to public health and no reason for consumers to refrain from purchasing and eating lamb.

It is Government policy to insist on the highest levels of safety and, to keep under supervision lambs in those areas of Scotland where relatively high levels of radioactivity have been identified, I have made an order, which will be laid before Parliament, to come into effect today, to prohibit for the next 21 days the movement and slaughter of sheep in Dumfries and Galloway, Arran and Easter Ross.

Monitoring in these and other areas will continue and the restrictions will be reduced or removed as soon as testing confirms the expected fall in levels.

I recognise that these measures may cause some interference with the marketing plans of some farmers in the areas concerned. I am sure that they will understand why this action is being taken. In this connection, I must pay tribute to the responsible and co-operative attitude shown by the National Farmers Union of Scotland. If it should prove necessary, the Government will be prepared to discuss cases of compensation for severe loss in particular circumstances to specific farmers.

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): I fear that the right hon. and learned Gentleman's assertion that there is no danger is likely to be about as reassuring as Corporal Jones telling Dad's Army not to panic.

May I thank the right hon. and learned Gentleman for not following the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, who tried to smuggle his statement through an empty House on a Friday? What percentage of the samples analysed showed excessive levels of caesium, and how many farms and how many sheep are affected by the new restrictions? It must be said that there is no way in which farmers can be held to blame, so will the right hon. and learned Gentleman say more about compensation?

We should stress that the summer lamb sales are virtually the only source of income for many farmers in Dumfries and Galloway, Arran and Easter Ross. These restrictions could have disastrous effects. During the course of the restrictions lambs could become unsaleable, and the House should insist that the Government accept responsibility for compensating farmers affected by the restrictions—and that should apply not only to farmers whose loss has been assessed as severe in terms of the Minister's statement.

What is being done to cover the effect on the sheep variable premium system of the 25 per cent. collapse in market prices which has already followed the announcement made by the Minister of Agriculture on Friday? May I press the Minister further about contamination of land and farm produce, and remind him that, on 6 May, the Secretary of State for the Environment promised the House that the Government would be explicit, frank and open about that matter?

For several weeks there has been much press comment about hot spots of caesium contamination. How long has the Secretary of State known about those hot spots and how much farm produce—that means milk and vegetables as well as lamb—has been moved from those areas in recent weeks? What does he say to the people who have bought and eaten that food? Can we now have a full public report on all aspects of this monitoring exercise?

Mr. Rifkind: The degree of public alarm will be significantly influenced by whether the Opposition take as responsible an attitude towards this matter as the Government have taken. The hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) should pay careful attention to the responsible attitude taken by the National Farmers' Union of Scotland. The hon. Gentleman sought to cast aspersions on my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture for making his statement on Friday. The hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well that my right hon. Friend introduced the statement at the first available opportunity, and the hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends would have been the first to criticise my right hon. Friend if he had not done so.

In reply to the hon. Gentleman's detailed questions, I can tell him that 100 samples were taken from 50 sheep. Some five were shown to be over the level of 1,000 bq/kg. Although in all cases the amount over 1,000 has been relatively marginal, some 17 per cent. of the total number of sheep in Scotland will be affected by the order. The hon. Gentleman asked about compensation. I can only draw his attention to what my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture said on Friday about the matter, which I have repeated in my statement. The hon. Gentleman asked how long I have known about the specific results from the monitoring. The figures started coming in yesterday, when I was first informed, and this morning the decision was taken to make the statement that I have made to the House.

Mr. John Corrie (Cunninghame, North): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware of the dismay that this will cause to my farmers on the island of Arran? Can the Minister give us some information about beef? Is the same sort of monitoring being done for beef animals as for sheep? What is the situation about private slaughter? Does the Order totally cover the slaughter of all sheep in these areas? Do we use the same scale of monitoring as is used in other European countries?

Mr. Rifkind: The level of 1,000 bq kg is the internationally recognised standard, that is why the Government think it right to take the action that we have described. I share with my hon. Friend the Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Corrie) the dismay that will be felt by farmers who are affected. However, they were the first to say that they understand entirely the reasons why steps of this kind might be necessary and they are fully prepared to co-operate with the Government in the action that we are taking. I can assure my hon. Friend that all the beef sampling suggests that there is no comparable difficulty. I can confirm that the ban on slaughter will apply to all sheep in the areas designated.

Sir Russell Johnston (Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber): The Minister must not be touchy about this matter, as he was with the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson). If a member of the public is told that there is no problem at all and no danger whatever, and then told in the next breath that there will be a ban on slaughter, he is puzzled, and that is perfectly understandable. I am not asking the Minister to deliver a lecture in simple science, but would it not be helpful to everybody if he made some attempt to explain clearly what caesium is, what effects it has, how its radiation compares with the radiation from other known sources, and why it is that we are concerned only about sheep and not apparently about cattle, or for that matter about fish?

The hon. Member for East Lothian asked about compensation. Would it not be fair to ensure that farmers receive the guaranteed price for lamb and will the Minister do anything about those in abattoirs and the hauliers?

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman has asked a perfectly reasonable series of questions in a perfectly constructive way. The three areas have been designated not because there is any immediate danger to the health of the public but because, by designating those areas and preventing the movement of sheep outwith those areas for 21 days, it will be easier for us to monitor the sheep in those areas where lambs have been found with a level of radiation which is not at a dangerous level but which is slightly above the level at which we would normally begin to consider action.

Let me put the matter properly in perspective by saying that if we look at the most potentially vulnerable members of the community – young children – a 10-year-old child could consume more than 12 oz of lamb, much higher than most would wish to consume, with 1,000 bq kg, every week for a year and would still receive less that one eighth of the body dose level at which, by international recommendation, action should be considered.

We have had to take into account the fact that there is no risk to the public at the moment, nor in the foreseeable future, but because the public quite properly expect the Government to apply the highest standards of safety it is right and proper to take this opportunity to monitor carefully lambs in the designated areas which, although at the moment not due to go to the slaughterhouses, will be due to go in several weeks time. Therefore, it is right and proper that we should be able to give total reassurance not only now but in the weeks to come.

Mr. Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross): Will my right hon. and learned Friend reassure the public that, in applying these safety measures, the public are not at risk and that they are at greater risk from walking along the streets of Aberdeen because of the radioactivity of Union Street, from having an X-ray or from looking at an alarm clock? Will he also take into account that, as the public will not know from where their lamb comes, it will do harm to farmers in areas such as Perthshire who are not nominated? Will he take this opportunity to condemn the Socialist Republics of Russia for the assault on humanity which it tried to keep secret?

Mr. Rifkind: My hon. and learned Friend is right to draw attention to the absolute safety for the public. The average member of the public absorbs a dose of radiation from natural sources of 2mSv a year and the total dose for a year for the average consumer, assuming that he eats meat at the average consumption rate throughout the year of 5 kg, would be 0·15 mSv. That again illustrates that it is perfectly safe for the housewife to continue buying lamb and I recommend that hon. Members and the public as a whole continue to eat it.

Mr. Donald Stewart (Western Isles): Is the right hon. and learned Gentleman aware that his statement will give rise to great concern and indeed anger in Scotland in the light of the lapse of time between this announcement and the accident taking place in Russia? Did the monitoring take place before or after the discovery of radioactivity in sheep in Wales? Will he guarantee to the Scottish people that there will be total monitoring of animals for slaughter, and of root crops, grass and water in Scotland?

Mr. Rifkind: Of course we are doing general monitoring. For some considerable time now we have been monitoring sheep at the slaughterhouses because it is at that stage that sheepmeat would normally enter the food chain. It was only with evidence that young lambs with several weeks to go before they were likely to reach market had abnormally high levels of caesium that it seemed sensible to have similar monitoring in Scotland. Because the figures show that in some areas levels are slightly higher than the level at which we would usually consider taking action, it seems right and proper to make the order that I have described today.

Mr. Barry Henderson (Fife, North-East): Can my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that the worst fall-out in Scotland from Chernobyl has not amounted to as big a dose as someone would get from an X-ray in hospital? Would my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the reason why there should be no anxiety on the part of the public is that the Government have been extremely cautious in making such arrangements, which allow the public at large to buy meat in the shops with confidence knowing that it will do no harm to them or their families?

Mr. Rifkind: The average exposure from X-rays during the course of the year is almost exactly the same as would be the total dose in a year to the average consumer of 5 kg of lamb at 1,000 bq/kg level of radiation. That puts the matter in its proper perspective.

Mr. Ron Brown (Edinburgh, Leith): To stop those anxious to make a fast buck irrespective of safety standards, will the Secretary of State ensure that all meat – all beef and lamb products in butchers' shops and supermarkets – is checked, bearing in mind that we do not always know the source of those products? Not all of them come from Scotland.

Mr. Rifkind: Lamb or other products which enter the United Kingdom can be monitored. Various steps are

[Mr. Rifkind]

taken to ensure compliance with international recommended actions. It is only with regard to young lambs several weeks before they are due to go to market that the problem appears to have arisen. Therefore, it is in that area

Mr. Ron Brown: Appears?

Mr. Rifkind: Of course, we can only go on the basis of the evidence that we have. The hon. Gentleman would not wish to be so irresponsible as to suggest anything beyond that.

Mr. Michael Forsyth (Stirling): Would my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that caesium is a short-lived isotope, that becquerels are a measure of disintegration rather then the energy of radiation and that the risk to public health is minimal? Will he take this opportunity to repudiate the remarks of the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) and other Opposition Members who, as part of their campaign against nuclear power, are deliberately whipping up public hysteria on this matter and adding to the burden of hard-pressed farmers in Scotland?

Mr. Rifkind: The biological half-life of caesium is about 20 to 30 days. Therefore, there will clearly be continuing reductions as the days go by in the level of radiation to levels which are very small. I have already shown that I believe that there is a duty on the Opposition, as much as on the Government, to try not to cause needless alarm in areas where there is no danger to the health of the public.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): If the Secretary of State is claiming openness and honesty in this matter, can he tell the House why Ministers overruled the advice of Government scientists that milk should not be drunk in Scotland for two weeks after the events at Chernobyl? Will he also say why the information in relation to the regular monitoring of sheep thyroids in Caithness being transmitted to MAFF laboratories in Weybridge is classified? Will he arrange for that information to be declassified? Otherwise, in this and other matters, he will be continuing the attitude of the Government towards this whole issue, which is one of secrecy and complacency.

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman is being utterly absurd. First, he should address any questions on MAFF to my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture. Secondly, with regard to the question of overruling advice from my officials on the banning of milk, I have to say that at no time did I receive any advice from any of my officials to ban the consumption of milk. Therefore, there was no advice for me to even consider, much less reject. The hon. Gentleman should check his facts before he makes foolish allegations.

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): As these events and the Opposition's irresponsible reaction to them have caused a sharp fall in the price of lamb, would the Secretary of State explain whether that loss is paid for by the farmer or by the taxpayer through the deficiency payments system? Could he give us some indication of the extra cost to the taxpayer of the fall in lamb prices?

Mr. Rifkind: It is not possible at this stage to give any indication of what the implications for lamb prices will be over an extended period. However, we have said that if any individual farmer suffers from severe economic loss, we shall be prepared to consider compensation. I cannot usefully go beyond that at this stage.

Mr. Robert MacLennan (Caithness and Sutherland): Has the monitoring of food products now been sufficiently extensive to enable the Secretary of State to say that he is satisfied that there is no risk of consumption of irradiated or contaminated products in Scotland, outside the matters of his statement today? While I fully accept the necessity of what he has done, does he realise that it will have a damaging effect, not only on the individuals in the areas where the movement has been restricted, but on the market generally, despite his undoubtedly justifiable reassurances? Experience in Wales and Cumbria suggests that a compensation scheme will be necessary for individuals, and that the income of sheep farmers generally will take a severe knock. The Government must bear that in mind.

Mr. Rifkind: If anything, the Government could be criticised for being over-cautious and for imposing safeguards which may be beyond what is absolutely necessary for public health. The public would expect us to err, if we were to err, on that side rather than in the opposite direction. One appreciates that in such circumstances there is some uncertainty, which can have implications for the farming community. For that reason, I paid tribute to both the National Farmers Union of England and Wales and the National Farmers Union of Scotland for their constructive response at this difficult time for their members.

Several Hon. Members *rose*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I remind hon. Members who represent English constituencies and who seek to catch my eye that the matter refers to Scotland.

Sir John Eyre (Harborough): I congratulate my right hon. and learned Friend on the sensible precautionary step that he is taking. In the long term, will he look at the Food and Environment Protection Act 1985 in which we endeavoured to set out a framework for the role of proper consultation and compensation to deal with natural and man-made disasters of this nature? I mention that to my right hon. and learned Friend because the relevant orders from that Act will shortly be coming before the House. Could we not include an order to cover this sort of eventuality in future, as some of us wanted to do at the time?

Mr. Rifkind: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's suggestion, which I shall certainly consider.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): For 19 years successive editors of *New Scientist* have thought me sufficiently responsible about nuclear and other industries to write a weekly column. I do not take it easily or kindly to be told that I am irresponsible about these matters. Can I press the Secretary of State on his answer to my hon. Friend the Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) that he was first informed yesterday? The heavy rain fell on 3 and 4 May. I am informed that MAFF in England was told of the problem of caesium-134 and 137 in mid-May. Are we being told that the Scottish Office was not informed by MAFF, and that the responsible journalism about when MAFF was first told, which we have all read, is completely wrong? I believe that the Secretary of State may not have been informed, but what about his officials and the Under-

Secretary of State for Scotland, the hon. Member for Argyll and Bute (Mr. MacKay)? When was the Scottish Office first told? It is incredible to many of us that the Secretary of State should give the impression that he was first informed yesterday, although a good deal of information was available in mid-May.

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman is suffering from a considerable misunderstanding. He should know, and if he does not he can read it in the *Official Report* tomorrow, that I was referring to the specific monitoring done on young lambs in Scotland during the past few days. He should also be aware that the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food first received its figures for young lambs last week, and that, as a consequence of that, a statement was made by my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food last Friday. We initiated our monitoring in the light of the figures that were emerging on young lambs in England and Wales, and as a consequence we have decided to take the action that I have announced today.

Mr. Michael Lord (Suffolk, Central): I acknowledge the reasonableness of my right hon. and learned Friend's answers. Nevertheless, I ask him to consider that the general public are still extremely confused. I have seen reports that suggest that one can eat lamb every day of the year without getting any more radiation than one gets from a visit to the dentist. I am not sure whether that is a recommendation to carry on eating lamb or one to stop going to the dentist. Will my right hon. and learned Friend accept this at least? Unless we can establish a scientifically correct yardstick that is more easily understood by the general public, we shall have more problems both with the Chernobyl-type incidents and, more particularly, with our continued nuclear programme.

Mr. Rifkind: My hon. Friend makes a reasonable point. The difficulty under which we all labour is that certain figures have been adopted for international purposes, but many experts think that these figures are far too low and that higher figures would be consistent with the safety of the public. Nevertheless, these are the present figures available for the international community. Therefore, it is right and proper that, if these are the figures that it is recommended that one should consider, it is only reasonable to respond in that way.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): Is the Secretary of State satisfied with the sampling methods employed in this monitoring process? Has a similar monitoring process been carried out on recent imports of fish from north-east Atlantic countries?

Mr. Rifkind: I cannot speak in detail about the products of other countries, but I have no reason to doubt the reliability of the sampling that has been carried out in Scotland.

Mr. Richard Alexander (Newark): In conjunction with my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, will my right hon. and learned Friend reconsider restricting compensation to cases of severe loss? If someone suffers loss as a result of a Government decision, for whatever reason, is he not entitled to compensation? What action are my right hon. and learned Friend and the Government taking to get this loss back from the perpetrators of the incident, the Soviet Union?

Mr. Rifkind: My hon. Friend will appreciate the difficulties that would be inherent in any such attempt, but compensation is a delicate and difficult problem. We hope that, for the vast majority of farmers, the lambs in question will in due course be safe and will go to market, so any loss sustained will be minimal, if it exists at all. This will be more apparent as the days go by.

Mr. Gavin Strang (Edinburgh, East): When the Secretary of State uses phrases such as "no risk to the public", will he acknowledge that any increase in the exposure of the population to radiation leads to an increase in radiation-linked diseases, albeit a small increase? In that context, will the Secretary of State give us some further information as to the level at which the radio-caesium content of the lambs will have to fall before the meat is deemed suitable for human consumption? Can we be assured that it will be below half the level of 1,000 bq kg^{-1}?

Mr. Rifkind: The internationally recommended level is 1,000 bq kg^{-1}. The highest figure in Scotland of which we are so far aware is only 1,200 bq kg^{-1}. There is a biological half-life for caesium of 20 to 30 days. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that, in the vast majority of cases, in those lambs that at the moment have contamination above the level of 1,000, the level will fall well below the internationally recommended level during the period of this order.

Mr. Keith Raffan (Delyn): Will the announcement that my right hon. and learned Friend has made affect the movement of sheep from unrestricted areas to abattoirs within the restricted areas that he has designated?

Mr. Rifkind: If it were desired to move sheep from unrestricted areas to abattoirs in restricted areas, that would be permissible, as long as the sheep did not stop in transit. If they stopped for any length of time, they would become subject to the requirements of the order.

Ms. Clare Short (Birmingham, Ladywood): I am not trying to spread panic, but I find the situation increasingly frightening. I do not think that the Government's position adds up. If it is necessary to stop selling lamb now, it is not good enough for the Secretary of State to say that there is no danger. He would not be making this statement if there were no danger. If this is necessary now, what about the vegetables, crops and milk that have already been consumed? I am not satisfied. The Government are not protecting the public properly. I think that I am typical of many people in finding, in the Welsh ban on sales and now this, great cause for fear and a great sense that the Government are not protecting our interests properly.

Mr. Rifkind: I suspect that the hon. Lady would not be capable of being satisfied by any announcement that the Government made on this issue. All the lamb in the shops at present is absolutely safe, and on all the information that we have, the lambs that are at the slaughter houses at the moment are safe. The reason for the order is that a number of lambs have been identified — for the most part young lambs, and several weeks will elapse before they are ready to go to market — and it is therefore sensible to continue to monitor in those areas where findings have been taken that are above the internationally recommended level. However, the level to which I have referred is not a level above which it is unsafe to eat lamb.

[Mr. Rifkind]

The level for that is much, much higher. In fact, 1,000 bq/kg is the level at which Governments are recommended to consider taking action. In other words, that is quite different from the implications of the hon. Lady's remarks.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): The Secretary of State said that the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland was not monitoring young lambs at the time that the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food was doing so. Why was that?

Mr. Rifkind: We were concentrating upon those lambs that were at the slaughterhouse, because lambs at the slaughterhouse were to go immediately to the shops and to be eaten by the public. That seemed to us to be a clear priority, and that view was taken throughout the United Kingdom. There was additional monitoring in England and Wales of young lambs some weeks before they were due to go to the slaughterhouse. In the light of those findings, it seemed reasonable that we should take similar samplings.

Mr. Home Robertson: The Secretary of State said that he received the results of these tests only yesterday. If he really wants to allay public fear, will he answer my question? What information did he have during the month of May about the concentration of caesium contamination on pasture, or in animals, or elsewhere? There are many more questions that need to be answered. In the presence of the Leader of the House, I suggest to the Secretary of State for Scotland that there is an urgent need for a debate in this House on the whole issue.

Mr. Rifkind: We are perfectly happy to make available to the public all the results of the sampling that we have done. It is precisely that decision that I have announced today and that we have put into practice during the last few weeks. This is the first time that we have had figures relating to young lambs that imply levels above 1,000 bq/kg. Therefore, the House and the country would expect us to take action of the kind that I have described, and that is what we have done.

Later—

Mrs. Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. As you so clearly ruled, in reference to the statement on Scotland, that it was Scottish business, are you in a position to tell us whether a similar statement will be made on Wales? Are we to have a statement from the Secretary of State for Wales? Many hon. Members would like to put questions to him. The concern in Wales is just as extreme as it is in Scotland. I believe that a statement should be made in this House along exactly the same lines.

Mr. Speaker: I do not know whether the hon. Lady was present on Friday, but Wales was covered then.

Mrs. Clwyd: But not by the Secretary of State for Wales.

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. The Secretary of State for Wales is the Agriculture Minister for Wales, not the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. The Minister of Agriculture for England has made a statement and the Secretary of State for Scotland has made a statement, but all that we have seen the Secretary of State for Wales do is slink in and out of the House with a guilty expression whenever somebody else wants to make a statement.

You have told the House frequently that you protect the position of Back-Benchers — as you do, Sir. We ask you to ensure that the Secretary of State for Wales comes to the House and makes a statement on the caesium levels in sheep in Wales. Half of Wales is now affected by restrictions, including much of my constituency. Welsh Back-Benchers should be given the opportunity to question the Secretary of State on this matter.

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg (Hampstead and Highgate): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Is it not correct that all Secretaries of State are interchangeable and that the statement could have been made by the Secretary of State for Employment?

Mr. Speaker: It is not for me to call upon the Secretary of State for Wales to make a statement. I do not possess that authority. A number of Welsh Members were called on Friday when the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food made his original statement.

Social Security Bill

Hon. Members: On a point of order—

Mr. Speaker: Order. I shall take first the point of order of the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher).

Mr. Michael Meacher (Oldham, West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I rise to ask you to use your good offices to request the Secretary of State for Social Services to make a statement. Following the Government's humiliating defeats on the Social Security Bill yesterday in another place, his proposals for the so-called reform of social security have now degenerated into a ragbag medley of disconnected cuts without any logic or structure. Since the package is now in total disarray, and since in every single policy area his original proposals have now been mauled out of all recognition, the only decent thing for him to do would be to withdraw the whole package. But even if he does not do so, since there is no electoral mandate for this package, since the proposals were almost universally condemned in the consultation exercise and since they have now been decisively thrown out in another place, it would be a constitutional affront to use the whipped majority in this House to reverse these votes. We want an unequivocal assurance to that effect.

The Bill represents the most unpopular set of proposals in this area for 50 years. On every test of public approval, they have failed. The Secretary of State must now recognise that fact and withdraw his package.

Mr. Speaker: I know about the changes that have been made in the other place, but there will be an opportunity here to consider Lords amendments. Whether or not a statement is made is not a matter for me, but no doubt we shall deal with the matter when the Bill comes back here.

Later—

Mr. Bill Michie (Sheffield, Heeley): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I refer to your answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, West on the Social Security Bill. May I, through you, ask the Leader of the House, who is present, when a statement is likely to be made rather than that we should allow the House of Lords to do further damage to the Bill, which has already lost credibility?

Mr. Speaker: I did not say that there will be a statement. That is not a matter for me. I said that the Bill will undoubtedly come back here for consideration of Lords amendments.

Mr. Ernie Ross (Dundee, West): Further to the point of order raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher), Mr. Speaker. It is very important that the Secretary of State for Social Services should say whether he intends to proceed in another place with the Bill. It would be a waste of the time of the House if the Bill wee to be brought back here, where it s likely to suffer further defeats.

Mr. Terry Lewis (Worsley) *rose*—

Mr. Speaker: Is it the same point of order?

Mr. Lewis: Yes, Sir.

Several Hon. Members *rose*—

Mr. Speaker: Order. We have an important debate today. I shall take one more point of order, if it is on the same point.

Mr. Lewis: Further to the same point of order, Mr. Speaker. Not only were two amendments to the Social Security Bill severely defeated in the other place last evening, but a few others very narrowly scraped through. A coach and horses has been driven through the whole measure and it is now in complete disarray. Surely it is necessary that a statement should be made either today of tomorrow, but preferably today, to satisfy Back Benchers who have worked very hard to explode the very matters that the other place has exploded.

Mr. Speaker: I am sure that those comments will have been heard, but they are not matters for me.

Famine Relief in Africa

4.8 pm

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to place a duty on the Overseas Development Administration to publish an annual Report to Parliament on famine relief in Africa to include individual reports on each project in Africa financed directly or indirectly from public funds; to establish a timetable during which overall official United Nations aid targets for overseas aid may be reached; to establish a timetable during which the proportion of aid spent on development of subsistence agriculture in the poorest countries would constitute 50 per cent. of the total aid budget; to encourage long term development of African agriculture; and for connected purposes.

Hon. Members will have noticed that only today the United Nations has again renewed its warnings about the drought in six African countries. Of course, droughts are endemic to Africa. They are predictable events that build up over a period of time. They continue, and they will almost certainly get worse in future. That represents only one of many contributory factors to the difficulties experienced in Africa today.

The stark fact is that Africa's ability to feed itself has been steadily diminishing for more than 20 years. Food self-sufficiency decreased by about 12 per cent. from 1960 to 1980. Food imports increased by about 9 per cent. over the same period. [HON. MEMBERS: "Why?"] Conservative Members, from a sedentary position, are asking, sotto voce, "Why?". One of the reasons is the destruction of the environment which has led to increased incidence of drought and desertification. There has been a change from food production to cash crop production. The cash crops are purchased on the world commodity market, sometimes at extremely low and unpredictable rates.

There has been an appropriation of the best agricultural land by settlers, plantation owners and multinational companies. I submit that one of the other main reasons is the incidence—it is an uncomfortable fact—of war and civil strife which has destroyed crops and disrupted agriculture. Currently, some 40 per cent. of Government resources in Africa are spent on arms. Against that background, it is true to say that fund raising is dealing only with symptoms. The real causes of the problems are political in nature, and political action is required to deal with them.

My Bill requests the Overseas Development Administration to produce an annual review and to include in that review an individual project report. That provision is important, because the impact of the deployment of British taxpayers' money must, in my view, be directed primarily to the alleviation of poverty. Hon. Members will have noted that the World Bank report "Poverty and Hunger", published in March this year, found that the basic cause of hunger or food insecurity was poverty or lack of purchasing power. I quote two sentences of the report:

"Hunger persists even in countries that have reached self-sufficiency in food. Food insecurity cannot be eliminated without alleviating the poverty of countries and people."

It is not always clear how effective the United Kingdom's contribution is in combating that poverty and famine directly at source. An annual review and project report would make it more apparent to the press, the public, the charities and agencies involved, and everyone outside the Overseas Development Administration.

The Bill contains an important provision that a timetable be set during which overall UN aid targets for overseas aid may be reached. Hon. Members will know that most countries in the West have made steady progress towards the official UN target of 0·7 per cent. of gross national product devoted to aid. Scandinavia and the Netherlands have passed that target. Successive Governments have accepted the target without having set a timetable for its achievement. In 1979, the Labour Administration reached a figure of 0·52 per cent. of GNP. That figure has subsequently fallen to a disgraceful 0·33 per cent., making the present Government's so-called commitment somewhat suspect.

I submit—I am sure that this view is held across the Floor of the House—that it must be possible to reach the UN target. Even if it takes up to four years to do so, we should set out in that direction forthwith.

If one looks at the way the three broad measures used to record United Kingdom aid have been changing, one sees that all have fallen in real terms since 1979. Using figures compiled for the years 1979 to 1984, public expenditure on aid has fallen by 19 per cent. The aid programme that is technically administered by the ODA has fallen by 21 per cent. Official development assistance, which excludes loans and market terms—what is known as concessional aid—has fallen by some 33 per cent.

The Bill also sets a timetable during which the proportion of aid spent in the development of subsistence agriculture in the poorest countries constitutes some 50 per cent. of the total aid budget. It is notable that, in 1984, only 15 per cent. of United Kingdom bilateral aid was allocated to agriculture and related economic sectors—renewable natural resources. By comparison, mining and energy took some 55 per cent. of United Kingdom bilateral aid.

Infrastructure is obviously important, especially in health, education and communications. By and large, the infrastructure developed by United Kingdom aid at the moment does not primarily assist the work of people producing food on the land.

There have been changes and reductions in aid for research and development in United Kingdom institutes and in the renewable natural resources sector. At the same time, there has been a significant increase in the proportion of the aid budget devoted to aid and trade. I submit that funds under that heading should be more appropriately found from the trade and industry budget.

Last year, the report of the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs entitled "Famine in Africa" argued that

"to help in the prevention of recurrence of the present crisis, assistance by the donor community is required in various ways for the food producing sector"

which the Committee defines as

"principally smallholder, agricultural and horticultural production".

Last year, the all-party parliamentary group on overseas development showed that there was a considerable mismatch between the robust policy statements in favour of aiding the renewable natural resources sector in Africa and the relatively modest level of financial allocations made available.

On 1 June this year, the United Nations special session on Africa completed a review of the initiative of African countries. The British Foreign Secretary, speaking for the United Kingdom in the plenary session, said that, important as Sports Aid had been, it was now the turn of

Governments to act. The House knows that the Organisation of African Unity has adopted a far-reaching and fundamental programme called Africa's priority programme for economic recovery. The organisation adopted that in 1985 and set out a financial target of $128 billion which it needed in the four years from 1986 to 1990. Sixty four per cent. of the funding for that programme is to be found from within African domestic budgets. The rest is to be found from external resources. The United Nations special session did not formally endorse or adopt the OAU report, but it reaffirmed a commitment to provide resources to support and complement the efforts of the African countries.

It is now the season when Government Departments are preparing bids to the Treasury for expenditure targets to be announced in the autumn statements. If the House permits me to introduce the Bill, the Bill has all-party support—it will be a strong signal that we all accept that long-term development in African agriculture must be afforded a higher budgetary priority if we are to have any real and long-term hope of banishing poverty and famine and its horrendous cost in human life and misery.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Archy Kirkwood, Mr. Jim Lester, Mr. Mark Fisher, Mr. John Cartwright, Mr. Donald Stewart, Mr. David Alton, Mr. A. J. Beith and Mr. Geraint Howells.

FAMINE RELIEF IN AFRICA

Mr. Archy Kirkwood accordingly presented a Bill to place a duty on the Overseas Development Administration to publish an annual Report to Parliament on famine relief in Africa to include individual reports on each project in Africa financed directly or indirectly from public funds; to establish a timetable during which overall official United Nations aid targets for overseas aid may be reached; to establish a timetable during which the proportion of aid spent on development of subsistence agriculture in the poorest countries would constitute 50 per cent. of the total aid budget; to encourage long term development of African agriculture; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 4 July and to be printed. [Bill 187.]

ESTIMATES DAY

[2ND ALLOTTED DAY]

ESTIMATES 1986-87

Class VIII, vote 3, Administration.

Employment

[Relevant documents: First, second and third reports of the Employment Committee, House of Commons Papers 199 (1985-86), 265 (1985-86) and 435 (1985-86).]

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That a further sum, not exceeding £27,735,000, be granted to Her Majesty out of the Consolidated Fund to defray the charges which will come in course of payment during the year ending on 31st March 1987 for expenditure by the Department of Employment on the administration of benefit services and on central and miscellaneous services. *[Mr. Kenneth Clarke.]*

4.18 pm

Mr. Ron Leighton (Newham, North-East): I commend to the House the two reports of the Select Committee on Employment, on special employment measures and the corporate plan of the Manpower Services Commission. The MSC has a budget of some £3 billion and the House should give it more detailed attention. We compliment the MSC upon the comprehensiveness of its corporate plan, which sets something of a standard to other public bodies in that regard. We were impressed by the enthusiasm of the MSC staff for the necessary work they do. I want to concentrate on our reports on special employment measures. The opening words of our first report were:

"We seek to attack a vicious paradox. Admitted needs in both the public and private sectors have increased, while the stock of unused resources, both human and material, has increased likewise. Why not bring the unmet needs and unused resources together more quickly? We believe that unemployment is increasingly becoming the main social, moral and economic problem facing the country."

The cost of the dole queue to the Exchequer is about £20 billion. That must be bad economics. If those people were at work, they would produce some £35 billion worth of wealth. It is a failure of imagination to allow that to continue. The Committee's report stated:

"The costs, of unemployment, including long-term unemployment, are not to be measured only in terms of benefit paid, taxes forgone and output lost. The associated increase of family breakdown, drug abuse, sickness, suicide and crime have a high economic and social cost."

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Leighton: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will forgive me for not giving way.

Let the House consider the nature and scale of this tragedy and what has happened. In the year to October 1978 unemployment fell by 91,700. In the year to October 1979 it fell by a further 62,100. Then there was a change of Government and, with it, a change of policy. I do not want to be too partisan but perhaps it is as well to remind ourselves that the Conservative election manifesto in 1979 promised what was termed "more genuine new jobs". On 15 May 1979, the Gracious Speech stated:

"My Government will give priority in economic policy . . . and create a climate in which commerce and industry can flourish"—

and lay the basis for

[Mr. Leighton]

"increased employment in all parts of the United Kingdom."
[*Official Report*, 15 May 1979; Vol. 967, c. 48.]

That was the promise and the prospectus. What happened? I want to give the facts. Anyone can have opinions; it is the facts that count.

By the next year, 1980, unemployment had rocketed by 670,200. By the following year, 1981, it had increased disastrously, by no less than 903,400—almost 1 million in one year. In contrast to the 1979 promise, unemployment has continued to increase every year since.

The Select Committee and, I am sure, the House are concerned about the dramatic increases, within those totals, of the numbers of the long-term unemployed—now more than 40 per cent. of the jobless, numbering 1 million. If we included those taken out by the Budget changes of 1983 for a real comparison, we get a true figure of some 1,430,000 unemployed for more than a year, compared with only a third of a million in 1979. There are now more long-term unemployed than the total out of work in 1979. Well over 500,000 have been out of work for more than three years—many for four or five years. This reflects the marked increase in the numbers of people thrown out of work in 1980, 1981 and 1982 and denied work ever since.

I put it to the House that the Government have a special responsibility to those of our people, because they are the victims of the Government's policies. Many of the younger generation have never known what it is to have a job. They have been brought up, and are now marrying and starting families, in an out-of-work society. It is impossible to overestimate the damage it is doing to our society and its cohesion. We are fashioning a time bomb for the future. It is not an adequate response to equip the police with CS gas and plastic bullets.

This is not just an economic problem; it is a moral problem. Recently, the Secretary of State for Employment, Lord Young, made a speech suggesting that 87 per cent. of our people had never had it so good. Does that mean that the millions of unemployed do not matter? That speech does not stand up to close scrutiny because the lower paid have seen their incomes decline in absolute terms. Those in receipt of state benefits, such as pensioners, have not shared in the increased standards of living.

But to the extent that that statement is true, if nationhood and common citizenship mean anything, do not those who have done well out of the past seven years owe a duty to those who have not—to those who have been shut out and allowed to rot on the dole? Are we to widen the gulfs and divisions in our country even more by spending what resources we have on tax cuts for the better off?

We all lose and are impoverished by mass unemployment. There is the monumental waste of £20 billion every year to finance the dole queue. There is the lost output. We all know of the things that our constituents lack, yet idle people are not allowed to produce them. Much of the country is crumbling to bits and becoming a slum and, in areas where almost half the population are idle, we see dramatic increases in crime and disturbances in our cities. We all lose by mass unemployment, in the quality of society and of our own lives.

Mr. Forth *rose*——

Mr. Leighton: Ought the Government do something about it? Yes. Can they do something about it? Yes, of course. It would be a betrayal, a form of treason to democratic politics, to say that we can do nothing. If hon. Members say that we can do nothing, we should not be here. Yet the Government have virtually given up. We know that because their assumptions are fed into public expenditure plans which show an assumption of, and provision for, mass unemployment as far ahead as can be seen.

The Government's main policy is seeking to lower wages and, fancifully, to price people into jobs. Even here they have succeeded only in reducing the wages of the lower paid, yet their unemployment is already higher, and is increasing—disproving the notion that unemployment is caused by high wages. For the rest, there is just chatter about deregulation, jargon about improving the functioning of the labour market and the three Trade Union Acts—all aimed at lower wages.

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East) *rose*

Mr. Leighton: However, it must be noted that, for the most part, real wages are not directly under Government control, nor are the long-term unemployed now any longer part of the labour market. As someone recently said, they might as well be in Australia for the effect they have on the level of wages. This failure has led the Government to a defeatist, almost passive acceptance of continuing mass unemployment. We cannot endure this indefinitely, so what is to be done?

Even with the Government's tight overall fiscal-monetary stance, the Chancellor said in the 1985 Red Book that there was a £9·5 billion "fiscal adjustment" from 1986-87 to 1988-89. Therefore, that £9·5 billion of tax cuts or public expenditure increases would be consistent with the Government's public sector borrowing requirement objectives. Here we all have to make a choice of objectives. Here we all have to decide on what we should like this money to be spent. Surely this scope should be used, as far as possible, to create jobs quickly. That should be the priority. The Select Committee took evidence on the best and most cost-effective ways of doing that.

Of course, other things being equal, we should all like to see tax cuts. However, if we are interested in jobs, the evidence shows that tax cuts are the least effective, and most expensive, way of creating jobs, costing some £50,000 net for each person removed from the unemployment count. Some people would allege that income tax cuts unleash a surge of productive enterprise and incentives to work effort. The best that can be said for that is that it is completely unproven. The 1979 Budget, introduced by the former Chancellor, the present Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary, was based on that concept. It had the opposite effect and preceded a surge of unemployment.

Much of the proceeds of tax cuts goes into savings or is spent on imports, not domestic employment. It might be more honest to admit that income tax cuts are a straightforward bribe for electoral reasons than to pretend that they are for the good of the economy. Better and cheaper for job creation, although still relatively expensive, are increases in public expenditure, notably in public investment. They are considerably more cost-effective than income tax reductions. Here we should note that the direct and indirect job content of each unit of

public expenditure differs considerably programme by programme and according to whether it is current or capital expenditure. This would have to be taken into account when designing the mix to create employment.

The third method of job creation

Mr. Nigel Forman (Carshalton and Wallington): I am sorry to interrupt the hon. Gentleman in the flow of his long speech, but does he not accept that any variable analysis of the impact of different forms of fiscal adjustment upon employment is bound to be suspect? About the only confident statement that one can make is that tax cuts may have a greater or lesser effect on unemployment than the other things he is discussing, such as public expenditure or national insurance. It is clear that it does not have a quick effect. Is it not a question of time scale?

Mr. Leighton: The hon. Gentleman is known in the House for his attention to these matters. He is right that the estimate cannot be exact. What he says about the speed at which the measures can be introduced is also right.

We are not suggesting that these are the main measures for the future of the whole economy. They are measures to be taken alongside an orthodox expansion of the economy. Whatever mix of measures that we have, the Select Committee proposes selective employment measures because they are targeted and quick acting, with an effect in the short term within the next two or three years. That is why we recommend them.

Therefore, I come to the third method — special employment measures. The evidence here is striking and very clear. It shows that they are far and away the most effective measures of all. They boost employment or cut unemployment far more than any other use of money.

The Government already have a range of special employment measures such as the community programme, the enterprise allowance scheme and the job release scheme. If we include the youth training scheme, although it is not strictly speaking a special employment measure, more than 600,000 people take part, taking over half a million out of the unemployment count. That is not at £50,000 a head, as with tax cuts, but at about £2,000 a head. That is spectacularly good value.

What the country needs now — I take the point of the hon. Member for Carshalton and Wallington (Mr. Forman) in relation to the short term — is a new deal. Alongside an orthodox revival of the economy we need, especially in the short term, a major expansion and upgrading of special employment measures to take up and reduce unemployment.

Of course, there are some criticisms of the measures. Some spending is on dead weight, that is, in financing jobs that would have existed anyway. Also there is displacement, displacing employment or output elsewhere. There is nothing new or unique in that. For example, regional development grants often go to firms that would have made the investment regardless of the availability of grants. There is already heavy dead weight on some of the Government's schemes. On the young workers scheme, which has been revamped into the new workers scheme, the dead weight is well over 75 per cent.

On the enterprise allowance scheme, of which the Government are so proud, the dead weight is about 50 per cent. But, even allowing for the dead weight and displacement, the expenditure on special employment measures is some 20 times more effective than tax cuts. It is certainly far quicker in removing people from unemployment.

On the inflation criterion, special employment measures are superior to other uses of money because they are targeted towards individuals, firms and areas where labour is in excess supply, and so they do not lead to inflation. Spending on the long-term unemployed is not inflationary. It is an investment in their future employability.

At present, 0·6 million people are on special employment measures. What is the optimum number? What is the optimum number with unemployment at over 4 million? Why is the figure 0·6 million rather than, say, 1·6 million? We had better realise that the measures will be a permanent feature of the labour market as far ahead as we can see, so let there be longer-term planning and evaluation.

Here I come to the details of our proposals. We concentrated on the long-term unemployed as a priority category. For them, privation and hardship is greatest. They are discriminated against as the only long-term claimants who cannot claim long-term benefit, however many years they have been out of work.

After a family has been without wages for a year or more, clothing, footwear and household goods wear out and cannot be replaced. Their children suffer, and in turn their life chances are affected. The longer that someone is without a job, the less likely he or she is to get a job. Unemployment is not an orderly queue, where those who have waited the longest come off first. The reverse is true. Successful applicants tend to be those who have recently joined the queue. The great advantage of special employment measures is that they can be targeted at specific groups.

Our original proposals recommended that, over three years, a job guarantee should be offered to all long-term unemployed who wanted one. We wanted the new special measures to create additional jobs at the lowest feasible cost to the Exchequer. That would lead to regular jobs with regular employers, paying the rate for the job for a full week if required. We felt that 750,000 extra places, in addition to the 230,000 on the community programme at the peak of the scheme, would be sufficient to provide the guarantee. Clearly, it would not be possible to provide these jobs at once. We envisaged a build-up of the scheme over three years, with pilot schemes to test out the ideas in practice and learn from them. Where would the extra jobs be found? The first area was an urban rehabilitation and building improvement programme. Despite the enormous backlog in maintenance work, the construction industry is employing 500,000 fewer workers than a decade ago. We envisage 300,000 extra jobs at a net cost of £1·5 billion when the scheme is in full operation.

The second area is in health and personal social services. Both are highly labour-intensive. We suggested that 50,000 people should be employed in the personal social services and 50,000 people in the National Health Service.

Mr. Thurnham: I apologise to the hon. Gentleman for arriving a few moments after he started his speech. Could the hon. Gentleman say whether trade unions have suggested they would be able to support the initiative from

[Mr. Thurnham]

the Select Committee? I have not heard of any response from the Trades Union Congress on the suggestions that the Committee has put forward.

Mr. Leighton: I have no knowledge of the trade union view of the schemes. Perhaps, if I may be allowed to call him my hon. Friend, the hon. Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) and I might together seek evidence on this from the TUC.

I am putting this forward not as the view of the TUC, but as the view of the Select Committee. Indeed, I offer these views to the Government and the country, and that includes the TUC. I am as prepared to argue this case with the TUC as I am with anyone.

Mr. John Evans (St. Helens, North): Would my hon. Friend accept from me, as someone who regularly meets senior members of the trade union movement, including members of the TUC general council, that they would accept any measures that would help to get the long-term unemployed back to work? The problem is in trying to get the Government to accept the measures.

Mr. Leighton: I hoped that that would be the view of the TUC. I certainly thought it might be. We need sensible and feasible ideas to tackle and remedy the problem of long-term unemployment. That is why we are putting them forward.

I hope that the House will come up with sensible, reasonable and practicable ideas and I am certain that we could discuss them with the TUC. I have no reason to suppose that the TUC would be anything other than co-operative in any measure that would increase employment.

I understand that it is public policy to move from institutional care to care in the community. We need more carers, and that is the area of our second proposal. The net cost would be about £0·4 billion.

The third area of our proposals involves a wage subsidy of £40 a week, which is the average benefit that a long-term unemployed person may expect to receive, and would be paid to the employers in the private sector who took on additional long-term unemployed people. Allowing for the maximum possible dead weight, we estimate that some 350,000 jobs could be created by that means at a cost of £1·4 billion. At the end of a three-year period, that would give us the additional jobs needed to constitute the guarantee to the long-term unemployed, at an eventual cost of £3·3 billion.

We studied the figures carefully, and we had our calculations double checked by the London Business School. Such a programme would transform the situation in this country. Everyone would know that a year would be the maximum period that he was idle and out of work. It would lift morale, and restore hope to our people. The report received a very good response in the country and in the press. The Government's reply was a long time in gestation. When it came, they did not fall over themselves in their eagerness to spend £3·3 billion in that way.

The Government claimed that we had underestimated the cost, which they said would be £4·3 billion at its peak —which is £1 billion more than our estimate. They also thought that it would produce fewer jobs. We do not accept the arithmetic of their calculations, and we would be pleased to discuss that. But even on their figures, we say that the proposal is well worth while and should be adopted. The main argument against seemed to be the [illegible] which the Government's reply said was "formidable". In the fifth paragraph, the Government said:

"The cost of attempting to implement the Committee's proposal would be prohibitive"

In their very last paragraph, the Government said of the £3·3 billion cost:

"Additional spending on this scale would pre-empt the scope for tax reductions"

So there is the choice. It is a question of priorities, and of what value one puts on dealing with unemployment. When considering the Government's reply, we were somewhat heartened that, although the Government did not agree with our figures, we were not all that far apart. We said £3·3 billion; they said £4·3 billion. At least we are in the same parish. We take the Government's reply as being in no way a rejection of the Committee's view that the long-term unemployed are a priority category.

We did not leave things there. The debate must continue. Consequently we have come back with a scaled-down version of our programme, and have suggested that our proposal for the job guarantee should be offered to the over 500,000 people who have been out of work for three years or more, at a cost of £1 billion, and that pilot projects should be used to test the feasibility of our original, more ambitious proposals. This much more modest proposal that we now put forward would involve less than one third of the original cost. We offer it in a constructive and helpful spirit. It is something that we can afford. The House will remember the billions found to defeat the miners' strike, and the billions spent in the Falklands. We can certainly spend £1 billion on fighting unemployment among our own people if the will and the desire are there. If we do not embark on that programme, or on one of a similar nature, we shall write off those fellow citizens.

Despite being told of the new jobs that have been created since 1983, the number of long-term unemployed has grown dramatically during that period, and the duration of their unemployment has likewise grown. Any general economic growth would help only the short-term jobless. Unless there are specific and targeted measures, those people will never work again. That would be unforgivable and a betrayal. If the Government want to help, it is perfectly possible for them to do so. We have pointed the way.

I am pleased to see that the Paymaster General is listening intently, although I am now drawing my speech to an end. I imagine that he will refer to the extra places on the community programme. We have included that in our calculations. I imagine that he will also refer to the restart programme as being the Government's way of tackling the problem. I should make it clear that the Select Committee fully supports the restart programme. However, it would be futile to suggest that it is a solution to the problem. As the Paymaster General knows very well, it has nothing to do with job creation. It does not create one single new job. The most that it can do is to seek to ensure that the long-term unemployed get a better share of the existing vacancies. But what if there are no vacancies, or too few? The six-month restart pilot projects started on 6 January. My researches show that on 9 May, five months later and five sixths of the way through the period of the project, 3,919 letters went out in Dundee, and, after five months, just 11 people got jobs.

Mr. John Prescott (Kingston upon Hull, East): I think that my hon. Friend must have heard the exchanges during

Question Time, which showed that the Government are concerned not about how many people obtain jobs, but about how many are offered jobs. Presumably, many people are offered the same job so that the Government can say that so many offers have been made, and do not have to state the number of real jobs available.

Mr. Leighton: It is not quite like that. People are offered a menu of opportunities. One offer may be to go to a job club, another may be to train, and yet another may be to join the community programme. There is no question of 90 per cent. being offered jobs. The Select Committee will try to monitor the restart programme, and lay the facts before the House. Indeed, such monitoring is a justification of the whole Select Committee system.

It could also be said that the task of the restart programme is not just to put people into jobs. I have travelled round the country with the MSC, and it is said that the main purpose is not to offer people jobs but to remotivate them, to train them, and so on. The Paymaster General must be careful about the language that he uses. The restart programme will not solve the problem. It will not create a single new job. It is not in the business of job creation.

Once I have given a few more figures for the restart programme, I shall outline how our proposals could help it. After all, we are in favour of the restart programme. In Billingham 941 letters were sent out, yet by 9 May only four people had got jobs. In Preston, 3,130 letters went out and nine people obtained jobs. In Huddersfield, 2,544 letters were sent out, but by 9 May — five months after the beginning of the six-month pilot project — 15 people had been placed in jobs. In Stoke, 4,140 letters were sent out, and 23 people obtained jobs. In Port Talbot, 2,615 letters were sent out, and 53 people found jobs. In Plymouth, 2,537 letters were sent out, and seven obtained jobs. In Crawley — this looks as though it is the best result, and I know Crawley quite well — 643 letters were sent out, and 53 were placed in jobs by 9 May. Lastly, in Ealing, 2,260 letters were sent out, and 38 were placed in jobs.

The pilot projects have another month to go. We shall then get a final assessment, and the effect of all this will continue. To use language such as the Paymaster General used at Question Time today misleads my hon. Friends into thinking 90 per cent. when it is a fraction of 1 per cent.

The Paymaster General and Minister for Employment (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): I am sure that the hon. Gentleman would not wish unintentionally to mislead the House in the use that he makes of the figures. He is talking about the number placed directly, on coming to interviews, in available jobs. He knows that he is leaving out all the figures for those placed in jobs on the community programme, all the figures of those referred to job clubs, where about two thirds will get jobs, and all those who will benefit from the restart courses, which will undoubtedly have an effect on people's ability to go into jobs. He is making a narrow and most misleading use of all the information that we are producing about the pilot schemes just as, a few moments ago, he completely misrepresented the Government's response to the report of the Select Committee by suggesting that we turned it down on cost alone. He knows perfectly well that it was the impracticability of what was proposed that led us reluctantly to reject it.

Mr. Leighton: I am pleased that I have flushed out the Paymaster General and got him to come and account for himself. Now we are beginning to get down to some of the nitty-gritty. It is frustrating at Question Time, when the Paymaster General comes back with his strange language giving everybody the impression that 90 per cent. are satisfied and happy. When we start probing, which is what a Select Committee can do — we can ask not just one question but 12 questions, and we can visit places and get to the facts — we find a different situation. Let us get to an area of agreement here.

Mr. Clarke: The hon. Gentleman, when he remembered that he was Chairman of the Select Committee, conceded that the report of the Select Committee was in favour of restart. He then launched into a great attack upon it. We have used consistent language throughout to the effect that 90 per cent. of those interviewed are made some sort of offer. The confusion is caused by the completely inaccurate quotation of what we are meant to have said by various right hon. and hon. Members of the Opposition.

Mr. Leighton: The right hon. and learned Gentleman must learn to relax and not get too excited about this. There is no need to worry because there is a lot of common ground here. We are in favour of the restart programme, make no mistake about that. We are putting forward proposals to make the restart programme more effective. I say again — I will give way if the Paymaster General thinks that I have this wrong — that the restart programme is not an exercise in job creation. It does not create one new job. It seeks to ensure that the long-term unemployed get a better share of the existing vacancies.

Mr. Clarke: As the hon. Gentleman knows, the community programme is a job creation programme, which is why we are doubling it at huge expense. It will provide jobs for over 300,000 in a year. When giving his figures, the hon. Gentleman leaves out all the community programme jobs, although earlier in his speech he was saying how cost effective the job creation measures were and that he supported them.

Mr. Leighton: There is hope for the Paymaster General after all — he is coming along.

The Select Committee recommended two years ago, before the right hon. and learned Gentleman's time, that the community programme should be doubled, and at long last we are managing to drag this out of the Government. I am certain that he will be obliged to carry out many of the ideas that we are putting forward, although he is not jumping at them now. We are the cutting edge — he will come along eventually.

We have included in our figure of 1 million the expansion of the community programme. We want the community programme to be upgraded. Even the Paymaster General has not read the report properly. He rubbishes a report that he has not read. To constitute the job guarantee of 1 million, we proposed the 750,000, with the other 250,000 to come from the community programme. The Government do not even understand what we propose, yet they jump up and down trying to criticise us. Of course, if the Paymaster General likes to come back, I am always generous in giving way, as hon. Members know. Perhaps he will have a little read, I will continue for a few moments, and I am certain that eventually he will come back on this matter.

[Mr. Leighton]

I want the community programme to be upgraded. I want the wage, which is a miserly £67, increased so that we can get a better community programme. The Government must pay a little more attention to the documents that we produce and the speeches that we make. It would be nice to have a competent Treasury Front Bench dealing with unemployment.

I repeat for the fourth time, so that the Paymaster General should not misunderstand, that we support the restart programme, and we support and congratulate the dedicated Manpower Services Commission staff operating it. However, as we say in the report,

"In fact, the programme is already beginning to reveal a desperate shortage of such jobs".

What the restart programme needs, what it is crying out for, is some jobs for its participants who have been motivated to take them. If their hopes are raised and then dashed, it would be a scandal. I urge the Government to adopt our proposals to work in tandem, to complement and ensure the success of the restart programme, to provide the jobs that the participants of the restart programme, having had their training and their motivation, can take.

I conclude by emphasising that this is a moral, social and economic issue. There must be a response commensurate with the scale of the problem. It is our overwhelming duty to come up with a remedy to this tragedy, which is impoverishing and undermining our whole nation. The Select Committee will strive for it, and I urge the Government to do the same.

4.57 pm

Mr. David Howell (Guildford): I think that the whole House admires the zeal and application with which the Select Committee on Employment looks at the question of job creation and the plight of the long-term unemployed, even if the whole House will not necessarily agree with every nuance of the speech that the Chairman of the Committee has just delivered, giving his own rather personal interpretation of the problem. While there was much in the early part of his speech with which I agreed, it is a pity that he got into a sort of rhythm of accusations about the Government virtually giving up and pushed aside the beginnings of a serious analysis and understanding of this highly emotive and central social problem. About that I was sorry. Nevertheless, I recognise that he feels strongly on these matters, and has done much work upon them.

I hope that, although I am not a member of the Select Committee, I will be forgiven for intruding on a debate and on an issue that obviously affects all of us. In particular, I will concentrate on the Manpower Services Commission's four-year forward corporate plan and report, 1986 to 1990. With that I associate another recently published report that is very germane to the issues under discussion today. That is a survey by the Institute of Manpower Studies which it undertook for the occupations study group on the pattern of employment as the institute sees it evolving over the same period, 1986 to 1990.

The MSC report, some of the comments of the hon. Member for Newham, North-East and the study by the Institute of Manpower Studies all have one central and very obvious message — that the employment and unemployment landscapes have totally changed; they have altered in their structure and shape and in the problems that they throw up. This is not futurology; it is not something that will happen in 10 years time — it has happened already. We are dealing with a new employment landscape and the MSC report is obviously attuned to that fact as it looks forward to 1990, as does the IMS report.

As the MSC report reminds us, we are now in the fifth year of uninterrupted growth in the United Kingdom economy, yet the prospects for employment are not good. The MSC chairman, Mr. Nicholson, said in the foreword to the report:

"Over the planning period unemployment, especially long-term unemployment, is likely to remain at historically high levels, though the rises of recent years are expected to cease."

Elsewhere in the report is the marker that the most sensible and safe planning basis for the long-term unemployed is to assume that the problem will remain at roughly the same level — perhaps not very much worse, but not very much better either.

The IMS tried its hand at rather more precise forecasting and came up with a rather more depressing assessment. It suggests that 640,000 jobs will disappear from the production industries by 1990, with only 520,000 jobs appearing in other industries, notably in the service sector. We must add to that the increase in numbers entering the labour market, which on IMS figures gives an actual rise in the level of unemployment, especially long-term unemployment. As the hon. Member for Newham, North-East said, they are the ones who stay at the back of the queue.

The beginning of wisdom in addressing this problem is to recognise something that, to be fair to the hon. Member for Newham, North-East, he, his party and the critics of the present position do not fully accept, which is that manufacturing employment — if we define that in the old form — will continue to shrink at a great rate. That is happening all over the world, and in British industry it is happening rather faster than in the past. There is a most basic technological reason for that — manufacturers find that their processes are better organised on very skilled manpower only and on a capital-intensive basis.

As the IMS reminds us, that is a process in which manufacturing is actually divesting itself of large numbers of people, not merely because they are not wanted but because the whole process with which they are associated is now subcontracted outside manufacturing. Therefore, when the pessimist sees that manufacturing employment is shrinking fast, he is actually looking at a process by which the very category of manufacturing is shrinking as more and more of the processes are sub-contracted out. Some of those processes are very close to the main stream of manufacturing production, but include accountancy, transportation, catering, all sorts of services and support to the processes within production. That sub-contracting is to industries and firms that may be classified as services. Thus, the whole pattern is bound to be one of shrinking manufacturing employment; that cannot be stopped. Indeed, if we are to have a flexible, competitive economy in the 1990s, it should not be stopped.

One of our difficulties is that, for emotive, noble but wrong-headed reasons, in the past we have stood in the way of the rapid shrinkage that was required in blue collar and traditional manufacturing jobs, a process that should have meant people becoming reskilled, re-educated and diverted into new activities that probably would not clearly fit the label of manufacturing or services.

Mr. Jim Craigen (Glasgow, Maryhill): What does the right hon. Gentleman say to the pessimists who look for greater buoyancy in the growth of the service sector, but do not see it?

Mr. Howell: That will be dealt with in the remainder of my speech. I accept that the proposition that I have put so far, if left by itself, is gloomy and implies that a great many people will not find jobs in manufacturing. That applies throughout the world, not merely in the United Kingdom. Indeed, I was about to add a little more gloom before coming to a more optimistic line of thought.

It is not the slightest use saying that that process can be stopped by artificially resisting capital-intensive methods. I take strong exception to the line of thought, which has come even from some of my right hon. Friends on the Front Bench, that we should maintain a low-tech or no-tech world to ensure that a great many people continue to do jobs that both they and we know perfectly well can now be done by sophisticated machinery. It is a perfectly human reaction that people should object to being kept in production jobs — perhaps dull and diminishing work — even though it is known perfectly well that machines and capital equipment exist that can do the job far more accurately and quickly.

Keeping people employed by resisting capital-intensive methods and retaining labour-intensive methods is not the right way forward.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): Even the newer industries are not immune to unemployment. For example, the offshore oil industry and its ancillary industries are suffering unemployment because of the very low price of oil. Similarly, in Scotland the electronics and information technology industries have not been immune to unemployment. Therefore, it is not simply the traditional manufacturing industries that have suffered.

Mr. Howell: I take the hon. Gentleman's point. Nor is it true that service industries have shown, are showing or will show growth in employment. A great many of the traditional service industries such as banking and insurance are due for, and are now experiencing, a gigantic diminution in labour needs and a huge increase in automation and computerisation.

So far I have struck a very pessimistic note by reminding the House that the position will become more difficult and that there is little chance of resisting that by maintaining labour-intensive industries or putting up a no-tech flag. That would be as absurd as the red flag that used to go before motor cars to keep them at four miles an hour, and will be about as effective in slowing down the trend in manufacturing world wide to grow without creating jobs—in other words, jobless growth.

I know that my right hon. Friends are greatly concerned about the very sharp wage increases for those in work. Whitehall has got itself into quite a state about high wage increases and rising unit labour costs. I suspect that at least part of that process reflects precisely what I am saying—that manufacturers are no longer interested in expanding employment and taking on new recruits, but want to concentrate on a core of highly skilled workers whom they know well, want to reward generously and are content to allow to work additional overtime and pay high rates. There is evidence that some of the large wage increases are a reflection of that—it is a technological change rather than an employer waking up one morning with a sudden surge of expansive generosity and deciding to give everyone huge increases for no reason.

Mr. Prescott: This is a serious point. Can the right hon. Member tell the House what kind of large wage increases he is talking about?

Mr. Howell: I am referring to the official statistics, which show that unit labour costs have been rising in engineering and manufacturing generally. A survey measured that at 7·2 per cent. According to the statistics, which I would advise the hon. Member for Kingston-upon-Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) to treat with great caution, in Japan the unit labour costs are zero or falling. That disparity must be worrying my right hon. Friends.

Mr. Prescott: How much money is the right hon. Gentleman talking about? Is he talking about £5,000 or £6,000 a year or the £30,000 or £100,000 being made in the City? What does he consider are the huge wage rates currently being paid?

Mr. Howell: I do not think that the hon. Gentleman can have followed my remarks. I have reflected a view which is heard in Whitehall and which has concerned some of my right hon. Friends. Unit labour cost increases of 8·2 per cent. in a nation which is competitive and which must sell to survive and create new employment are not terribly welcome if unit labour costs are zero or falling in Japan. If the hon. Gentleman finds that point difficult to understand, I am sorry; I should have thought that it was a simple point.

Having struck a note of gloom about the present position of manufacturing employment and long-term employment — a note of gloom that reflects what is stated in the Manpower Services Commission report and the Institute of Manpower Studies report — we must build on that basis. The policies that are required to meet the social misery, ugliness and fear of being unemployed — and especially of being unemployed for a long time and being unable to get back to the front of the queue — must relate to the new employment landscape that I have described.

Hon. Members — this view is expressed by hon. Members in all parties — who continue to argue that we can somehow return to the patterns of employment that existed in the 1960s and 1970s and that that can be done by pressing buttons and through deflationary programmes are perpetrating a cruel hoax. We will not return to that employment landscape. We need new policy responses to meet a new employment landscape.

A number of these policies have been developed by my right hon. Friends and many of them are set out in the enormous list of initiatives and programmes listed in the Manpower Services Commission report. There are so many initiatives that it might be a little hard for some people looking for work to find their way through that great variety of different programmes and initiatives, but certain major points can be extracted from the proposals.

The first point is obvious, but the IMS report makes it even more obvious. There will be very little place in the new employment landscape, whether we like it or not, for the unskilled. Everyone who wishes to participate in this new employment pattern in society will have to get a skill. In the rather brutal words of the IMS report, summed up in *The Times*:

"If you are an unskilled worker, get skilled."

[Mr. Howell]

That is not a very warm and friendly message but it is filled with realism.

The second point revealed in the proposals is that self-employment, part-time work and work in small businesses will play a much bigger part in the work pattern. Indeed, they are already doing so. Many hon. Members, especially Opposition Members, have referred to part-time employment and have said that part-time employment does not represent "proper jobs." They have asked why we do not return to full-time employment. They have also asked what is wrong with full-time employment and why there must be a growth in part-time employment.

The MSC and IMS studies — which are objective — show that, whether it is thought to be good or bad, there will be more part-time work. The labour supply has been vastly increased by millions more married women coming into the labour market seeking part-time work. The numbers have increased from some 3·5 million married women participating in the labour market in 1960 to about 8·5 million or 9 million today. There are probably another 2 million who are not registered for work but who would like to work. The labour supply is therefore completely different. On the demand side, the pattern of business is such that people want part-time workers. Businesses want the kind of worker who can work flexible hours rather than someone who wishes to work a full-time, fixed-week year with a fixed career.

That is clearly a feature of the employment scene today. I am not indulging in futurology. The public policies that are required must facilitate and encourage that pattern rather than resist it, pretend that it does not exist or that it is a temporary aberration.

My next point is related to the language and presentation which my right hon. and hon. Friends sometimes use when addressing these problems. I know that one of the phrases that we hear from the policy makers is that people faced with the new conditions should "price themselves into jobs." I beg my right hon. and hon. Friends not to use that economic logician's phraseology. It is technically true that people are accepting lower wages in the form of part-time wages and are taking jobs. Hundreds of thousands of new jobs are emerging which are part-time jobs on part-time wages.

But pricing people into jobs sounds as if a lecture is being given and that people should accept a wage cut. That is a poor basis on which to persuade people that a new employment landscape exists under which different patterns of work will be required, and that people will have to look for their incomes and family living standards from different means rather than from one wage or salary from one job.

I also hope that we can move away from talk of work-sharing. That is a feeble and defeatist concept. There was talk about that, but it tends not to have found much of a place in policy thinking at present and I am glad about this. There is, of course, a kind of work sharing now, not as a result of Government policy but as a result of changing social patterns and attitudes. Women are rightly saying that they want to work outside the home for pay and that they are fed up with doing the hard work at home for no pay. The other partner in the marriage has to adjust. Some kind of work-sharing automatically exists in millions of homes as women take on paid work and the duties in the home are shared as are the duties outside the home. That is an inevitable and healthy development. That form of work-sharing is creating a new pattern of employment and new attitudes in the labour market.

The MSC and the IMS reports emphasised that that leaves the problem of the unskilled. There is a segmented labour market, with an increasing demand for skilled people. Skill shortages are already springing up while the long-term unemployed and unskilled remain left out. The bizarre position exists in some areas — for example, in my constituency — where there are real and urgent shortages of certain skills. We hear again the dismal talk from the past about skill bottlenecks. At the same time, we are left with appalling unemployment figures and high levels of unemployment among the unskilled.

The Government are responding to the new landscape. They are moving slightly patchily and haphazardly towards new policies to adjust to it, but more open recognition is required of where we are and of the real employment situation.

If more people are self-employed or employed part time, school leavers must be educated and prepared for such a pattern. They must be prepared to change their skills three, four or even five times during their working life. That suggests a rather different type of education from that which many children have received hitherto. It is quite different from the proposition that everybody must expect a full-time job which will come from somewhere and, if it does not — that is tragically common — that person is on the scrapheap. That is a hopeless and destructive line of thought which starts in school and it must be cut off by new patterns of education.

Tax policies are becoming more favourable to self-employment and people who start their own enterprises, but we still have a long way to go. I wonder whether we have reached the point at which we should take seriously the idea of the Institute of Directors, which is that almost anybody who wants to should be able to aquire self-employed or subcontract status. I am aware that that sounds radical and will arouse cries of horror in the Inland Revenue, but I wager that, 10 years from now, that is the type of pattern to which our tax system will have shaped itself.

We must have more of the deregulation policies which my right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State for Employment has put out in his two excellent White Papers to allow the development of a world in which own or home-based work and self-employed activity can prosper rather than be regulated or planned out of existence.

As for the social security reforms which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services is trying to put through, the Government must build more on the concept embodied in the enterprise allowance scheme. I refer to insulated benefit. It is based on the idea, which may be anathema to some, that benefits should be insulated up to a certain point, regardless of what work activity or other income the recipient gains. Followed through entirely, the idea flowers into the proposal for a guaranteed basic income, which is a nice idea but is ruled out because it is hopelessly expensive. With insulated benefits, people who want to earn more can, and do not get into one of the various poverty traps or find themselves unwillingly joining the illegal classes by being in the work and draw category.

A little more money will have to be spent on Government capital spending in inner cities, which my right hon. Friend the Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine)

has recommended with great vigour and panache. He speaks a great deal about seed money and pump priming. As I have said before, more should be done in that regard. I do not believe that the effects on employment will be dazzling or that jobs in the numbers that the hon. Member for Newham, North-East would like — he spoke of 50,000 jobs in health, for example — will appear, but such expenditure would help and would have the additional benefit of helping to clean up the country and improve our cities.

We must create a far more favourable climate for spreading capital and wider capital ownership as well as income. If Governments are honest enough to reckon that they cannot deliver a decent living standard to everybody through guaranteed full-time employment through income redistribution, it is through capital redistribution that some additional support at the edges — not a significant amount in the early years — can be developed. That is why I greatly welcome some of the Government's initiatives to encourage wider ownership among all income groups, including those on the lowest incomes.

We should examine more closely the bonus system of pay. Almost every job in Japan has an attached bonus arrangement. When people are taken on, they are taken on at the basic rate of pay without a bonus. The result is that there is far more encouragement for employers to hire more people than if the newcomer had to be paid the same as everyone else. That system is one of the reasons why Japan has an unemployment rate of 2·8 per cent. and why it successfully absorbs would-be long-term unemployed people, giving them a continuing function, if not a full-time job.

I have outlined the changes of emphasis that we need and how existing policies must be pulled together to make a real push at the burning and unpleasant social problem of persistent long-term unemployment. They are somewhat different from the responses about which we have argued previously. They take us away from the idea that there is a general reflationary package which will miraculously reduce unemployment permanently. That cannot be done, and the suggestion that it can is a cruel hoax. We should concentrate instead on the policies that are outlined in the MSC report and which my right hon. and hon. Friends are beginning to gather from different Departments. They could take us not back to a fully employed society in the old sense but forward to a fully occupied society which will be both more satisfying and prosperous.

5.27 pm

Mr. Michael Hancock (Portsmouth, South): Most hon. Members look beyond the unemployment statistics to the depressing and hideous statistic concerning the long-term unemployed. They present a bigger challenge than almost any other group. Although many could fall into a job tomorrow if one were available, there are some who have suffered from enforced unemployment who need the extra help which I hope will be forthcoming.

I support the proposal to start job clubs, but remain suspicious about what they will achieve. The Government seem to bring out at least one new scheme each year in an attempt to show that they are doing something about unemployment and the mess that the economy is in. It seems that job clubs are in front of the Government's shop window this year.

It is interesting to note that, in the section on the restart programme in the Government's glossy booklet "Action for Jobs", the first step is an offer of a suitable job. The next six steps merely represent what is already available — places on the community programme and training courses, for example. The final step is the Government's let-out. It is a new one or two-week restart course to help people assess what they are good at and to show them how to look for jobs more efficiently.

I do not deny that courses would be useful to many people, but if no more than that is offered to unemployed people they will feel cheated and let down once again. When the Minister replies to the debate, I hope that he will give an estimate of the number of people in the various categories described in the booklet. Regrettably, I suspect that many will end up in the final category.

I understand that the initial pilot schemes for job clubs has been successful in getting jobs for the participants. However, the Government's restart programme with its job clubs lacks sincerity and will not create a single job. As the Chairman of the Select Committee on Employment said, it simply shuffles the vacancies around and redistributes them to different categories of people who are unfortunate enough to be unemployed.

This scheme will lack credibility in the eyes of the unemployed because the Government have not created the incentive of jobs that the restart courses will show people they are good at and for which they will be qualified. Alternatives are suggested and, undoubtedly, the community programme is important. If the jobstart scheme is to be as successful as the Government predict, there will not be sufficient places on the community programme to cater for it.

In the alliance budget statement earlier this year, we said that the community programme should be brought up to at least 460,000 places. The latest unemployment figures show that 1,356,000 people have been unemployed for more than a year, and clearly the Government have considerably understated the requirements for their own programme.

The other avenue is training and, as has been said in debates over the last two years, in that we lag far behind our competitors. One of the most telling paragraphs in the MSC's corporate plan reads:

"Britain's performance on training is poor in comparison with that of our main competitors".

The right hon. Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell) spoke about Japan and its ability to cope. We lag hopelessly behind Japan in the sort of initiatives that have been taken there. I doubt the ability even of the Japanese to absorb for much longer the continuing progress of new technology and I doubt their ability to continue to find jobs for everyone. The right hon. Gentleman will find that his predictions for the future of Japan will somewhat reflect our own situation in relation to the effects of new technology.

There are still not enough training opportunities. Training and education should be restructured. I hope to develop that point later. An important component of training facilities is the skillcentre. The one in my city has been badly hit by cuts. I shall demonstrate later to the Minister how it has been neglected. Schemes for training exist, but they are insufficient and insufficient resources are devoted to their valuable tasks. The current

[Mr. Michael Hancock]

programmes are seriously underfunded and corners have been cut so that unemployed people can be taken off the dole list for as little money as the Treasury will allocate.

I hope that the Minister will develop the proposals about the MSC's corporate plan because the chairman's foreword predicts a chilly future. He says:

"Over the planning period unemployment, especially long term unemployment, is likely to remain at historically high levels."

Clearly, the report was written within the constraints of the Government's straitjacket, but one can discern where the MSC would like to expand its activities. That is obviously in the training component of its work, and many of us have argued that this part of the MSC should come under the control of a Ministry of Education enlarged to cover training. It is a great pity that at one moment the Government appeared to be considering this option but then backed away from it.

Time after time the MSC document talks about close co-operation with the Department of Education and Science. Why do the Government not finally take the initiative and make the logical move to bring the two together? I know from experience in the city from which I come that many facilities are wasted. There is duplication of courses and insufficient flexibility. The skillcentre in Portsmouth illustrates the point that I am trying to make. Some of the courses there are under-subscribed but the machinery and the skilled teaching staff exist for those courses. Many schools in the area could benefit from using the skillcentre, with its modern equipment, to train youngsters at an earlier age. Regrettably, that cannot be done because of the constraints that are placed on the skillcentre.

The current structure of the MSC does not allow the person in charge of a skillcentre enough autonomy. He or she has to go through a long-winded process to get new courses off the ground, yet such people know from their experience of the areas in which they are operating that such courses are needed by the many employers who time and again try to negotiate with them for courses. We need a change in policy which will allow that autonomy to be given to the heads of skillcentres so that they can negotiate and immediately offer alternative courses for which there is a need.

There is almost a complete lack of market research and the staff at the centre do not always know the best courses to promote. That is because the placings for such things as job training schemes come through the jobcentre and the staff have no idea of what the public demands from job training schemes. The corporate plan recognises this, but insufficient emphasis is placed on that and existing projects are biased too much to the centre.

The local collaborative and responsive college projects must be expanded quickly. This is one area of the commission's work where the overall structure needs to be reviewed to improve training opportunities. The Government have used the poor structure as an excuse to cut back on the skillcentres. They are golden reservoirs and they are under-utilised. Schools should have better access than they have at present. I hope that the Minister will look at that and deal with it.

There is a great deal of complacency about the training undertaken by private companies. I see that in my constituency and I regret it. There is not enough in the plan to encourage private enterprise to take advantage of the various schemes that exist. Some employers are not aware of the benefits and, unfortunately, some are not interested in any of the schemes. We need to find ways of making the schemes more attractive and of keeping employers better informed, and making them more willing to take on their obligation to try to retrain the people whom they constantly say that they need.

The report also deals with the recent review of vocational qualifications. The need for a flexible qualification system is essential and it must be based on achievement, not on time served. Qualifications need to be designed to bridge the gap between academic and vocational awards. More modular courses should be offered to allow the individual and the employer to obtain exactly what they need. In addition, the courses should allow people the chance to interchange between subjects not traditionally related.

It would be impossible to cover all aspects of the report and in the time that I have available I shall not attempt to do so. However, I should like to speak about another measure specifically related to the long-term unemployed. The corporate plan mentions the jobstart scheme and the pilot schemes that have taken place, but it does not tell us how successful they have been. Perhaps the Government could enlighten the House about that, because I doubt whether the schemes will achieve much. I doubt whether six months is long enough. I phoned my local jobcentre this morning to discover whether anybody had shown any interest in them, and I was told that nobody had and that there was not one response, despite the fact that the schemes had received fairly widespread publicity.

The challenge for the MSC is clear but it remains to be seen whether the Government have the will power to provide the necessary resources. At this time of record unemployment there is a widespread shortage of skilled labour, and low skill levels may well explain why. Even in factories where the equipment is the same as that in similar factories abroad, productivity is lower than abroad. In order to encourage companies to use existing MSC training courses, tax incentives are desperately needed. The YTS and especially the qualification systems need to be strengthened.

I urge the Minister to read two quotations, one of which is from the Government's own report "Action for Jobs". On page 35 it says:

"Decisions about jobs, training and business are among the most important you're ever likely to take. But first you want to make sure you've got all the facts and are aware of all the opportunities."

The Minister needs to know all the facts and to be aware of all the opportunities that he has at his disposal before he invites the unemployed to take seriously his comments in that document.

The second quotation comes from the chairman's foreword to the MSC report. He says:

"The Plan sets out challenging objectives which can only be attained with the support and co-operation of others."

Surely, if unemployment is ever to be stopped, we must find that co-operation. I am sure that in his endeavours the Minister is, like every other hon. Member, trying to achieve something better. But that will be achieved only if there is a willingness to put in the sort of resources that are needed to make retraining programmes relate to the needs of industry.

We should not take the over-pessimistic view adopted by the right hon. Member for Guildford about our

declining industrial base. We must find a way of using what we are good at. The one thing that British people have traditionally been good at is inventing and making things. We must find a way of bringing that expertise back on the world stage and making ourselves once again attractive to the world as an industrial power.

When I recently visited Japan with other hon. Members I was not too impressed with its prospects. It will experience enormous problems over the commitment in various industries to provide jobs for life and the belief that jobs can be revamped. I saw golden opportunities for British industrialists to sell our products in Japan, but there was a great reluctance on the part of the embassy staff in Japan, and others representing Great Britain there, to sell Britain. It is depressing that in our major competitor in the far east no one is pushing hard for Britain and the people whom we represent.

I hope that when the Minister replies he will give the hope that is so desperately needed to so many of the millions of people in Britain who look for a lead and for help from the Government.

5.41 pm

Sir Philip Goodhart (Beckenham): My right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell) delivered a masterly analysis of current employment prospects nationally and internationally. I agree with a great deal of what he said and I should like to discuss that with him. However, I am upset that he seems to have resigned from his earlier philosophical flirtation with work-sharing, and I was astonished to hear his proposals for work-sharing within the home. I can only hope that our wives never read today's *Hansard*. I am certain that they will not.

I see my brief role in the debate as rather more limited, and that is to urge my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister to look more favourably than he has in the past at two aspects of the report of the Select Committee on Employment. First, we made proposals for the creation of a substantial number of jobs on building schemes and environmental improvement projects in our inner cities. We have suggested that the way forward is to set up employment schemes.

I am happy to note that after the publicaton of that report the Government quickly announced that they would go ahead with environmental improvement programmes in selected target areas in our inner cities. They did not, as we suggested, go on to say that those jobs should be largely occupied by the long-term unemployed. But, as my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister has said on a number of occasions that many such jobs should be filled by local residents, that amounts to much the same thing. I am delighted that, at least in that respect, the Government are beginning to move down the road that we have signposted.

We also recommended that more money should be made available to promote employment opportunities in the social services and the NHS. We pointed out that the Government's policy of moving from institutional to community care inevitably means that there will be scope for more jobs. There is scope here for the development of a great many small local schemes.

Last week that admirable organisation, the Invalid Children's Aid Association, wrote to me as the Member for Beckenham saying that it would like to start a new scheme in Bromley to help families who are caring for severely disabled children. The scheme involves a person called a care attendant going into the home to help parents with tasks such as bathing, feeding, dressing and changing. That gives the parents some relief from the physical strain of looking after a severely disabled youngster. The Invalid Children's Aid association says:

> "In our experience, several young people aged 16 to 19 have had to go into a residential establishment after leaving school, because there was inadequate community support to enable them to stay at home."

The association has picked out the names of 15 adolescents whose families would benefit from such a scheme locally. They suffer from conditions such as muscular dystrophy, spina bifida and cerebral palsy. Now that the children are older they are hard to move and the association knows that there is often a high incidence of back problems among the mothers of such children.

If the provision of one or two paid carers recruited from the long-term unemployed delayed the institutionalisation of five or six of those 15 children, the taxpayer would save a lot of money and a dozen or more parents would receive a lot of help.

In response to our proposals, my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister suggested that the administrative costs of supporting that sort of scheme would be high. He has estimated them at about £2,000 per job. However, in this sort of project the administrative costs would be minimal and could often be carried by the voluntary agency concerned. There is substantial scope here for increased employment which would, in some instances, save the taxpayer money.

Finally, I note that almost all commentators agree with our comments in paragraph 7 of the report when we say:

> "All the evidence is that, whereas a major fall in short-term unemployment would generate considerable upwards pressure on wages, a fall in long-term unemployment would not. Thus the Government's objective of growth without inflation would be well served by further measures directly aimed at the long-term unemployed."

Indeed, some economists would go further than that and suggest that the rehabilitation of the long-term unemployed would, in certain instances, actually reduce the pressure on wages.

I do not expect the Government, during the course of the debate or in the next few weeks or months, to say that they will adopt all our proposals. However, common sense suggests that in the near future they should take some further steps down the path we have outlined.

5.50 pm

Mr. Ken Eastham (Manchester, Blackley): We are all grateful to the House for the fact that at least we have been afforded some time to debate this important report. Very often, the Select Committee on Employment has been involved in long inquiries in great depth and, unfortunately, the Government have not found time to allow us to air these issues in public. Nevertheless, I am grateful that at least we can hang on to a peg in the Estimates to have our way today and indulge in this short debate.

I was rather encouraged when I read a report in one of the national newspapers about the pending debate. I felt that it gave credit to all members of the Select Committee, except one. It said that only one Member disagreed after the inquiry. Unfortunately, that Member is not present today. I would have liked to say one or two things to his face if it had been possible. He voted against every recommendation from the Committee. It is worth going on

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record to say that he had not really served to listen to the evidence which the rest of the Members had so meticulously investigated.

Mr. Don Dixon (Jarrow): In fact, the person involved voted against our response to the Government's attitude to our original report. I do not think that the hon. Gentleman was on the Select Committee when it made the report and recommendations.

Mr. Eastham: I would not argue with my hon. Friend and I do not want to over-indulge and use my valuable time talking about the hon. Gentleman's reasons for voting against all the recommendations. I got the distinct feeling throughout our inquiries that there was a genuine desire to look at the problem in depth and at least try to persuade the Government to make some positive recommendations.

I believe that when we commenced the inquiry and asked the various people to give us evidence we were thinking, along with other factors, about the human cost. We are talking about the sheer desperation of so many people nowadays. The social and moral consequences of workless people and their families being decimated is of greater importance than any of the other evidence that came before us.

I am sure that we all recognise – I certainly do – that unemployment is destroying family life. It is dividing husbands and wives and there is family breakdown of a dimension and scale that has never been seen before in this country. We are seeing an excessively high divorce rate and, consequently, increasing burdens being placed on social services and on local education authorities, which have to provide children from workless homes with school meals and the necessary clothing because some children are not even dressed sufficiently to be able to attend their lessons.

We are seeing massive rent arrears and heavy debts being accumulated and we are also seeing complete mental breakdowns, wholesale suicides, drug abuse on a scale that has never been recognised before and abnormal sickness levels. That more or less sets the scene for some of the comments I should like to make. It is because of those factors that the Select Committee was making a special plea – more than a special plea, a just demand – that there should be changes in the Government's attitude to the problem.

Additionally, there is the cost to the taxpayer. The cost of unemployment is £5,000 per head per year on average. When we consider that there are about 3·25 million unemployed, we know that the cost is well in excess of £16 billion per year and some people say that it can be as much as £20 billion. That is without mentioning some of the additional burdens being faced by the Health Service because of additional hospitalisation, drugs being prescribed by general practitioners and many other spin-off consequences of the sheer human misery and desperation that people face. They feel that nobody cares and that the Government and politicians could not care less. That is not the case. The Opposition are saying quite clearly that it would be our highest priority at least to give people hope and the chance of a job.

As people become long-term unemployed, so the problem becomes greater. We should consistently remind ourselves of the scale of the workless figures today. People now become rather blasé when they say there are 3·25 million unemployed. We should also remind ourselves that of that number over 1·3 million are long-term unemployed – over a year without a job – plus another 200,000 under the age of 25 who have been workless for six to 12 months. Still more desperate, over 500,000 workless have not had a job for over three years.

However, the Government keep on telling us how successful they are. One Conservative Member went to great lengths to say that things will never change, that technology is here, we cannot provide jobs and nothing can be done. I contest that point of view. We are not Luddites. We are not saying that we resist change. We welcome change. However, if Conservative Members go to their local hospitals or social services departments to ask whether they could use additional people to help alleviate their burden, every area could tell the Government that that is the case.

Only last week I received a letter from a constitutent complaining about the care her husband was receiving in hospital. I made inquiries and the secretary at the hospital said that the complaint was true and apologised, saying that the hospital was undermanned. These are the areas where we contend that there are worthwhile jobs. Never mind the implication that we are talking about a periphery of worthless work: there are plenty of worthwhile jobs that could be done.

Not all the Government job schemes have been successful. I would also add – the Minister should recognise this when he replies – that we are strongly critical of the unrealistic rates of pay being offered in some of the Government schemes. Without doubt people are, rightly, refusing to accept poverty wages. We believe that realistic rates of pay could be offered. When one considers that it costs more than £5,000 a year to support a person without a job, it seems sensible to conclude that realistic rates of pay should be offered and should meet with the Government's approval.

The Select Committee in its recommendations seeks job guarantees for the long-term unemployed. If the Minister studies the report, he will see the type of worthwhile jobs that we consider could be tackled. It is ironic that the areas with the highest unemployment have the worst dereliction and the highest incidence of slums, inadequate housing, overcrowding and homelessness. Probably 1 million homes need modernisation and improvement, and at least 500,000 families are homeless. We have an enormous backlog of work which could be tackled through the creation of worthwhile jobs. The report also mentions maintenance, renovation and other useful jobs. I hope that the Minister will note in particular that we are seeking at least an average wage to enable a man to support his wife and family.

Several references have been made to social services. We suggested that 50,000 additional jobs should be created in the National Health Service. I am sure that they would be warmly welcomed, if the Government agreed to that modest proposal. We are not being unrealistic. The proposals could be phased in, and the chief officers of the Manpower Services Commission in their evidence gave us to understand that they could adopt some of our recommendations and employ the numbers we have in mind. Therefore, it is not good enough for Conservative Members to say, "We could never do this. It is too much and there are problems." We have already tested our

recommendations and we have seen the people involved, who have assured us that our target of 750,000 extra jobs could be met.

I sincerely believe that the figure of £3·3 billion as the overall cost for the implementation of these proposals is justifiable. We make no apology for our recommendations. People are no longer giving greater priority to tax relief than to job opportunities, and it is about time that the Government took that on board. Wealthy, selfish people may always be interested in more money, but if the Government canvassed the nation for its choice between providing more jobs and giving some people 6p in the pound tax relief, the overwhelming mass would support more jobs.

I commend to the House the report which the Select Committee has worked so conscientiously to produce, and I hope that the Minister will yield, reconsider the position and implement all our recommendations, particularly those on behalf of the long-term unemployed.

6.4 pm

Mrs. Elizabeth Peacock (Batley and Spen): Unemployment is a disease of society throughout the world, and that disease in this country was highlighted when my right hon. and learned Friend the Paymaster General gave us the present figures. Perhaps it would do no harm to repeat them. There are 3,325,000 people unemployed. 1,357,000 people have been unemployed for more than a year, 845,000 for more than two years, and 567,000 for more than three years. Long-term unemployment is becoming the cancer of our society, and we must spend some money to cure it.

Today's debate is about not whether we should cure the problem, but how to cure it. My right hon. and learned Friend and my hon. Friend the Minister have already talked about work sharing. Perhaps I should quietly send copies of the *Official Report* of our debate to their wives who can then see what they said. The debate is not about costs, although they must come into our discussions. We are talking about the principles that must be established and about the actions that need to be taken.

As a member of the Select Committee on Employment, I supported the report that we produced in April, not so much because of the detail, but because of the principle. Unemployment is a problem and long-term unemployment is a disaster. The percentage of those unemployed are irrelevant to those who are unemployed. To the person who is unemployed, unemployment is 100 per cent., whether he be a man or a woman.

The problem of the long-term unemployed is that the longer they are unemployed, the greater is their difficulty of ever finding a job. I recognise that some of the schemes which my right hon. and learned Friend has already introduced are helping that difficult position. It is a clearly established fact that at interviews employers prefer those who have been out of work for a short time to those who have been unemployed for a long time. All hon. Members know that from talking to employers in their constituency. Some people have the impression, wrongly, that if someone has been without work for months or years, he will probably not want to work or he will be incapable of adjusting to the disciplines of the workplace. That is nonsense.

We must take steps to aid the long-term unemployed, and I still believe that the proposals in our original report and our proposals in response to the Government's reply are basically along the right lines. Our three-part proposals remain relevant.

First, a new building projects programme, supported by local authorities, private agencies and private firms, agreed by the MSC and tendered for by private contractors, to provide 300,000 additional year-long jobs has merits still well worth discussing. The programme would be targeted specifically on housing renovation – many of us know from our constituencies how desperately we need that – and the renovation of schools and hospitals. Although much renovation is already taking place, more can be done. At present all those areas are demanding extra help.

I realise that we must consider the question of substitution of the community programme, but I have seen little evidence to date of the community programme targeting in on these specific areas. It is not proven that specific targeting as we propose would cause substitution of those at present employed in such work.

The question of cost is always at the back of everyone's mind, and we have been accused of underestimating the costs, especially those of management overheads and of sponsors for the MSC. Originally we proposed proceeding via a private tendering system which would have brought straightforward commercial pressures to bear and would have imposed the downward pressures of the market place. That is not such a bad idea. In this instance, the costs per job are somewhat higher than the £4,000 to £5,000 that we originally suggested, but not as high as the £9,500 suggested in the Government's reply.

Sometimes, we in the House underestimate the pressure of the market place, and we should not. I can give a simple example. We can think back to our arguments about the price of petrol after my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer made his Budget speech, and to the demands for action against the oil companies which wanted to recoup the increased tax. The market place sorted out that problem quite satisfactorily and quickly.

Our second proposal involved the social services and the Health Service. We were looking for some 100,000 jobs, at an average maximum wage of £120, to be paid by the MSC for one year. In their reply, the Government have rightly pointed out the difficulties, particularly within hospitals, and we recognise them. There is always a danger of substitution in hospital jobs such as cleaning, laundry and catering.

However, one sector has not been adequately looked at by the Government, or if it has, that was not apparent in the Government's reply. I refer to community care. We have problems of inner city decay and of an increasingly elderly population. We have within our Health Service a policy to treat within our communities people with mental and medical problems. The Green Paper on the subject was called "Care in the Community". There is a demand within our society for special steps to help in these increasingly important sectors.

We might be criticised, and it might be suggested that this problem should be tackled by professional people and not by the long-term unemployed, but many among the long-term unemployed would be capable, with the correct amount of management and supervision, of helping in these critical sectors of community care. The Government and, if appropriate, the Select Committee should give further consideration to special action in the community care sector to provide some short-term employment.

[Mrs. Elizabeth Peacock]

Thirdly, the Select Committee's proposal of a wage subsidy to employers in the private sector who take on long-term unemployed people is a suggestion that has a part to play in the overall strategy. Again, subsidisation of those currently employed, or the short-term unemployed, has to be considered. The proposed subsidy of around £40 a week for a year would have significant attractions for a small employer.

We always want to encourage and develop the small businesses, as we rightly believe that new jobs are created in this sector. We offer encouragement to the small business man to employ more labour. The merit of the Select Committee's original proposal was that it targeted particularly the small business man, encouraging him to take on a long-term unemployed person who has much to offer.

In our latest report, we are calling on the Government to initiate pilot projects along these lines, to be applied to those who have been unemployed for over three years. We do this on a simple and logical basis. While we costed our original proposals at £3·3 billion, the Government replied by saying quite plainly that our proposals would cost £4·3 billion. We do not know that we are right, but equally the Government do not know that they are.

As the chairman of the MSC has already said that he is confident that he could provide a guarantee about the practicality and viability of such schemes, we must put them to the test. We have to ask ourselves what happens if we do nothing. We shall never overcome unemployment —short-term or long-term— no matter what the colour of the Government. We have to innovate, experiment, and manage change. Therefore, I implore the Government, and especially my right hon. and learned Friend the Paymaster General, to look favourably at some of these proposals and start measuring them by practical experience, not just by theory.

6.14 pm

Mr. Don Dixon (Jarrow): I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton), the Chairman of the Select Committee, who opened the debate and explained the proposals and the work of the Select Committee very well. It is a disgrace that, after the many months of taking evidence and interviewing people and the many hours of work that the Select Committee put into its report, the Paymaster General tried to rubbish the report even before it was published. We know that he claims to have been an industrial worker. He told us on the Second Reading of the Sex Discrimination Bill how he had worked in the bakery industry to raise a few pounds between leaving school and going to university. We do not want lessons on industry or unemployment from someone with such experience.

One of the dangers about debates such as this is that they seem to be an academic lecture to the people outside. We talk about "the long-term unemployed", but this sounds like some of the terminology that we get from the parliamentary word factory. We are talking about an individual who has been out of work for a year, or two or three years. Often, that individual is the wage earner, and a person who wants work and has been denied it. Thousands have been denied work because of the Government's policies.

There is an uncanny resemblance between the present day and the 1930s in my constituency. I was born in Jarrow in the 1930s, I was bred there and have lived there all my life. In 1930, the steelworks closed, throwing 3,000 men out of work in an area that already had high unemployment. In 1934, the shipyard was closed by an organisation called Shipbuilding Securities Ltd. It was made up of a combination of merchant bankers, shipowners and shipbuilders, who decided to rationalise the shipbuilding industry. The same sort of policy was carried out under Graham Day as chairman of British Shipbuilders.

The company closed the shipyard, and Jarrow was murdered. My father and grandfather were thrown on the streets. My grandfather was not required again, and my father did not work until the war started in 1939. My father was taken back into the shipyard and was told that if he did not work overtime to build and repair the ships that were required for war he would be fined, after he had been thrown on the scrapheap in 1934 with another 5,000 Jarrow people.

This is the 50th anniversary of the Jarrow march, when 200 men walked from Jarrow to the central Government to let them know what was happening in the region. It is somewhat ironic that the Government are cutting regional aid and development. At that time, a scheme called the Jarvis Fund was set up. In 1937-38, my father had one month's work— making a park — under the Jarvis Fund, which was the charity given to Jarrow because we were sorely pressed. To get work from the fund, one had to be unemployed for three years. We were over the moon because my father had got a job making a park in Jarrow. We have the same system now, with the community schemes, with the same requirement that one has to be out of work for a number of months before getting a bit of work. That is a resemblance to the days of 1930.

Since the Government were elected, the last pit in my constituency has been closed and the last part of our shipbuilding capacity, Palmer's at Hebburn, is now doing only care and maintenance. The last steel plant in my constituency, the Jarrow mill, will close next month. That is an uncanny resemblance to what happened in the 1930s, and it took a world war to get out of that mess.

The Government say that the Select Committee's recommendations will cost money. Of course they will. We were aware, when we went into the debate and the many hours of evidence, that, at the end of the day, the recommendations would cost money. However, we were concerned about human beings being put on the scrapheap. People in their fifties are being thrown out of work in the north of England and in Scotland and Wales. In the present economic climate they have no chance of working again.

In paragraph 28 of their reply to the Select Committee's report, the Government say:

> "First, the Government's specific measures to assist long-term unemployed people are part of a wider economic strategy for encouraging enterprise and employment."

They should have said that the reason for long-term unemployment is the Government's wider economic strategy of not encouraging enterprise and employment.

The Paymaster General said a great deal about the restart programme. Indeed, in paragraph 31 of their observations, the Government say:

"The aim will be to improve the skills, work experience and motivation of long-term unemployed people and help them get back into jobs. Everyone who is interviewed will have the chance of one of eight ways towards finding work."

But the Government do not say where those jobs are. They intend to send out thousands of letters to the long-term unemployed saying, "Come to the jobcentre and we will have a talk with you." But there are thousands of unemployed people and no job vacancies in my area, so what help will the restart programme be? What help will the job clubs be able to provide? These measures may pacify some of the long-term unemployed, but they will not provide jobs. The restart programme will create not one job. All that is happening is that very many letters are being sent out.

The Government say that they have increased the community programme. However, all that they have done is spread the margarine even more thinly. A few years ago, the Government said that jobs under the community programme must not pay over £60 a week. That resulted in the creation of part-time rather than full-time jobs under the community programme.

I pay tribute to both sides of the Select Committee. It contains a majority of Conservative Members of Parliament. They worked every bit as hard as Opposition Members. The Select Committee's recommendations are realistic, constructive and necessary because of the length of time that people have been unemployed. It will be a disgrace if the Government do not accept the recommendations and try to get the long-term unemployed back to work and providing for their families.

The Prime Minister says that she is a family person. Therefore, she should say that the Government intend to provide finance to create jobs so that family people can provide for their families. I hope that the Government will accept the Select Committee's recommendations.

6.23 pm

Mr. John Maples (Lewisham, West): The hon. Member for Jarrow (Mr. Dixon) speaks with great passion and personal experience of unemployment. I hope that he will forgive me if I do not follow him down that road. Instead, I want to make two specific points to the Under-Secretary of State, my hon. Friend the Member for Rossendale and Darwen (Mr. Trippier).

The underlying need is to create sufficient jobs to absorb unemployment, but all reasonable analyses show that this will take a considerable time. In the meantime, the range of schemes and alternatives that have been produced by the Manpower Services Commission is imaginative and extensive. The Government deserve to be congratulated. Those who have spent any time upon examining the problem of unemployment know that training a more highly skilled work force and encouraging new businesses and self-employment through the kind of enterprise schemes that are sponsored by the MSC are two of the ingredients in the long-term cure of the problem.

I want to deal briefly with one element of the third part of the MSC's package—the employment programmes. I refer to the restart programme, which has been unfairly derided by the Labour party. It attempts to bring back into touch with the world of employment those who have been out of work for so long that they have lost touch with it. In many cases these people were made unemployed by the recession and they have not got back into employment in the way in which people tend to do so now. If people are made redundant now, the odds are that in about 50 per cent. of cases they will have found a job within three months and that in about 80 per cent. of cases they will have found a job within a year.

Those people do not have a long-term unemployment problem. The problem affects those who have been unemployed for some time, and their problem regrettably grows worse. When an employer looks for a new employee, he is inclined to take somebody from the front of the shop, so to speak—that is, somebody who has been unemployed for a relatively short time. This puts the long-term unemployed out of touch. They give up. They lose contact with the world of work and even lose confidence in their ability to get a job.

The restart programme performs the very important function of bringing them back in to touch with the world of work and with the available options and opportunities. The restart programme does not necessarily guarantee a job, but it considerably improves one's chance of obtaining one.

One interesting aspect of the restart programme is that it was tried out in about eight localities before it went national. That is an excellent precedent. The concept of trying out ideas locally before they are brought into operation nationally is one that the Department of Employment—and the Treasury, for that matter—could extend. Frequently the reason for not putting programmes into operation nationally is that the Government do not know whether they will work and how much they will cost. If a programme is tried out first on a local basis and is found not to work, or not to be cost effective, or not to produce results, it can be dropped. However, if it works, it can be tried nationally. That concept should be exploited. It should be applied to many of the ideas that are being explored in an effort to do something about the problem.

My hon. Friend might care to try out more ambitiously, on a local scale, the concept of job subsidies. This principle has been accepted by the Government and the MSC through the enterprise allowance, the job start scheme and the new workers scheme. I suspect that one of the reasons for the job start and new workers schemes not doing better is that the subsidies are not large enough. However, with greater subsidies, the cost would be greater if the schemes were not successful. Therefore, it would be worth trying out a more generous scheme on a local basis—in, say, four or five areas.

The difference in cost to the Treasury of somebody being unemployed and somebody being employed is enormous. If somebody is employed and takes home an average wage, he pays about £4,000 a year in tax. If he becomes unemployed, he collects about £4,000 a year in benefits. This represents a difference of £8,000 to the Treasury between somebody being employed in the private sector—it is important that the employment should be in the private sector—and somebody being unemployed.

Not everybody, of course, is an average earner. However, even in the case of an unemployed 17-year-old who has never worked and who lives at home, that figure is £50 a week, or £2,500 a year. There is a large amount of money with which the Government can play and which they can use as a catalyst in the job creation process. It would be worth trying out a more generous job subsidy scheme in a few specific areas to discover whether it works. If it works and if it is cost effective in the way that I and a few other people think that it might be, it could be

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extended nationally. If, however, it did not work, it could be dropped. At least it would not have to be tried out on a national basis first, which would be very expensive and risky.

That leads me to the second point that I want to make to my hon. Friend the Minister. There should be a regional approach to the unemployment problem. Unemployment varies enormously from region to region. Unemployment in the south-east and London cannot be compared with the problem that is experienced in constituencies such as that of the hon. Member for Jarrow. Therefore, it is foolish to implement national schemes, which have a huge deadweight cost in the south-east, in order to try to create jobs in the north-east and in the midlands. Therefore, a more regional approach to the problem ought to be adopted.

I suggest three areas where that kind of approach might be adopted. First, we should target some of the specific measures that we know help to create jobs on a regional basis, instead of trying to implement them nationally. If there are to be national insurance reductions on employers' contributions, job subsidies and extended home improvement grants, there is a great deal to be said for targeting those subsidies in regions where there is high unemployment instead of spreading them over the whole country.

The second area where a regional approach might be adopted relates to public sector employment. The public sector employs a very large number of people. One of the main computer installations of the Department of Health and Social Security is in Reading. In the context of the Government trying to help to reduce unemployment in the regions, that does not seem to me to make very much sense. It would make much more sense to move that installation to the north-east where the Department's other main computer installation is sited. The Government employ a large number of people. For instance, many people are employed in the Ministry of Defence and the armed services. Whether or not we should deliberately adopt a policy of moving public sector employment away from the south-east and towards the north seems to bear serious examination.

My third point is that London has become an incredibly powerful magnet in the British economy. One could make speeches and write books on that, but I shall only touch on it now. London's influence as a magnet for industrial and political power, money, jobs, and industrial expansion is too powerful for the good of the country. It sucks in the nation's savings from all over the country. There is a concentration of industrial power and industrial decision-making in London in a way which operates beneficially for the south-east but not for the rest of the country.

It seems to me that an element of our regional policy should be not only to encourage the move towards and development of industry and commerce and economic activity generally in the non-south-east regions, but actively to discourage from locating there enterprise which does not need to be in the south-east. The French have such a scheme and I believe that it works quite well. The scheme involves setting up specific regional centres to attract industrial and commercial development to them, and giving them the infrastructure, communications, and so on, to do so. We should attempt to reverse the rather pernicious magnetic effect that London has on the nation's resources.

We should and can build on the excellent work that the MSC is doing. In doing that, we might look seriously at trying out some of the schemes on a local basis, so that we can test their effectiveness before they go national, and adopting a more regional approach to solving what is essentially a regional problem. Such policy initiatives might help to form part of the package which we are developing and are trying to continue to develop to help cure the awful problem of mass unemployment.

6.31 pm

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): It is a depressing exercise to compare and contrast the reports of the Select Committee on Employment with the Government's response. I wholeheartedly welcome what the Committee said in paragraph 25 of its report on the Manpower Services Commission's corporate plan:

"With the Committee's recent Report on special employment measures in mind, we asked whether, if a political decision were taken to guarantee, for everyone out of work for three years, an occupation more profitable in cash terms than being on the dole, the MSC could deliver. The reply was a firm, 'absolutely'."

I shall refer to the MSC's role, the community programme, training, and the massive problem of unemployment. Some people talk readily of the unemployment rate in Great Britain, but they choose to ignore the geography of unemployment. The unemployment rate in Great Britain as a whole is about 13·3 per cent. In Scotland, the figure is 15·6 per cent. In the Strathclyde regional authority area, the figure is about 18·5 per cent. In the Greenock travel-to-work area, the figure is 21·4 per cent. In Greenock and Port Glasgow, the male unemployment rate is a scandalously high 26 per cent. Those are the official statistics. According to the official statistics, there are approximately 359,000 people out of work in Scotland. In my constituency about 6,500 men and about 2,400 women are without work.

Given the extent in Scotland of what the right hon. Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell) called the ugly and nasty problem of unemployment, I welcome the Select Committee's reports on that vicious and nasty problem. In the few minutes remaining to me, I shall speak of my concern, naturally enough, about unemploment in Scotland. I shall refer to the measures needed to reduce the appallingly high Scottish unemployment figures. Much of that unemployment has been brought about by structural decline in Scottish manufacturing — for example, shipbuilding, steelmaking, textiles, and engineering. In addition, there has been a massive decline elsewhere. The coal mining industry is a sad case in point.

The west of Scotland is in a dreadful economic condition. As I mentioned earlier in an intervention in the speech of the right hon. Member for Guildford, the newer industries are not immune from the process of shedding labour. Already, the results of lower oil prices are coming through in employment prospects, especially in Scotland. Many of the onshore oil fabrication yards are running out of orders as new developments are being postponed. The British Indigenous Technology Group, which represents indigenous British companies working in that important industry, reports that its members expect to have lost some 15,000 jobs between February and the middle of this year. When we talk about the need to combat those problems,

I suggest that in that industry there needs to be a modification to the petroleum revenue tax allowances and the payments schedules. In addition, I urge on the Government the need to offset expenditure on new field developments against income from producing fields. I think that there should be some kind of allowance for corporation tax to minimise the problems of unemployment in the industry.

Jobs are badly needed throughout Scotland. The Manpower Services Commission has an important role to play regarding training and the community programme. I have complained about the MSC in Scotland before, and I shall do so again tonight. The commission's officials must, at all times, react in a sympathetic and helpful way when dealing with applications for assistance from community groups. A number of complaints have been brought to me concerning the unhelpful attitude of the MSC. I believe that the MSC should be more sympathetic to individuals seeking assistance to enhance their job prospects.

I give an example that I come across in my constituency. It relates to unemployed welders in particular. Unemployed men seeking to find work offshore — God knows that it is difficult enough as it is — are frequently barred from employment because they lack a survival training certificate. The oil companies demand that any job applicant must have such a certificate before he is taken offshore. Many of those concerned work for contractors under a short-term period of employment. The contractors are not concerned with such training. Given that such a course of training lasts three or four days and costs about £300 to £400, in my view the MSC should help — the state should help — such people who actively seek work in the offshore oil and gas industries. The MSC is failing those who seek help.

I refer to the growing trend of periods of short-term employment in many industries. I believe that Parliament must pay close attention to that growing phenomenon. It affects many skills. I know that the trend is found throughout the European Community, but I should like to know the Government's position on short-term employment.

Given the remorseless decline in recent years of the Scottish manufacturing base, it seems to me that people are not being trained or retrained to adapt to changing industrial needs. On the contrary, they are educated to accept unemployment. That unemployment has its own distinctive geography. The Government tinker with a massive problem — a problem which always generates poverty, misery, and deep distress. That is one of the reasons why the Conservative Administration are so thoroughly unpopular in Scotland.

6.39 pm

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): The whole country is yearning for an end to unemployment. The Employment Committee did an excellent job in setting out the problem. It attempted a solution, and we all look to the Government to discover additional solutions if the Committee's report is not acceptable.

The figures in table 2 in the annex to the first report tell the story. For the past four years, the numbers of males unemployed for less than three years have decreased, but the numbers unemployed for more than three years have increased from 145,000 to 427,000. According to the latest figures for male and female unemployment, 560,000 have been unemployed for more than three years.

Beveridge said:

"The danger of providing benefits which are both adequate in amount and indefinite in duration is that men, as creatures who adapt themselves to circumstances, may settle down to them . . . Men and women in receipt of unemployment benefit cannot be allowed to hold out indefinitely for work of the type to which they are used or in their present places of residence, if there is work which they could do available at the standard wage for that work. Men and women who have been unemployed for a certain period should be required as a condition of continued benefit to attend a work or training centre . . . The period after which attendance should be required need not be the same at all or for all persons. It might be extended in times of high unemployment and reduced in times of good employment; six months for adults would perhaps be a reasonable average period of benefit without conditions."

We have seen dole queues lengthen for six years and more.

If my right hon. and learned Friend the Paymaster General and Minister for Employment does not feel able to accept the proposition of a guarantee which is put forward in the Committee's report, I ask whether he can find a form of words which is almost tantamount to it to the effect that, in the work and training schemes which are available, increased priority will be given in proportion to the period of unemployment. If sufficient funds were available, he would come to almost the same answers as the Committee.

I remind my right hon. and learned Friend the Paymaster General of the schemes in Bolton. He has seen one of our schemes, and two others are coming forward. I ask my right hon. and learned Friend to reorient the priorities in that way on 1 July and to hire, in addition to the 2,000 magicians he already has, a sufficient number to ensure that we meet those priorities.

The community programme should be not just for the worthwhile jobs which would otherwise be done but for the worthwhile people who would not otherwise be employed. We are concerned about people. All people are worth while, and that is why we have to set certain priorities.

6.42 pm

Mr. John Prescott (Kingston upon Hull, East): I should like to add my congratulations to the Select Committee on Employment which has done considerable work and analysed the problems of unemployment. I am especially pleased that most Committee members reached the same conclusions and came together to analyse a number of the Government's proposals and be critical of them.

I think that all hon. Members would congratulate those Select Committee members who can come together in a critical analysis. Presumably, the effectiveness of their analyses will be judged during the period of the next Administration. I hope that the Select Committees will continue their critical approach to the policies of the Government, whether Labour or Tory.

I especially congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton), the Chairman of the Employment Committee, and the other Committee members who have spoken in this debate. My hon. Friend analysed the problem well and made it clear that he was not challenging the Government on the basis of whether we could return to full employment. That would be a debate between both sides of the House. We believe that

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the Government can be challenged on that basis. Admittedly, the issue is not whether everyone can have a 40-hour-week job. Clearly, major changes are taking place in the employed labour force. There is no doubt that, to achieve full employment, we must deal with the radical changes in the distribution of wealth.

The issue is whether the Government can do more than they are doing, especially with employment schemes. The Committee made the sensible point that more can be done in the provision of jobs and training. That is similar to the Labour party's claim that we can get 1 million jobs in two years — from public expenditure programmes, schemes and the mixture of suggestions made in the report. We must, however, recognise the realities. Even when those 1 million jobs were being created, 3 million people would still be unemployed. We certainly have a long way to go to achieve full employment.

My hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-East, and the Committee, in noting the Government's response — in which they churlishly rejected much of the Committee's analysis and suggested that it would cost more than the Committee thought to create new jobs — have said, "Fine, if the Government think that jobs will cost more than we have said, we are prepared to accept 500,000 jobs, instead of the 750,000 mentioned and the menu of proposed schemes." Can we create more training places and schemes in the way suggested in the report by extra expenditure? That is the real question. I shall not quibble about whether it is £3 billion or £4 billion. The question is whether the House is prepared to endorse such an approach.

The Government have made it clear that they dispute the amounts of money involved and the scale of jobs or placements which can be provided and are not prepared to accept the general argument to go further along the road in building upon existing schemes. That is an important decision which reflects the Government's total indifference to doing anything about long-term unemployment. I must justify that comment. It is argued that the Government are not doing enough. Since 1979, youth training schemes have trebled. Of course, this reflects what has happened to unemployment, which has trebled as well. I shall not argue about the various fiddled figures we have been given — 3 million unemployed is a very large number.

In earlier debates, we have laid the charge that much of the unemployment is brought about directly by the Government's policies. I should like to refer to the provision of "real" jobs. I do not like using that term, because, with the changes coming about in the labour market, we must recognise all the different descriptions of gainful occupations, whether part-time, full-time or any other employment. We readily recognise that.

The sole purpose of the Government's policy is to create part-time, low-paid, cheapie schemes. All the present schemes are geared to achieve that end. That is one of the criticisms of the Government. In looking at the way in which the Government have created unemployment, one begins to understand how some of their policies can be reversed. At the heart of the argument is the Government's response to the Select Committee's report on long-term unemployment. Paragraph 18 says:

"Additional spending on this scale would pre-empt the scope for tax reductions necessary to stimulate enterprise and employment."

The Government choose to keep their money for tax reductions. Apparently, according to surveys in yesterday's newspapers and last night's "Panorama" programme, even the Tory party and Tory voters are asking whether the best priority is to give more money to those who have a lot while the low-paid and the unemployed pay the price. That is a central choice for the Government to make. We are challenging them, as did the Committee.

It is argued also that it costs far too much to create jobs. The Minister for Employment has talked about a cost of £8,000 or £9,000 per job. We have seen, in justification for proposals on enterprise zones, a cost of £70,000 to create each job. In defence, the cost is £45,000 or £50,000 a job. Even tax cuts create jobs only at a cost of about £46,000 a job.

In view of the present level of public expenditure, if the Government are subjected to a type of jobs audit, they may be able to screw an awful lot more jobs from public expenditure than they do under the present order of public expenditure priorities. If more is spent on education, defence and certain other services, more jobs can be created because of the nature of the activities involved.

The crucial question which we should begin to consider is not how many jobs are created by extra expenditure — although we argue that case — but the increased number of jobs that can be provided with a different order of priorities and different levels of expenditure. That is one of the significant differences between Britain and its competitors in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. Comparisons have been made between the way in which we use our public expenditure and the methods used in some OECD competitors. I was recently looking at Swedish public expenditure in local authorities. In Sweden the number of people employed in local authorities has doubled in the period from 1970 to 1984. That has happened under different administrations, but largely Labour authorities. In this country, from 1970 to 1984 there has been an increase of 10 per cent. But since 1979 there has been a reduction of more than 100,000 jobs in local authorities, because the Government have decided to reduce public expenditure.

When we consider the sort of jobs that have been thrown out, we begin to see some of the thinking behind the Government's strategy. For example, the recently-announced cleaners scheme with Virgin Airlines or Branston, or whoever he is, is apparently going to clean up our streets with 5,000 people on community programme schemes. Mind you, a lot of CP schemes are unfilled and no doubt 5,000 cleaners will be given £65 a week on this scheme. In reality, more than 5,000 cleaners from public health authorities have been sacked because of the squeeze on public expenditure.

There is an essential difference, quite apart from the privatisation point, in that the cleaner before probably cost £116 but now the cleaner will cost £65. That is part of the Government's strategy to force down wage rates and get it done more cheaply. We are paying people on the dole to do it, although in these circumstances the cleaner may have been employed by the local authority at £120 a week but may now be offered a job with Virgin Airlines,

Branston, or whoever is running the system at £65 for doing the same job. They will feel aggrieved. They might not even accept the job.

The Government are waiting for them there. They have just moved an amendment to the Social Security Bill. If someone refuses one of these schemes, he is likely to face a 13-week suspension of benefit. That, of course, will not force anybody into a job on half pay. The suspension comes into operation when someone refuses to take work when it is offered. The Paymaster General derives great glee from the fact that people who do not accept a job at about half the rate of pay will be taken off the dole and taken off benefit. He wins all round and makes a profit out of it. It seems that the Paymaster General has learned a great deal from Murdoch and what he did to the printers.

Housing is another area of public expenditure that we should look at. We produce houses at a rate of 2,000 a week less than in a comparable period of the previous Labour Administration. There are half a million building workers on the dole, and it is costing £3 billion to keep them there, but that does not seem to worry the Government at all.

I have heard all this jargon about dead weight. It is not dead weight to pay people to do nothing when there are people desperate for houses and we are producing 2,000 fewer houses a week than under a Labour Administration. It seems crazy, particularly when some of the schemes talked about by the Select Committee are basically in the construction sector of the community programme. In those areas, the industry and the trade unions are becoming increasingly apprehensive as they watch the Government switching it from proper construction programmes to these cheapie labour gang schemes that the Minister talks about. We will not be surprised that people become more apprehensive.

In transport, there was expansion in all the areas I was talking about in Sweden. Here, with the deregulation of transport services—the Minister was much involved in that—a further 9,000 bus men will be thrown on the dole by October. I assume that the Ryedale by-election has made no difference to that, but I expect that the news will shake up a few rural areas when they realise what is going to happen to their transport system.

There will be 9,000 people paid for on the dole, and they will be offered jobs on Branston's cleaning-the-streets schemes, for considerably less cash. The public expenditure profiles of our competitors show that they have done far better than us in growth and economy, with lower inflation rates, and done it very successfully. Those are not only Labour or Socialist Governments. Governments of the Right have been able to achieve more effective records than us.

A significant factor is the way in which other Governments use public expenditure as a means of creating jobs. That is the realistic difference. The Government believe that their arch policy is to reduce public expenditure in that sphere. Whatever the debate has been today on the provision of long-term employment schemes and the role of Government, that has not been at the heart of the debate.

At the heart of our debate are the schemes and the roles they play. In passing, it might be well said by some people—we have said it before in debate—that Labour will produce 1 million jobs in two years. Various schemes have been put forward by the CBI, the churches or the wets of the Tory party—all the various mixtures that can produce more jobs. I was interested to read in the *Financial Times* of 19 June 1986 a report headed "Labour's Plan for Jobs". A report by the City university business school says of Labour's proposals that

"they will need to be taken very seriously as a genuine alternative to the present Government's approach".

The man who came to the conclusion that Labour's policy can actually produce 1 million jobs in two years is Professor Brian Griffiths, now the head of the Prime Minister's personal policy unit at 10 Downing street. Having fed Labour's plan into his employment models, and despite a fervent belief in the Government's policies, Professor Griffiths is now saying to everybody that it is possible to get 1 million jobs in two years. He says that a Labour Government could reduce unemployment by half according to their policies. That seems to be such an authoritative source that even the Paymaster General might accept it. I recommend that people read the *Financial Times* of 19 June 1986, instead of just slating the idea that Labour can produce its plans.

The debate in the Chamber has been largely about the provision of schemes through the delivery system of the Manpower Services Commission. In some of those schemes, the wage rates and productivity are considerations without a doubt. But the level of investment is also crucial to productivity, and the effeciency of our economic machinery. When one considers that we have totally failed to achieve a level of investment in our economy that is comparable to our competitors, we should ask ourselves whether the Government's policy of wholesale tax cuts for companies has been effective. They are making mass investment and profit, but they are not putting it into investment.

More important is the fact that the Government are making no input into training. Here I want to say something about training aspects of the programmes. The community programme schemes that have been talked about today have a role to play. Let me be clear about both youth training and community programme schemes. There is a role for them; I have always said that. But there is a place for great improvement. For example, I have seen some very good YTS schemes, which basically work with the industrial training boards that remained after the Government had abolished 16 out of 23 of them, the ones that even the Government claim, usually in construction and engineering, maintain some form of industrial training, but in reality we do not invest in training at anywhere near the level that we should.

Indeed, the report "Competition and Competence" shows that the level of investment in training in this country is equivalent to about 0·15 per cent. of turnover, whereas it says that our competitors are spending about 1 to 2 per cent. That is about £5 billion to £6 billion.

The Government are spending about £2 billion on the community programmes and YTS, but the trouble is that industry is offloading even the limited amount of investment in training and apprenticeships that it used to have. In fact, industry is now using YTS as the first part of apprenticeship schemes. It is making a profit out of it. Even in areas where industry should be training apprentices, it is even offloading it to YTS. It is a scandal that industry in this country ducks its responsibility and does not pay its fair share for training. Let me make it absolutely clear that if a Labour Government comes in industry will pay its fair share on the scale necessary to include adult training, not just training for our youngsters.

[Mr. John Prescott]

Even the resources that have been available under the MSC since 1979 are reducing. They are a quarter of the amount that goes to YTS schemes, when three times as many people are involved in adult training than in YTS. We have got it out of order, primarily because the Government are not prepared to force industry to pay its fair share towards training.

Even the CBI, in its evidence to the Employment Select Committee, said that it was all for training, but industry must not have any more of the cost of it. What a deplorable reply from industry, which does not invest in training and then tells Government how much they should put into programmes. Quite clearly, we need community training, but I have it firmly impressed on my mind that if we get money for training the delivery is important. No doubt the Manpower Services Commission will play a part.

Certain bodies such as British Rail Engineering Limited, York and Brough Aerospace could do considerably more. Indeed, I visited Brough Aerospace this week-end and looked at its schemes. Its training is very good, and is part of a modular system. We should consider such bodies as training agencies that can provide proper and adequate training. Perhaps we should even pay them out of those funds.

We must address ourselves to the problems that are outlined in the report. In view of the time, I shall conclude. The Minister seems to be moaning, but he should talk to his Back Benchers who sought to speak. I shall conclude by referring to the MSC. It was a good body, and was set up to do a good job. It is doing a difficult job, and has been sullied by doing much of the Government's dirty washing. I do not think that the MSC can continue to play that role. We are radically rethinking what the role of the MSC should be. I give those involved notice that we see a different role for it. Sweden has a similar body, but it plays a much more effective part in that economy's growth and in the quality of training.

In view of the time, and the few minutes left to the Minister, I shall end by saying that there is an alternative. But frankly this Government do not care a damn about that alternative. They are only playing around with community schemes, and tea and sympathy. They could do more, as the Committee has said. I should like to hear the Minister's reasons for rejecting that approach.

7.2 pm

The Paymaster General and Minister for Employment (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): I had thought that the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) was about to conclude with some remarks on training. I agreed with part of his diagnosis of the problem, but not with his solutions. Indeed, my hon. Friend the Member for Carshalton and Wallington (Mr. Forman) slipped over to tell me that he intended to raise the same subject. I apologise to both hon. Members because time is pressing, but I certainly hope that we have an opportunity to discuss training policies on some future occasion.

I also apologise to my right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell), who produced a masterful analysis of the employment scene. He touched on several issues with which I have much sympathy, and I should have liked to debate them. I am very interested in one of the ideas, although he gave it a name that I have never heard of—insulated benefit—which sought to encourage the unemployed back into work. I hope that I shall have an opportunity to do justice to his speech on another occasion.

Obviously, the subject of the debate is the Estimate and, in particular, the Select Committee's reports. The hon. Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton) gave a somewhat partisan presentation of the Committee's report, although he retreated into agreement when I pressed him. But it was obvious from his speech and from the speeches of my hon. Friends the Members for Beckenham (Sir P. Goodhart) and for Batley and Spen (Mrs. Peacock) that there is a measure of agreement between the Government and the Select Committee, at least in our aims. We are undoubtedly coming closer to an agreement on measures, as the Select Committee modifies its proposals in the light of the Government's response.

There is no disagreement between us about the plight of long-term unemployed people—about the difficulties that they face in breaking back into the job market and how those difficulties increase, as my hon. Friend the Member for Batley and Spen underlined, as the period of unemployment lengthens.

There is no disagreement between us either about the need to focus urgent and specific help on long-term unemployed people. The Government have steadily increased the resources available for measures to help the long-term unemployed. This year we shall be spending £1·2 billion—an increase of 20 per cent. over the previous year—on programmes specifically for the long-term unemployed. We agree, too, that there must be some direct Government intervention to provide temporary jobs for long-term unemployed people. If we thought otherwise, we should not be providing jobs for more than 300,000 long-term unemployed people in a year on the community programme. At a later date, I shall take up the assertion of the hon. Member for Newham, North-East that the report calls for a further doubling. As far as I can see, it calls for no increase on the Government's present plans.

Mr. Leighton: Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Mr. Clarke: I shall not give way as I have only half the time to speak that the hon. Gentleman had.

Our disagreement with the Select Committee, therefore, centres principally on what constitutes the most cost-effective and practical package of measures to provide the assistance that long-term unemployed people undoubtedly need. The Select Committee's approach, set out in its first report, involves an attempt at job creation measures on a truly gigantic scale—350,000 extra temporary jobs in building and construction; 100,000 temporary jobs shared between the social services and the Health Service; and 350,000 additional jobs in normal employment achieved through a subsidy to employers.

I do not quarrel just with ambition; there are considerable financial and, more importantly, practical difficulties. On our calculations, the Select Committee's original package would require nearly £6 billion in gross expenditure and more than £4 billion net. That would be additional to the £3 billion that the Government are already spending on their employment and training measures. In addition, the cost of the individual proposals would be between £7,000 and £9,000 for each extra job

created, or four to five times the average cost per job of the measures that we currently run. By any standards, this is a massive programme of expenditure, and it is incumbent on those who propose and support it to tell us where the extra money is to be found. That is obviously an important matter which goes beyond the remit of the Select Committee.

But we did not reject the plan on the ground of cost alone. There is an even more serious objection to what the Committee proposed, and it is one of practicality. Our view, based on our great and growing experience of both temporary employment programmes and employment subsidies, is that the Committee's proposals simply could not be achieved. It is with genuine reluctance that we have come to the conclusion that they would not work.

We are already supporting 300,000 long-term unemployed people this year in jobs under the community programme. Nearly 20 per cent. of the programme involves some building, construction or refurbishment work, and 30 per cent. involves jobs in personal and social services. I commend to the House and the Select Committee our recent efficiency scrutiny of the programme, which was designed to take stock of the situation and to discover how we can manage the programme most effectively for the benefit of the long-term unemployed. That scrutiny showed clearly that there are limits to how far and fast the programme could be expanded.

The danger of rapid expansion is that the quality of the work experience offered to long-term unemployed people may be reduced. I shall take an example that I have concentrated on before — the Select Committee's proposal for an extra 50,000 temporary jobs in each of the health and social services sectors. On the face of it, it is one of the most attractive of the Committee's proposals. I am most interested in it, because when I was Minister for Health, I was a genuine enthusiast about going over to a community-based model of care instead of having long-term stays in old institutions. But the important point is the reality of what is proposed.

It is a mistake for those outside the health and social services sector to look upon community care as some sort of unskilled cheap alternative to hospital-based services. Those who still abide by that idea, including my hon. Friends the Members for Beckenham and for Batley and Spen, who gave all the reasons for looking at the community model, should ask the management and — as my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) said — the trade unions what they would think about 100,000 untrained people who have been out of work for three years or more being given temporary contracts in order to provide that care.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): Will my right hon. and learned Friend give way?

Mr. Clarke: I apologise for not giving way, but I am making one of the shorter speeches today.

Finally, there is the proposed employment subsidy. Our experience is that such subsidies must be carefully and specifically targeted if they are not simply to support jobs that would have existed anyway; and they must be associated with some wage limit if they are not to be inflationary. The Committee's proposals are defective on both of those counts. Our estimate is that it might be necessary to pay subsidies for 850,000 jobs to create the extra 350,000 which is the Committee's target. That is too expensive and unrealistic.

But the debate on this immensely serious matter — the problems of the long-term unemployed — has moved on. To the Committee's credit, it has responded to our arguments by scaling down the size of its proposals, so that it is now talking about a target group in the first place that is 40 per cent. of the original size. But that does not remove all the difficulties. There would be more than £1 billion of extra expenditure and an even greater net cost per job created. It would certainly be four to five times higher than the current measures, and it would still involve major practical problems. For example, the health and social services point is just waved away and glossed over in the third report, although the difficulties remain.

Thus, we continue to express reservations. However, we are at one with the Committee on the need to take quick and effective measures to tackle the problems that it has identified. The one thing that we are all agreed on tonight is that we must do something. There will be no answer to the problems of the long-term unemployed if we do nothing. The Government are acting on a similar but alternative course that is on an ambitious, imaginative and massive scale.

Next Tuesday, 1 July, we shall be embarking on the most ambitious and comprehensive programme yet attempted to assist the long-term unemployed. In contrast to the Committee's proposals, the programme will offer assistance to each and every person employed for more than 12 months, and will seek to identify in discussion with each individual concerned his or her particular needs and a practical way of meeting them. We have already tested this in nine areas around the country. Indeed, as my hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, West (Mr. Maples) said, that was a good way of trying out the practicability of our proposal. We are hopeful that the restart programme will offer in the next nine months personal help to some 1·25 million people registered as long-term unemployed.

There has been some criticism about the jobs being offered. We have identified eight categories of opportunities that we can offer to those whom we approach. The full range is set out in our "Action for Jobs" leaflet. It is no good the hon. Member for Newham, North-East doing the knocking job that he tried to do at one point — before agreeing that he supported it, after all — by talking about the number of jobs in which people were directly placed. We are talking about placing people in jobs with private employers, placing them directly in jobs in the community programme and placing them in jobs clubs, which have a high success rate, about placing people in training, and in the enterprise allowance scheme, and about people taking advantage of the jobstart allowance.

I believe that this ambitious programme, unique in its scale of comprehensiveness, is an answer to many of the pleas that have come from both sides of the House this evening to have another go at the problem of the long-term unemployed.

The hon. Gentleman made references to the alternative that he would put forward. I have to say to the SDP and to the Labour spokesmen that, given that the Select Committee has revised its proposals in response to our reactions, they might well examine their own policies. The Labour party in particular relied heavily on the Select

[Mr. Clarke]

Committee proposal to justify its 1 million jobs claim. It has always reacted with cynicism and some suspicion to our restart programme, talking about tea and sympathy.

The first report of the Select Committee emerged at a time when the Labour party was making promises about jobs but had not, as it still has not, any clear policies. This was seized upon by the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) in his speech on the Budget as an explanation. Professor Griffiths, it is claimed, shows that Government policies would reduce unemployment by the same amount, although over a little longer time. The same model says that our policy will reduce unemployment to a similar level a year later and that the Labour party's policies will push up inflation to three to five times higher in the next five years and increase the marginal tax burden by nearly one third.

Mr. Prescott: How much—what is the inflation rate?

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: It is three to five times higher—*[Interruption.]* If the hon. Gentleman is going to rely on Professor Griffiths' analysis, I rather welcome that.

I would like to know what the hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends mean by the commitment that they keep giving, somewhat cynically, about the extent to which they have policies that would reduce unemployment—claims that are easily made to deceive those who hear them. One has to be clear about this. Two claims are made by the Labour party. One is that it will create 1 million new jobs. The other is that it will reduce unemployment by 1 million. The two are clearly different and they amount to quite different figures.

As the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East knows, the Government have presided over the creation of 1 million additional new jobs since spring 1983, but demography means that unemployment remains high. The available labour force grew by 500,000 in 1984 alone. What Labour spokesmen plainly do not understand is the difference between the two claims and they use both formulations with reckless abandon. The fact that they keep changing shows that it is a bogus, irresponsible claim and in my opinion a cheat on the unemployed waiting for their share of economic recovery.

I tried to bring this out last week with the shadow Chancellor. I do not think the "Dear Roy, Dear Clarke," exchange will ever be published as a example of great literature, but it was an example of prevarication and bombast, something of which the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook was accusing the Prime Minister earlier today. Let me explain what lies behind this so that Labour can clarify its policies. I want to give some quotations of what has been said by shadow Cabinet members in the course of the last six months when they have repeatedly made this kind of claim. The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East, in the *Daily Telegraph* of 14 August 1985, was quoted as having said,

"Altogether we can create 1,400,000 jobs at a cost of £3,800 million".

That seems to bear no relation to current claims. Secondly, the right hon. Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock), the leader of the Labour party, is reported in the *Municipal Journal* of 7 February 1986 as saying——

Mr. Leighton: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is the debate not about the report of the Select Committee, not a knockabout in regard to the deputy leader of the Labour party?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): I will decide whether the right hon. and learned Gentleman is out of order.

Mr. Clarke: The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East took 20 of his 40 minutes bashing the Government. I am also referring to claims that are based, as the Budget speech of the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook shows, on this Select Committee report, which was clutched by the Labour party as a drowning man clutches a straw when it had already made these commitments to new jobs, but had no idea how to create them.

I am sure that people will want to be reminded of what the right hon. Member for Islwyn said on 7 February. He said:

"When we form the next Government our first priority will be jobs. We are going to work to generate one million in the first two years".

That was the same occasion on which the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East said in the same journal:

"How did we get this promise of one million jobs? Who worked on the programme? Promises such as these simply label us with targets we cannot achieve and expose our credibility".

Then we had the Budget speech in which the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook claimed, in what was the only detailed analysis of the policy that we have had—and this is to be found at column 310 of *Hansard*, 19 March—that 750,000 came from the first report of the Select Committee. On went the right hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East. He said the next day:

"My right hon. Friend the Member for Sparkbrook pointed out how one million jobs could come in two years."

[*Official Report*, 20 March 1986; Vol. 94 c. 448.]

This was repeated by the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook to the Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers conference on 28 April when he said:

"This programme will produce one million jobs in something like two years".

Today the leader of the Labour party has been speaking in Jersey—he has made a speech of which I have a copy—and he has altered the promise again. He said:

"By using the money that Nigel Lawson would fritter away in tax cuts and by putting it to productive use we can and will gain a million new jobs in our first years in office".

As I have made clear, a million new jobs does not solve unemployment. As I understood the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East earlier today, he committed himself again to the creation of 1 million jobs, and he admitted that would still leave 3 million unemployed. The fact is that the creation of those new jobs is merely matching what the Government have achieved. We are taking steps to try to speed up the process.

The claims of the Labour party are imprecise and insecure and do not amount to a row of beans. There is no solid policy behind them. I will take the hon. Gentleman's final words and go away and work on them. It seems that Professor Griffiths of University College is now the bedrock of Labour policy. I look forward to exposing——

The debate having continued for three hours, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *interrupted the proceedings, pursuant to the Resolution [8 March].*

Question deferred, pursuant to paragraph (2)(c) of Standing Order No. 19 (Consideration of Estimates).

ESTIMATES, 1986-87

Class IX, Housing

Housing and Environmental Services

[Relevant documents: Third and fourth reports of the Environment Committee, House of Commons papers 341 (1985-86) and 356 (1985-86).]

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That a further sum, not exceeding £1,010,095,000, be granted to Her Majesty out of the Consolidated Fund to defray the charges which will come in course of payment during the year ending on 31st March 1987 for expenditure by the Department of the Environment on Housing, as set out in House of Commons Papers No. 284-IX. *[Sir George Young.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): With this it will be convenient to discuss the motions relating to the following Estimates: Class X,

That a further sum, not exceeding £5,820,177,000, be granted to Her Majesty out of the Consolidated Fund to defray the charges which will come in course of payment during the year ending on 31st March 1987 for expenditure by the Department of the Environment on Other Environmental Services, as set out in House of Commons Paper No. 284-X;

Class XX, Vote 18

That in respect of Class XX, Vote 18, for expenditure by the Property Services Agency of the Department of the Environment on acquisitions, public building work, accommodation services, administration and certain other services for civil purposes in the United Kingdom, the balance to be surrendered to the Consolidated Fund be £171,101,000.

7.18 pm

Sir Hugh Rossi (Hornsey and Wood Green): This is the third time that the Select Committee on the Environment has reported on the Main Estimates of the Department of the Environment and the Property Services Agency, and the third occasion upon which the reports have been debated. As on previous occasions, the Committee has examined all the Estimates concerned, except defence accommodation, and is in general satisfied with the justification given for the Estimates. However, it has selected particular matters to which it believes the attention of the House should be drawn before Supply is voted. We inquired into the relevant sections of the public expenditure White Paper as well as the Estimates themselves.

There are two motions on the Order Paper in my name for reductions in two sub-heads. Depending upon what my hon. Friend the Minister says, I am prepared to press them to a Division at the end of the debate. They do not necessarily involve the most important subjects in our report, but, as the House knows, our conventions governing the Vote of Supply allow us to propose reductions, but not increases. A number of our past recommendations have been accepted by the Department, for which we are grateful, and by the PSA. Those are acknowledged in the appropriate places in our reports, and some of them are listed in paragraph 3 of the report on the Department of Environment's Main Estimates.

The two reports deal with some new subjects, but also explore further subjects upon which we have reported in the past. It is not to be expected that major subjects such

[Sir Hugh Rossi]

as the maintenance of the country's housing stock can be disposed of in a single year, so we make no apology for returning to such matters.

The first subject that I wish to raise is on page vii, paragraphs 5 to 8, of the third report on the main Estimates, and relates to housing mobility. Under the national mobility scheme, local authorities agreed to make available 1 per cent. of their lettings to people moving into their areas from other parts of the country. The result so far has been pathetically small—only 6,000 houses were successfully released under the scheme in 1984-85. We have previously made proposals for improving the scheme and we make fresh proposals in our report. I hope that they will be acted upon.

The scheme would help the mobility of the unemployed by assisting them to move into areas where jobs might be available. The root difficulty may be local authority reluctance to provide accommodation for new arrivals because they want to concentrate on those on their housing waiting lists. That is understandable, but more should be done to increase the mobility of labour. Perhaps my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment should take an active interest in this matter and discuss it with environment Ministers. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will respond to the debate more positively and less defensively than he has in the past—reluctant though he may be to upset local authorities. There is little point in setting up a national mobility scheme unless he is prepared to see it work. If it is defective, it should be replaced by a better scheme.

My next subject, dog and game licences, is referred to on page viii, paragraphs 9 to 12, and is becoming a hardy perennial. The Government are asking the House for £3·87 million to pay the Post Office to issue licences that bring in only £900,000 in revenue. That is nonsense, which is why I have tabled a motion that the House should not vote the £3·87 million.

Successive Governments have dithered about this matter since 1974. I recall tabling a new clause to the Control of Pollution Bill in that year, asking for changes in the system of control and protection of dogs. That led to the setting up of a working party which reported in 1976, and which made many recommendations that were widely welcomed. However, there is still no sense in the current system. When taking evidence we found that an overwhelming majority of people would prefer money to be spent on a dog warden service at local level. There is a need to collect strays and most of us, whether or not dog owners, want dogs to be kept under reasonable control in public places and the pavements in towns to be kept clean.

The Government appear to be making unnecessarily heavy weather of this issue. It is very controversial, but it cannot be ignored for ever. It is absolute nonsense to pay the Post Office more than £3 million a year simply to push pieces of paper across counters to half of the dog owners in this country—the other half not bothering to take out licences, and there being no prosecution for those who fail to do so. The law is a dead letter. We are spending a large sum that could be put to better use. I know that my local hospitals need kidney machines, and that £3·87 million would provide quite a few of those. We should not waste that money.

Mr. Richard Alexander (Newark): Does the position that my hon. Friend describe mean that those who refuse to take out dog licences, and are therefore acting illegally, are saving the country money?

Sir Hugh Rossi: That is the strange position in which we find ourselves. One recommendation could be that all dog owners should break the law and not buy licences, thereby saving the country almost £4 million. I know that my hon. Friend the Minister will be appalled that such a suggestion should come from these Benches, but illegality would not be necessary if only he would act.

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): If a law is effectively unenforceable, does that not make the law look an ass and undermine the basic fabric and authority of this House? Is it not about time that we tackled the problem once and for all?

Sir Hugh Rossi: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for reinforcing my words with such eloquence.

Mr. Norman Miscampbell (Blackpool, North): The House should remember that there is a considerable body of opinion that dogs should be properly licensed and that simply to abandon licences would cause chaos in our streets. A proper dog licence, politically difficult though it may be, might be a better and more acceptable alternative.

Sir Hugh Rossi: As the House is no doubt aware, in Northern Ireland a higher fee is paid for a licence and the money is devoted to a proper system of dog wardens, to the benefit of both the general public and the dogs. Indeed, we have recommended that course in our report, and the Government should address themselves to it. If they feel that some form of dog licence is necessary, they should ask local authorities to operate the system because they know the amount of control that is needed in their areas. In some areas a system of control is more necessary than in others. That matter was suggested by the working group nearly nine years ago, yet today we are still discussing it and no progress has been made. The fault does not rest simply with this Government. Previous Administration have also fought shy of tackling this problem, probably because there are many dog owners and it was feared that they may be offended in the process.

I would like to consider briefly the homeloans scheme which was introduced in 1978. That scheme had the commendable objectivity of encouraging home ownership for first-time buyers. Unfortunately, the sum which the scheme provides—£110 plus a £600 loan—has never been updated and has remained the same for eight years. That is now quite derisory. The Government should either make the scheme more attractive and advertise it, so that first time buyers know that it exists, or wind it up. The scheme seems to be nonsense.

The scheme is also a compromise. The original scheme proposed from the Opposition Benches in 1978 was a pound for a pound grant scheme to first-time buyers with a cut-off point at £3,500. However, the Government in 1978, stampeded somewhat by that suggestion before a general election, brought in the present mouse of a scheme, which has been a failure. I hope that my right hon. and hon. Friends will consider whether home ownership is now so popular that this kind of incentive may no longer be required since 62 per cent. of people currently own their own homes. If so, perhaps the scheme should be disposed of and the money allocated elsewhere.

The most important matter dealt with in the report on the Department of the Environment's Main Estimates is housing maintenance. Unfortunately, up-to-date information on the state of the housing stock is lacking. There has been no progress on that since the housing condition survey in 1981. However, updating the figures in the report, some £40 billion needs to be spent on repairs and renovations.

The money spent at present is doing little more than preventing the backlog of maintenance from growing. We should not delude ourselves over this matter. A firm action programme is needed. When we took evidence, it seemed as though the Department was inclined to shelter behind the fact that up-to-date information from the 1986 house condition survey must also be available. However, we know that that information will not be available for another two years. That is rather a long time to wait when it is already accepted that a vast sum of money needs to be spent.

We have therefore made a modest suggestion that steps should be taken to have the preliminary results of the 1986 house condition survey available not in two years' time but in nine months. At the very least, I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will be able to assure us that that information will be available.

Mr. Chris Smith (Islington, South and Finsbury): Before the hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi) moves away from the report on the Main Estimates, may I draw his attention not to the main body of the report but to appendix 4 on page 34 and a supplementary note provided after the Committee had concluded its deliberations about the housing associations' construction programme? Is it not alarming that the figures show that, for scheme approvals and dwelling starts in the current financial year, there has been a drop of more than 20 per cent. in both those categories for housing associations? Should we not draw that fact to the attention of the House and ask the Government hard questions about those cuts in housing association provision?

Sir Hugh Rossi: No doubt my hon. Friend the Minister has heard the hon. Gentleman's intervention and will deal with his points in the course of his reply. We must bear in mind that other figures have been put about concerning the excess of accommodation in relation to households. The Opposition produced a Green Paper many years ago when they were in government which stated that the problem was local and that there was a need for public sector housing for specialist groups such as the disabled and sheltered housing for the elderly. No doubt the Minister has more facts and figures at his disposal about these matters and I hope that he will be able to satisfy the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith).

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): The hon. Gentleman said that the provision of public sector housing should be for specialist groups. Whatever may have been the position in 1977, would he not agree that in the large cities — for example, London — many people, even on average earnings, simply cannot begin to buy a place because of house prices? That does not simply apply to London; the hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi) must be aware of the position in his own constituency. Does that not strengthen the argument that many people — not just the poor — desperately need public sector accommodation, without which they will not be able to resolve their housing difficulties?

Sir Hugh Rossi: I accept that many families, especially in the inner cities, cannot begin to contemplate the purchase of their own house, although there are many valuable schemes, such as equity sharing, which have been produced to assist as many groups as possible.

Part of the inner-city problem — I am sure that the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) will not welcome this argument — is due to the fact that the private rented sector has died. We can look to certain legislation which has created an artificial shortage in that area and which has exacerbated the position for many families, especially when one considers that at one time the majority of housing provision was in the private rented sector. That has been killed off by legislation. We must take a much broader view of the position than that taken by the hon. Member for Walsall, North if we are considering an all-round solution to the problem.

Mr. Robert B. Jones (Hertfordshire, West): Is not part of the explanation for that the commitment or lack of commitment of local authorities? Is my hon. Friend aware that Wandsworth council, which has many inner-city problems, has increased its owner-occupation rate from 27 per cent. to 53 per cent. since the Conservatives captured control of the council in 1978? That has been achieved with the assistance of many imaginative schemes which could be copied by the local authorities controlled by the Opposition which are so adamantly against home ownership.

Sir Hugh Rossi: As always, my hon. Friend is well informed and, as usual, he is correct.

I would like to consider the Select Committee on the Environment's fourth report on the PSA's Main Estimates for 1986-87. In that report we have made a number of recommendations about the PSA system of accounting and the way in which money is made available to the agency by the Treasury. I should like to draw attention to three points.

First, we should like some hard evidence about whether the property repayment services system is producing economies. For three years, the PSA has been charging Departments for the accommodation they occupied. A vast amount of paper work is involved but there does not appear to be much evidence that the new system has resulted in more economy in the use of accommodation. What is the point of a reform of this magnitude if the results are not being monitored? They cannot be being monitored because nobody can give us the information that we want. Are we expected to believe in the PRSS as an act of faith?

Secondly, the PSA should have a proper set of commercial accounts. It would like to follow a policy of buying and building more office accommodation and relying less on the expensive alternative of leasing it. The agency is inhibited from doing that because the cost of capital investment is charged in Government accounts in the year in which it is incurred. From the point of view of annuality, therefore, it is easier to pay a smaller yearly rent than to pay for the freehold in one year.

All commercial properties are now subject to stringent rent review clauses. Gone are the days when one could get a 21-year lease on a fixed rent. Rents now have to be

[Sir Hugh Rossi]

reviewed every two or three years and in no time at all they exceed what would have been the cost of buying the freehold in the first place. That is a ridiculous situation into which the Government should not have got themselves and it is substantially the result of the Treasury convention of annuality. Environment Ministers should speak to their opposite numbers in the Treasury to see whether their accountants, whose ingenuity is no doubt unlimited, can find a means of spreading the cost over the lifetime of the asset, as any commercial undertaking would for the purposes of its accounts.

Thirdly, freeholds come on the market on favourable terms at very short notice. It is silly that the PSA is unable to buy freeholds when they suddenly become available. It should have the money to buy them, but the Treasury refuses to make money available on a contingency basis. To anybody in the commercial world, that is bad business. We see no reason why the Government should not conduct themselves on more commercial lines for the benefit of taxpayers.

Mr. Miscampbell: It might be useful for the Government to explain at the same time why they will not borrow from the commercial market if they do not want to produce the money themselves. Although they could buy the freehold of a property which they will need in a year or two at the most convenient terms, they refuse adamantly to go to the commercial market which is running with money and would lend to them. That would be a far cheaper approach.

Sir Hugh Rossi: My hon. and learned Friend will know that there is a glimmer of hope. We were told in evidence that consultants have been hired to advise on these matters. Their remit should be made as wide as possible to cover the issues that my hon. and learned Friend mentioned and their report should be expedited. Perhaps a Treasury Minister rather than my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State should be present to answer today.

One of the Select Committee's major worries concerns acquisitions and new works. They are dealt with in paragraphs 22 to 32 of the report. The PSA's original estimates of the cost of the new works have turned out to be wildly wrong in a significant number of cases. I shall give only two of the many examples that were given in evidence. The original estimate for a building for the Foreign and Commonwealth Office is being exceeded by 114 per cent. and the estimate for a court for the Lord Chancellor's Department is being exceeded by 77 per cent. Part of the fault lies with the commissioning Departments, which chop and change their requirements and specifications. Each time they do that, the cost of the project increases. There should be firmer control over commissioning Departments and the changes that they are permitted to make. Part of the blame, however, attaches to the PSA for inaccurate estimates. We are glad that the agency proposes to carry out a study into its estimating performance.

As an expression of the Committee's disquiet, however, I have tabled a motion which would reduce that sub-head of expenditure by £20 million. I hope that my hon. Friend's reply will obviate the need for me to move it formally.

There is an alarming backlog of maintenance on the agency's Civil Estimate, amounting to £100 million, which seems to be growing. We all know that neglected maintenance leads to more expensive bills. The point has been reached at which the Treasury must make increased resources available, as the other sub-heads of the agency's budget have been bled white.

I hope that we can hear satisfactory replies to the issues that I have raised. In view of the criticisms that we found it necessary to make in our report on the PSA's Estimates, the Committee has it in mind to carry out a full inquiry into the PSA during the next Session.

7.47 pm

Mr. Allan Roberts (Bootle): I should like to put on record the fact that, as well as speaking from the Front Bench on behalf of the Opposition, I am a member of the Environment Select Committee, and I am pleased to speak after the hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi). I should like to pay a compliment to him as he chairs our Committee adeptly and skilfully. He guides us effectively, especially when it comes to choosing subjects on which we can produce reports that have all-party support. I pay that tribute, even if I disagree with some of what he said today. This debate is a little more political than our discussions in Committee.

I shall concentrate on the Select Committee's report on the Department of the Environment's Main Estimates. My hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) will address himself later to the report on the PSA. I want to mention gipsy sites, the Liverpool garden festival, which affects me in terms of constituency interest, dogs, help to first-time buyers, home owners, housing mobility, housing maintenance and the report's references to the traditional urban programme.

The Environment Select Committee recently followed the hippy trail through the west country on its present inquiry into ancient monuments and historic buildings. Many of the local authorities which complained about the the peace convoy and said that they needed stronger laws of trespass to deal with it would have had the powers that they wanted if they had provided gipsy sites under existing legislation. If they had provided such camps, they would have been able to prevent travellers such as the peace convoy from squatting on land. Although there are 469 housing authorities, there are only 232 sites. The Select Committee welcomed the Government memorandum, the circular that has gone out from the Department of the Environment, but urged the Government to review the legislation and put strength in it so that local authorities which are not providing sites will have to provide them.

Mr. John Mark Taylor (Solihull): I should like to take the hon. Gentleman a little further on the matter of caravan sites and the so-called peace convoy. Is he honestly endeavouring to tell the House that if all the local authorities followed to the letter the law about the registration of necessary sites for itinerant people all the malpractice and anti-social behaviour of this so-called peace convoy would go away, and that the members of that convoy would settle down happily in any such designated sites?

Mr. Roberts: I am speaking about the laws that local authorities need to move travellers on. The peace convoy comes within the definition of the legislation on gipsy sites.

The local authorities would have had the stronger powers that they seek under the law of trespass to move those people on if they had provided sites. I do not want to spend all my time discussing this issue because I should like to move to other points.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: The hon. Gentleman has spoken about designation, and that would certainly give local authorities more powers in respect of public land. The point that arose in the west country related to private land. The law was perfectly clear but getting rid of these people caused the farmer great frustration and cost. That is the point that worries everybody.

Mr. Roberts: I am well aware of the things that worry people because we met worried people on our journeys. Local authorities have powers to move on travellers if sites are provided, but only 232 local authorities have provided sites. As the Select Committee said, this leaves some 35 per cent. of gipsies and people who travel leaving aside the peace convoy without sites on which they can legally park. Something needs to be done about that before we become critical of travellers who trespass.

I am pleased at the way that the Liverpool garden festival turned out. The Select Committee highlights that the festival cost £14·822 million to design and construct and £5·447 million to run. That is a total of over £20 million. The total revenue was £6·398 million, and that makes it look as if there was a loss on the festival of over £13 million. However, if we take account of the contributions of £883,000 and the £5 million value of the exhibition site and the buildings that were left, the loss is reduced to about £8 million.

Partly at my request, the Select Committee visited the site. That visit was a catalyst that got people moving. Our inquiries were informal and unofficial and as a result the development corporation was able to bring in a private company, Transworld, and public sector involvement through the Merseyside development corporation. That has transformed what was to be a one-off international garden site into a permanent facility for the people of Merseyside. Transworld will invest £5·5 million and this year it has already spent £1 million on maintaining the facility. The company is investing money to turn the area into a major theme park.

But for public expenditure and effort and the visit of the Select Committee on the Environment and this private sector partner, a formerly derelict dockland area would not have been transformed into a permanent benefit for the people of Merseyside. It is a pity that a lot of other development corporation land is still empty, despite having its negative value removed. Developers and private sector firms are not coming in, and perhaps the lesson is that a bit more public expenditure is necessary as a catalyst.

The Committee recommends that the present dog licence should be abolished and that consideration should be given to empowering local authorities to raise revenue by the issue of dog licences at appropriate fees to cover the cost of a dog service. There would be certain exemptions. As the Select Committee points out, there are 5 million dogs in Britain. I think they are all in Bootle. When I leave my front door in Bootle it is like entering a safari park. I was in the local supermarket the other day—not the Co-op—and a dog came in and peed on the South African oranges. One of my constituents said, "What will you do about that, Mr. Roberts?" I said, "I will buy Australian."

We need action to deal with the problem of dogs roaming in the streets and fouling the pavements. The dog licence is an insult because it is too expensive to collect. Local authorities should be given responsibility and power to deal with the problem and the Government should stop collecting the licence money. Local authorities could easily impose a heavy licence fee and use the money to run dog warden services. A service like that would be appreciated not only by people such as I who are not fond of dogs. Dog lovers would appreciate it as well. That is because it does dogs no good to roam neglected as they do.

The hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green called the home loans scheme a Labour Government's miserable little scheme introduced just before a general election. It is better than any scheme that this Government have introduced. The home loans scheme that the last Labour Government introduced in 1978 was a fair attempt to enable first-time buyers who had saved some money to receive grants and loans from the public purse. That was an attempt to help create genuine owner-occupation. The scheme should be extended and developed and we shall do that when we form the next Government.

We believe in owner-occupation and especially want to help first-time buyers. If the Government ask where the money will come from, let them look at the latest Estimate for 1985-86 which puts the total tax relief for qualifying interest on loans for the purchase or improvement of owner occupied property at £4·750 million. I am not suggesting that we should abolish income tax relief for owner-occupiers, but there is nothing wrong with redistributing that money.

A basic 29 per cent. rate taxpayer with a 25-year repayment mortgage subject to MIRAS and an interest rate of 11 per cent. in the first year and a £12,000 mortgage receives £383 in tax relief per year. A person with a £30,000 mortgage, the maximum amount for which income tax relief is obtainable, receives £957. That is wrong. It is a system of subsidising owner-occupation that is based on that old English principle that the richer you are the more help you need with your housing. We want to see first-time buyers, the lower paid and house purchasers in the lower price range given more help by redistribution of the money.

Mr. Robert B. Jones *rose*

Mr. Roberts: I will not give way because lots of other hon. Members wish to speak.

I am not surprised that the hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green and the Select Committee on the Environment said:

> "We understand that the Minister has been unsuccessful in persuading local authorities to agree to"

provide a certain percentage of their housing stock to allocate to people coming in from other local authorities. I regret that, but it is not surprising because if local authorities do not have the houses to allocate to their own people they will be understandably reluctant to allocate them to others.

The reason for the shortage of housing is that the public rented sector has declined under this Government because it is being sold off and also because hardly any new council houses are being built. That is why the mobility scheme is not working and why local authorities are reluctant to give houses to people coming in from other areas. They have no houses to give to people on their own waiting lists, homeless people indigenous to their areas.

[Mr. Roberts]

In 1981 house building fell to its lowest level since the 1920s. Under this Government public sector house building has been slashed. Fewer than 40,000 new council houses were started in 1984 and fewer still in 1985—about 70 per cent. down on 1978. Taking public and private house building together, homes started under the Government are 37 per cent. below the number started under the previous Labour Government. The claim that the private sector can make up the lack of new council houses is clearly wrong. Over 500,000 extra homes would have been built by last year if Labour's house building plans had been maintained.

The report of the Select Committee on the Environment on house maintenance is a damning indictment of the Government's housing policy. Because it is an all-party Committee, it is in softly, softly language, but, none the less, it is an indictment. Our last report said:

"It seems certain that there is a very large backlog of housing maintenance at the present day and, against that background, it seems to us imperative that the available resources are appropriately distributed between the private and public sectors."

That report talked about £30 billion—£40 billion at present day prices—being needed to maintain our housing stock. It goes on:

"According to the Department's recent enquiry into the state of the public sector stock, some 3·8 million dwellings out of a total of 4·6 million require some attention and the total capital expenditure required is some £19 billion ie an average of about £4,000 a dwelling."

The Select Committee concludes:

"We are concerned—that is putting it mildly—about the state of repair of the housing stock. Neglected maintenance is not merely postponed but gives rise to the need for even more maintenance later on."

Then comes the prediction of the return of the bulldozer—

"Some property, particularly in the public sector, may be near the point where replacement rather than renovation becomes the only realistic but more, much more expensive option."

The crisis highlighted by the Select Committee is a major one, growing into one of 1945 proportions. One third of today's homes were built before 1919. The worst conditions are in the private rented sector which Conservative Members want to revive. Nearly half of all unfit homes are owner-occupied. In England and Wales 1·25 million homes are unfit for human habitation and 1 million lack one or more basic amenities such as an inside toilet. In the United Kingdom 2·5 million are seriously affected by damp; 3 million require immediate repairs, each costing £2,500 or more; and 1·5 million have serious design defects.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: The hon. Gentleman is clearly implying that a great deal of money should be spent on this problem. He has already told us that he believes in altering the tax relief system. At what level would tax relief be withdrawn by an incoming Labour Government?

Mr. Roberts: At the high rates.

The backlog of repairs and the blame for the current housing crisis that the Select Committee highlights lies firmly with the Government. They have repeatedly cut the budgets for housing expenditure. Indeed, since 1979 housing has borne the brunt of public spending cuts, with expenditure cut by more than a half, taking account of inflation. As a result, the proportion of its national income that the United Kingdom spends on housing is far smaller than that of any other EEC country. That is the housing crisis as highlighted clearly by the Select Committee's report.

The Select Committee received from the previous Secretary of State for the Environment, now the Secretary of State for Education and Science, a note on urban policy headed "Traditional Urban Programme", which is optimistic. But we must realise that the urban programme is not an urban policy. It is financially, managerially and politically marginal to urban government. In 1985-86 the urban programme comprises only £2 in every £10,000 of total planned Government spending. The base urban programme allocation for some programme authorities is less than 2 per cent. of their revenue budget.

I welcome every penny of urban programme money that the Government give, especially if it comes to Bootle, but we must put it in perspective. Total urban aid from 1981 through to 1987 is £1,910 million. Government cuts in rate support grant to local authorities were nearly eight times more than that—£8,060 million. The only way to solve the urban problems of our inner cities with which local authorities are having to battle is not through the urban aid grant but through the mainstream programmes of local authorities which are highlighted in the report, such as housing and so on, about which the Select Committee is concerned. The only way to solve the problems is by increasing Government expenditure, not reducing it. I regret that the Select Committee cannot table any resolutions to increase expenditure rather than reduce it. If that were possible, that is what the Opposition would be doing.

8.5 pm

Mr. Robert B. Jones (Hertfordshire, West): I have greatly enjoyed being on the Select Committee on the Environment for the past two and a half years. Now that I am due to leave it I should like to take this opportunity to say that I very much enjoyed co-operating with hon. Members from both sides of the House during the production of our reports, and, in particular, serving under the chairmanship of my hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi), one of the outstanding Chairmen in the House, who has led us through a series of most interesting subjects, not the least of which are the two that we are considering today.

If I have one main regret about leaving the Committee, it is that I shall not be able to serve on the Committee during its detailed consideration of the Property Services Agency in the coming year. There is a major job to be done in that area.

I want to refer in particular to two recommendations which are dealt with in the Select Committee's report and I shall take them, if I may, in reverse order. Recommendation 32 relates to the acquisition of freeholds. My hon. Friend referred to that in his speech. I find it baffling, and I know that other members of the Committee did too, that the policy on the acquisition of freeholds is not a calculated one on the basis of the facts available to the PSA, but is an ad hoc policy, based entirely on whether there happens to be any money in the kitty at the time. It cannot be right that it should wait until the last weeks of a financial year, knowing, as many Departments do, that they have to blow the money or hand it back in order to develop its property policy. It should have a clear set of criteria by which it decides whether to purchase and there should be a fund within the PSA estimates which

entitles it to acquire far more buildings than it has at present. There is no doubt whatever, given the recent history of property prices, particularly in the cities and the south-east, that freeholds are a good buy.

Recommendation 31 refers to the central point, if I may call it that, of the report—the competence of the PSA in dealing with its programmes and projects. I took up two particular projects in some detail during cross-questioning of witnesses from the Department and I want to refer in particular to them.

The first is the Hanslope park scheme. That is the uprating of an engineering service in a Foreign and Commonwealth Office establishment. That has overrun by £1,500,000 on an original cost of £1·1 million. That is an astronomic increase. Some increases are because of things that have happened in the meantime, which have resulted in extras being added in. I agree with my hon. Friend that it is most unwise to change the specification to provide more or different accommodation or whatever, because that does not give good value for money in terms of purchasing construction work in the private sector, but it is even more illogical that the whole building had to be redesigned to bring the engineering services up to current safety standards. That was responsible for £630,000—40 per cent.—of the overrun. The reason for that was that it was very late in the day when the Department decided to consult the laboratory of the Government chemist. If it was important to consult the laboratory of the Government chemist about the design, surely the proper time to consult was at the beginning of the project, not halfway through so that it resulted in a significant overrun. When I questioned the witnesses from my hon. Friend the Minister's Department they could offer no real assurance that it would not happen again. Indeed, they seemed thoroughly complacent about their performance on this and other matters.

The second project is the Derby Crown courts. One would think that the Property Services Agency had some experience of courts. After all, it has dealt with them in a number of different parts of the country. It has overrun with monotonous frequency, but I am sure that in part it is due to the Lord Chancellor's Department revising its requirements. I hope that my hon. Friend will take up vigorously with the Lord Chancellor the point that he, too, should get things right at an early stage.

There are two other factors involved beside changing the specifications. In mid-1983, in the middle of the project, the Civil Service Catering Organisation changed its catering policy to include a coffee shop style of catering in some courts and provided a completely new brief. That cost the taxpayer an extra £41,000. Admittedly, that is small in terms of the total overrun of £2·7 million. That overrun relates to an original estimated cost of £2·9 million, almost as bad as the other example I gave.

The real villian of the piece was the PSA, which, on examination of the design, decided that it was necessary to make improvements, particularly in the fire escape routes from the dining and jury circulation areas. The consequent redesign was more expensive. That was £696,000 out of the total £2·7 million overrun. What happened? It is curious, but the fire authority was not consulted until late in the project. I find that extraordinary and when I cross-questioned witnesses from the Minister's department they said:

"The lesson we have learned from this is that it is not good enough to devolve responsibilities for designing something as complex as a court to our regional organisation simply on the basis that they have the requisite numbers of architects or engineers. One must make a more detailed inquiry as to the skill and experience of these architects and engineers that we now have."

Anyone who has any experience of the private sector in dealing with construction projects would have known perfectly well that that was the case. Anyone in a private sector company who placed an order with a company for a design of a building without having investigated whether it was capable of carrying out the project would deserve to be sacked on the spot. I ask my hon. Friend the Minister to say what disciplinary action has been taken against the civil servants in the PSA whose incompetence cost the taxpayer £700,000 on one project alone.

Those are just two examples out of a whole list that the Committee examined. We have examined similar examples in previous years and I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green for having secured this debate. It is about time that the scandals came to public attention and time that the Minister really took control of the PSA to make sure that we do not have the same sad story next year. If we do, it will not only be the Select Committee on the Environment which will be seeking a debate in the House on the PSA estimates; it would rightly and properly be something being sought by other Select Committees, by Opposition Members and by my hon Friends.

I shall turn to a number of items in the Department of the Environment's main heading. Some of them have been touched on by the hon. Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts). I simply wish to put a somewhat contrary view, which will not surprise him, on one or two points. First, I shall deal with gipsy sites. My hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green touched on the points on which we had cross-questioned the Department of the Environment. Of course, the letter is appended to the report.

Those of us who have constituencies which are on the fringe of urban areas know what the problem is. When an authority applies for designation saying that it has sufficient official sites to cater for the number of gipsies in the area, one may get an influx from all sorts of other neighbouring areas, especially if they had designation first. My hon. Friend the Minister responsible for planning and the designation of gipsy sites has tried to deal with applications on an inward-outward basis because that is the right way to do it. However, he is still sitting on the application for designation by Hertfordshire county council in respect of Dacorum borough council, which covers my constituency and part of the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, South-West (Mr. Page).

In the middle of the Minister's consideration, one of the local Socialists in Berkhamsted challenged the consultation process in the courts. She was perfectly entitled to do that. Of course, it went out for further consultation and it has gone back to my hon. Friend for another examination. I think that he must make an urgent decision on this because we are suffering every bit as much as people in Somerset from influxes of caravans, or various sorts of people who camp out on the byways, tear up the hedgerows, chop down young oaks and cause a great deal of petty and serious crime in the area. Obviously one wishes to see proper arrangements for permanent housing and schooling for many of those families. However, I do not think that it is right for any local authority to be

[Mr. Robert B. Jones]

required to cater for the sudden influxes that come from different parts of the country at any one time. I hope that my hon. Friend will convey those thoughts to the Minister responsible.

I want to refer to Vote 4 in passing. My hon. Friends on the Select Committee are aware of the fact that it was at my suggestion that the Select Committee did a one-day inquiry into the use and future of Hampton Court palace. It was a most interesting study, which provoked some interesting and quick decisions on the part of the Department of the Environment. Quick decisions are often welcome. Obviously, since that time the very sad events have taken place that led to the partial destruction of Hampton Court. We were all grateful to the Secretary of State for his assurance that funds would be made available for the reconstruction of Hampton Court. I simply want to ask my hon. Friend the Minister to assure us that we will not have any barmy modern architectural practices forced on to the beautiful Hampton Court palace and that it will be rebuilt properly in a combination of mediaeval, Tudor and Wren. I know that many people in that part of London are worried at a suggestion from an architect whose name I cannot remember

Mr. John Mark Taylor: Mr. Chapman.

Mr. Jones: No, it was not my hon. Friend the Member for Chipping Barnet (Mr. Chapman). The architect suggested that the ruins should simply be glassed over as a monument to the destruction. That would be quite unacceptable.

I should like to refer briefly to Vote 3 referring to the Commission for the New Towns. It is the policy of the Government, one that I fully support, that assets of the Commission for the New Towns should be released into the private sector in order to allow funds to be made available for other capital projects. I think that there is some evidence that the commission is using that remit to try to extract outrageous sums on the non-trading side of the commission. I am not talking about the sale of factories and so on, but the sale of some of the social assets. For example, the centre for the blind in my own constituency is on a 99-year lease on a peppercorn rent. Therefore, it seems wholly unreasonable for the Commission for the New Towns to insist on market price if the trustees of the centre for the blind wish to purchase it. It has no value to the commission since it is on long lease with a peppercorn rent. I hope that my hon. Friend will look at that and other examples to see whether he could give revised instructions to the Commission for the New Towns to ensure that it has proper regard to the social obligations in constituencies such as mine, Welwyn, Hatfield, Stevenage, Crawley and other new towns where their own corporations have been wound up.

I have also worried considerably about the commission's attitude to the sports facilities that it owns. I must declare my interest, albeit it a non-pecuniary one, as president of the Dacorum sports council. We are worried that, as the commission owns some of our sports fields, it will be tempted to seek planning permission for housing development on that land to get the maximum capital gains for itself. That would not be consistent with the general policy that has existed in the area for many years, which is that we should try to have the maximum sporting facilities in the town.

Vote 6 deals with rate support grant which is always a contentious matter. My hon. Friend the Minister will be well aware that when we last debated RSG I did not support the Government in the Lobby because I felt that Hertfordshire was being particularly adversely treated. I do not wish to defend excesses in expenditure. It is striking that since the Conservative party lost control of the county council in 1985, the alliance, together with the Labour party, which together form the majority, have pushed through an increase in spending of 11 per cent. That is second only to Liberal-controlled Somerset as an increase in expenditure. My ratepayers and others in Hertfordshire are having to carry the can for that sort of excess.

My anxiety is that the RSG distribution is unfair. It seems fair to say that because my constituents and others are wealthier than average — our per capita income is about 10 per cent. greater than the national average — we should pay more. But the average ratepayer in Dacorum pays 41 per cent. more in rates than the national average, and that is unfair. That is because of the way in which rateable value is taken into account in distributing the money available. The sooner my hon. Friend presses on with the reforms that have been heralded in the rates Green Paper, the better it will be for areas such as mine.

Mr. Allan Roberts: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that the Green Paper envisages that the change to a poll tax will take the duration of five Parliaments? Does he really believe that the Government will do anything about it?

Mr. Jones: I sincerely hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will take note of the importance of having a community service charge, because that will be a much fairer way of distributing the cost of community services than the present rating system. I make no bones about the fact that I support that proposal. Indeed, I have said that vigorously in my constituency and received a large amount of mail from people who agree with my stand.

My point refers to the other half of the Green Paper, which deals with how RSG distribution would take place. I certainly welcome the division of RSG into two halves: a per capita half and a resources half. One anomaly in the present system, which I am sure my hon. Friend would not wish to get rid of, is the London discount. London is given a 25 per cent. discount on its rateable value because it is considered to be high. In all fairness, either that should apply to Hertfordshire, Surrey, Berkshire and other local authorities which surround London and also have high rateable values, or the London discount should be abolished. I leave it to my hon. Friend to decide which he thinks is fairer. Certainly it is most unfair that London enjoys a privilege that is not extended to other areas.

The hon. Member for Bootle made a most interesting speech on housing. Unfortunately, he did not go as far as we in the Conservative party might have liked as he did not let his cat entirely out of the bag. However, the front six whiskers of the cat were quite enough to frighten many of my constituents, who would find their mortage interest tax relief abolished because they pay higher rates of tax. I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman realises that a senior school teacher in my constituency married to a manual worker in one of the computer industries would easily fall into that bracket and would end up paying a great deal more in tax if the relief were altered.

The hon. Gentleman did not tell us — the Labour party must come clean on this — where the Labour party

would set the limit for tax relief. He said that it was reasonable that tax relief should be given on mortgage loans up to £12,000 but implied that it was wrong that it should apply to loans of £30,000. At which point between those two figures does the Labour party propose to cut relief? I have heard it said that £20,000 is the point at which the Labour party imagines tax relief should end. If so, many home owners in the south-east will be extremely hard hit.

Finally, housing is a changing area of public policy, and rightly so, because people's aspirations change. It is not many years since most people's expectation to rent gave way to an expectation, especially among young people, to own their home. I pay tribute to the Government for having liberated a large number of my constituents from their previous feelings that home ownership was not available to them. It is now.

If we are to progress on the housing policy front we need to see more local authorities following the example of Wandsworth, which is prepared to involve the private sector in work and to bring in capital from private development companies to produce much better houses in the areas where grim, awful, council estates previously stood. It is hardly surprising that the Conservative-controlled council there was triumphantly re-elected in May. It gives many people in Wandsworth a chance of something which every Opposition Member has — a home of their own. Because that is the rallying call of Conservatives in local and national government, I am pleased to be a supporter of the Government.

8.27 pm

Mr. John Cartwright (Woolwich): I must be the first hon. Member to speak who is not a member of the Select Committee. I should like to offer my congratulations and thanks to it for the way in which it has examined these Estimates. I propose to select three issues to which it has referred in its helpful report.

First, I turn to the issue of the home loans scheme. As has been pointed out, the scheme began life in 1978 as the home purchase assistance scheme, and since then it has been virtually ignored by the Government. The financial limits are exactly the same as when the scheme was first introduced. Applicants who have saved for two years qualify for an interest-free loan of £600 and a grant of £110. However, since 1978 house prices have more than doubled and the Nationwide building society's housing price index which stood at 172 for the fourth quarter of 1978 shot up to 377 by the first quarter of 1986. Yet throughout that period the figures for the home loans scheme have not been increased by one penny piece, nor has the scheme been promoted seriously by the Government. As a result, it is hardly suprising that the number of applicants has decreased to only 3,000 a year. Indeed, it is surprising that as many as that know that the scheme exists.

At present, as the finance director of the Department of the Environment admitted to the Select Committee:

"the repayment of loans exceeds the outgoings so there is a net income to the Exchequer from it."

In other words, we have the crazy position in which a Government finance scheme, designed to put money into the pockets of first-time home buyers, has become a nice little earner for the Government. The sums involved are paltry. That was underlined in the Select Committee's examination by its Chairman, the hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi), who pointed out that the Government were spending £2·8 million on the home loans scheme and £3·8 million on dog licences. As he pointed out, if the Government scrapped dog licences, they could double the much needed help to first-time buyers.

The home loans scheme was designed to help genuine first-time buyers on modest incomes. People who already have a foot on the ladder, who have some inherited money or whose parents are prepared to give or lend the money for a deposit do not need such help. If the Government are as committed as they say that they are to extending home ownership, they must do more to help those young people struggling to pay rent or living with their parents while trying to save money to buy their first home. The scheme needs to be revamped. It should be limited to those on modest incomes, average earnings or below, who are saving to buy their own homes.

Rather than continue with the present arrangement of a loan grant, we should return to the original idea of matching grants so that the amount that people save will be matched pound for pound over a period of at least two years and up to a reasonable maximum figure. If the scheme were properly promoted and advertised, it could give a real incentive to young people to own their own homes. Much more important, it would bring home ownership within the reach of many young couples who are now denied it.

I move from a scheme about which little is known to an issue about which all too much is known — the condition of local council housing stock. Last November, the Department of the Environment published its famous report on the extent of dilapidation in local council housing. In summary, the report said that 3,836,000 dwellings, 84 per cent. of the council housing stock, were considered to require expenditure totalling £18·84 billion, at an average cost of £4,900 per dwelling. The estimate for local authority capital expenditure on renovation in 1985-86 was £1,150 million. That is only 6 per cent. of the money that needs to be spent, assuming that there is no further deterioration.

We all know that the condition of the housing stock is getting worse all the time. In its April 1985 report on capital expenditure controls in local government in England, the Audit Commission pointed out:

"the total maintenance backlog will have been building up at the rate of at least £900 million a year at 1984 prices over the past several years".

That implies that our current level of spending for repairs in council housing has an impact of only around £250 million a year in improving the situation. In other words, the overall bill for housing repairs in the council sector may be coming down by as little as 1 per cent. a year. On present trends, this could mean that it will take us up to the end of the next century to bring all council housing up to acceptable standards.

Obviously, all these Estimates have a certain broad ball park element to them. We know that the Department of the Environment is conducting selective follow-up surveys to the 1985 exercise, and that in 1986 the housing condition survey will give us more accurate information about the state of the public sector and its housing. A clearer view of the trend to deterioration on the one hand and the counter trend in terms of maintenance and repairs on the other will be emerging over the next few years.

[Mr. John Cartwright]

The underlying problem is clear, whatever the precise figures. The Select Committee said clearly and firmly in its report:

"Neglected maintenance is not merely postponed but gives rise to the need for even more maintenance later on. Some property, particularly in the public sector, may be near the point where replacement rather than renovation becomes the only realistic but much more expensive option. Accurate information is important but the necessary decisions are urgent and should not be postponed while the proposed House Condition Survey follows its protracted course."

I strongly endorse the sense of urgency contained in that recommendation.

Those of us who represent a substantial number of council tenants know only too well what this past neglect means for council tenants and families. It means leaking roofs, decaying plaster, rotting window frames, flats running with damp and condensation, old fashioned, ineffective and expensive heating systems and all the rest that so reduces the quality of life for many families in council housing.

There is a wide agreement across the House that the Government have not given capital expenditure the priority that it deserves. Capital spending on housing has been cut by 60 per cent. since the Government came to power and we know that there are no plans to increase the amount being spent on housing. Even last year, when the then Secretary of State was reported to have won a famous victory in the annual public spending round, it turned out that the increase of £250 million for housing spending was a decrease of £185 million. This was a confidence trick achieved by creative accounting and a revision of the amount of capital receipts that local authorities were allowed to spend. If that was the scale of the victory achieved by a leading Cabinet wet, it is doubtful how much faith one can put in a Secretary of State who is reported as having started the annual spending round by reducing the figures for his Department.

There is a general view that we must put greater emphasis on capital spending and increase investment in our national infrastructure. In 1970, we spent 7 per cent. of our national product on public investment. Today, the figure is down to only 2 per cent. We must, at the very least, restore the share of capital spending to its 1979 level. That means a boost of about £2 billion to be concentrated on housing and roads.

Public expenditure is not enough. The Government hope to attract private finance into the local authority sector, to assist in tackling a tremendous backlog of maintenance. In principle, I welcome that approach, but it has to be based on a genuine partnership between local authorities, financial institutions, developers, tenants and the local communities involved. It is not clear at this stage whether the Government have found the right mix, and it is doubtful whether a genuine impact can be made without both an increase in Government spending and significant incentives to encourage private investors to put their money into the restoration of council houses.

The Audit Commission pointed out that, although about £1 billion might be available to invest in council housing, the response in the local authorities has been "underwhelming to say the least."

The Audit Commission contrasts that lacklustre approach with the experience of north America where in cities such as Atlanta, Baltimore, Cleveland, Detroit, Minneapolis, New York and even Washington DC there has been clear evidence that only with a productive partnership between public and private sectors can the problems of inner cities in particular be addressed. In its report of March 1986, the Audit Commission set out a number of ways in which public-private partnerships can be developed. I hope that the Government and the local authorities will examine these proposals further and produce capital initiatives before much longer.

The hon. Member for Hertfordshire, West (Mr. Jones) mentioned briefly the next issue on which I shall talk caravan sites, gipsies and the travellers. I notice that the Select Committee recommended last year that the time was ripe for what it called a "modest review" of the effectiveness of Government policy. As a result, a consultative document was issued by the Department of the Environment in March this year.

On the basis of my experience in my constituency over the past 11 years, I cannot believe that the present policy is effective. In 1971, my authority of Greenwich provided a site for 54 travellers, gipsies and their caravans because we had a traditional involvement with such travellers and we thought that it was right to provide such sites. It is much larger than the sites required by the Caravan Sites Act, and cost us more than £300,000 to provide. We had only occasional problems.

Once the Thamesmead area was opened up for development, we were subject to regular invasions of caravans. There were difficulties when the landowners or the borough council used their powers under the Caravan Sites Act to take cases to court. We all know that the court procedure is slow, cumbersome and only moves the problem from one place to another. That was difficult enough until we had a change of political attitudes on the part of the GLC and the London borough of Greenwich in 1982. They declined to take any action to remove caravans in the area unless a severe problem had resulted.

As one can imagine, the caravans are now no longer part of the problem in the Thamesmead area but a permanent feature of life there. This morning, I counted and found that Thamesmead is disfigured by more than 70 caravans, mainly along the main road. My constituents have to put up with the rubbish and the filth created by some travellers, although not all. In particular, those who indulge in metal breaking, site clearance and encouraging others to tip in the areas near their caravans are causing a problem. There is also the problem of the horses that roam wild around people's homes and gardens and even into school areas. On occasion they have caused serious accidents through running free on main roads.

The Greenwich council has now proposed a second travellers' site in Thamesmead for up to 60 caravans. It is less than a mile from the original site. I cannot accept that that is either fair or reasonable. We have to share the burden of responsibility within one borough across other boroughs as well. I accept that we have to make reasonable provision for those who have a travelling lifestyle and who need to move around the area, but I believe that we must also show consideration for working people who pay substantial sums of money in rent, rates and mortgage repayments. They bitterly resent the creation of shanty towns around their homes and throughout their communities.

Therefore, like the Select Committee, I look forward to hearing the outcome of the Government"s deliberations as a result of the consultation document on travellers and

their caravans. I hope that at long last, after all these years, there will be effective action to deal with a problem that has been allowed to drag on for far too long.

8.40 pm

Mr. John Mark Taylor (Solihull): This will necessarily be a brief intervention, but I should like to follow the hon. Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts) and my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, West (Mr. Jones), both of whom are fellow members of the Select Committee on the Environment, in expressing appreciation of the excellent lead of my hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi) on the Select Committee. The more obvious dividend that he collects — and collects again on our behalf as Members of the Select Committee on the Environment — is the way in which he has succeeded in persuading the managers of the business of the House of the importance of Select Committee reports so that they are debated here from time to time. My hon. Friend's record in that regard probably exceeds that of any other Select Committee.

Mr. Allan Roberts: On that point, perhaps the hon. Gentleman will ask the Minister to tell us when we may expect a response to the remainder of the Select Committee's report, on the disposal of nuclear waste.

Mr. Taylor: That is an interesting point. The hon. Gentleman will not be short of techniques with which to advance his sense of urgency about the report, and I am quite sure that he will do so.

The hon. Member for Woolwich (Mr. Cartwright) referred to the north American experience and to some of their major urban problems. Many of them have close parallels with those that we face in our main conurbations. His mention of Baltimore aroused my interest, because it was the pioneer city of homesteading — that most daring of privatisation measures. Homesteading means gathering together the title deeds and handing them over to the young, first-time house purchasing couple for, in many cases, a dollar, in return for a covenant to repair a property that, sadly, has fallen into disrepair. It is a very interesting experiment which we should examine further.

As repair is the theme of the moment, it surprises me that it should be necessary to say again in this Chamber that the curve which it is possible to plot or draw — the graph between deterioration and cost — is not linear and never was linear. Our grandmothers told us that a stitch in time saves nine, and all modern analysis and modern science have led us to precisely the same conclusion: that delayed repair is exponentially expensive. One of the more worrying features that emerges from the environmental studies is that we are too complacent in our repair programmes and repair policies.

I think that it would be right to echo the words of other right hon. and hon. Members in the debate. They returned again, in surprise, to our national governmental practice of annual regimes of Government accounting. The local government experience of many right hon. and hon. Members taught them the difference between the discipline of the capital account on the one hand and the revenue account on the other. All branches of the accountancy profession are absolutely wedded to these principles, yet in our nation's affairs at the highest level we subject ourselves to the kind of financial scrutiny that would be unacceptable to the humblest district auditor.

This is not merely disturbing to me but, as we have heard, it leads to some perverse consequences. It is not just a bizarre way of presenting the accounts on a kind of national receipts and payments basis. It is not just eccentric in that sense. It is actually harmful. It is because of these accounting principles that the Property Services Agency, for example, was faced with what has turned out to be a complete disincentive to enfranchise leases, when other speakers have already said that enfranchising leases would make sense from so many points of view. The accounting technique has, for all practical purposes, prevented what would otherwise be a common-sense policy.

In drawing my remarks to a close, I hope that the hon. Member for Bootle will not mind if I remind him that those with the largest mortgages are very often those who put down the smallest deposits. At that time in their career as property owners, they may be able to put down only a small deposit. I refer to those who buy their first house with a mortgage of 95 per cent. and, in some cases, even more. In my division of Solihull many constituents are buying properties for, shall we say, £32,000. They are just moving over the stamp duty threshold and they are doing so with mortgages of, say, £30,000. I should not want them for a moment to think that the Opposition consider that they are affluent members of society and that they should therefore suffer not only the punishment and penalty of stamp duty but also the erosion of the income tax relief that they have been led to expect. The first-time home buyer is often at the point of maximum borrowing and minimum personal input.

When Select Committee reports are reviewed, many criticisms are voiced, but I end with a compliment to the Property Services Agency. Not long ago I went to see the Cabinet war rooms, a public presentation that both right hon. and hon. Members and tourists are able to visit. That job has been very well done.

8.48 pm

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): I hope that the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment will not take it amiss if it is impossible for me to hear the whole of his wind-up speech, but I have other duties in the House. However, I promise that I shall read his remarks very closely — all the more so, because I hope that he will respond to some of the points that I am about to make.

I address my remarks to class XX, vote 18, of the Supply Estimates that are being considered by the House. I welcome the debate, and particularly the clear pledge by the hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi) that his Committee will conduct a searching inquiry into these matters. I was delighted to hear him give that pledge. I hope that if he has an opportunity to study my remarks, he will feel that the Coatbridge south circular road project is a matter that his Committee ought to consider with extreme urgency.

The subject does not come as a surprise to the Minister. He was present, and indeed he replied, when I initiated it in an Adjournment debate on 25 March, almost three months ago. I am astonished that all that time has passed and my constituency still has such a serious problem. We still make profound criticisms of the method of budgeting and the preparation of estimates by the Property Services Agency. Those criticisms were echoed in general terms by almost every hon. Member who has taken part in the

[Mr. Tom Clarke]

debate. In the light of those criticisms, I should have expected a decision by the PSA about the Coatbridge south circular road project. I should certainly have expected the Minister and his right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland to have taken some action by now.

The Minister will be aware that I am referring to the office replacement and the new office provision of the Department of Employment and DHSS offices in Coatbridge. During the Adjournment debate on 25 March, the hon. Gentleman described the offices as

"not quite Victorian but very old." [*Official Report*, 25 March 1986; Vol. 94, c. 925.]

That hardly describes, in graphic detail, the appalling conditions which exist in both offices. The Minister does not dispute that. He knows that inspectors from the various departments have commented on the conditions which exist. He accepts — I give him full credit for it — that the case for replacing the two offices in my constituency is unanswerable.

Class XX, vote 18, of the Estimates makes no reference to the money which the Minister promised my constituents a long time ago. Perhaps he will put the record straight tonight. As the Minister knows — he has been in touch with the Department of Employment — unemployment in my constituency is about 22 per cent. Those offices would serve the village of Gartcosh — the House knows a great deal about the problems of Gartcosh — which has an unemployment rate of over 30 per cent.

I shall not bore the House with the facts that I put on record during the Adjournment debate. However, I am entitled to remind the House of the promise that the Minister gave in a letter he sent to me in December 1984. I should have expected the money that he promised my constituents to be included in the Estimates or in the Estimates which were last published.

The Minister's letter of December 1984 stated:

"The delay over several years in providing a new office at Coatbridge for DE and DHSS has been a result of other pressures on the Property Services Agency's Office and General Accommodation programme. These pressures will continue in the foreseeable future, but the deterioration in the condition of the existing accommodation is I know becoming very severe."

I remind the House that the letter was dated December 1984. The Minister continued:

"and I recognise also that a decision now to relocate both Departments to the South Circular Road site could make a valuable contribution to the redevelopment of the area.

As the Minister also responsible for the inner cities, I believe it vital that Departments including PSA should bear in mind the importance of urban regeneration when determining their own programmes. I am pleased therefore to confirm that, despite the tightness of funds, I have now authorised PSA to enter into a commitment for construction of new offices for DE and DHSS at the South Circular Road site which we will purchase on completion in 1986/87."

Time has passed. A start has not even been made on the construction. The Minister had to write to me again on 5 March 1986. He wrote to me again, after all that time had passed and after the commitment and involvement of the Scottish Development Agency, the local authorities, Monklands district council, Strathclyde regional, British Telecom and everyone else who was interested in clearing the site and preparing it for the offices. All that was based on the hopes that the Minister gave to my constituents in the letter he sent to me in December 1984.

The Minister's letter dated 5 March 1986 stated:

"It was because I could not allow a contractual commitment to be entered into without funds being earmarked that I had to hold the project up at the last minute. I realise how disappointing this is for all concerned; and I can assure you that I am actively pursuing a solution with my ministerial colleagues in the hope that a new building can go ahead shortly. But at this point, I can do no more than promise to search for funds."

Perhaps the search is continuing. However, there is very little evidence that that is so. The Minister's letter of 5 March came, as he rightly said, as a considerable blow to everybody concerned, not least the staff of the Department and those who frequent both offices who have found that their privacy was not being respected.

The Minister is well aware that the Scottish Development Agency and those involved in the project have already spent about £600,000 on clearing the site so that the building can go ahead. The Minister may argue yet again, after a three-month gap, that the project has not been cancelled; it has been postponed. If he does so, I must remind him that postponements cost money. We estimate that the postponement is costing the taxpayers £450 a day. In the Adjournment debate, the Minister said that Monklands district council had engaged Males and McDonald as its consultants and they would carry out their duties in that capacity. Those consultants were engaged by the PSA. The PSA should accept the responsibility. The PSA should urge upon the Minister the need to reach a solution to the problem.

Because the Minister has said, time after time, that he is actively pursuing the matter, I should have thought that a conclusion would have been reached by now. The Minister said that he was looking for a solution as soon as practicable. I should not have thought it would take three months from the debate on 25 March. I have heard disturbing rumours that the money that might have been allocated to the project may go to a new town somewhere in the United Kingdom, and possibly to a computer project. If such a provision is included in the Estimates, it would be a massive insult to the people of the west central belt of Scotland and especially my consituency. i invite the Minister to clarify the position.

The PSA has been criticised for the fact that, when there is a change of specification, it does not seem to be as alert to the consequences as it should be. That certainly applies in this case. The PSA encouraged the planning for a two-storey building instead of the previous ideas. The PSA must accept the consequences. The PSA cannot argue that that has caused a delay and increased the price. Of course it has, but the PSA should have the experience and knowledge to judge the consequences of its decisions.

I am appalled at the PSA's activities in Scotland, and I am not alone in that view. I am appalled that the promises made when Gartcosh was closed have not been fulfilled. In March this year, the Secretary of State for Scotland said that the Government would do as much as they could to help because of the substantial losses in the steel industry in Lanarkshire. Those views were expressed publicly also by the chairman of the Conservative party and many others.

There have been even more job losses, but what sticks in our gullet is that they have occurred because the Government have failed to co-ordinate appropriately and significantly with the PSA. I am sorry to say that the Under-Secretary of State has not yet lived up to his word to me. I urge the hon. Gentleman and the House to ensure

that there is greater scrutiny of the PSA's estimates. I say that based on the experience in my constituency. If that experience means anything, the PSA, and therefore the Department of the Environment, should come under the greatest possible scrutiny. I hope that the Under-Secretary of State will address himself with greater urgency to this serious problem.

9 pm

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Reading the chapter on housing in the Supply Estimates would not make one realise that a formidable housing crisis exists. There is a passing reference to enabling local authorities and housing associations to provide new homes for those whose needs cannot be met in the private sector, but that is not being done. It is deliberate Government policy that local authorities should not have the financial power and resources to build new dwellings to rent.

I remind the Under-Secretary of State, as I have done previously, that the reduction in housing public expenditure since the Conservative party came to office in 1979 is more than 60 per cent. in real terms. The number of new council dwellings being constructed is the lowest ever in peace time. It has been fairly low in recent years but, this year, the number of new public sector starts will be almost certainly less than 30,000 and, quite likely, well below that figure.

This has resulted, as one would expect, in an acute shortage of local authority housing. Waiting lists have grown substantially. Hundreds of thousands of people know that they stand no chance of obtaining a mortgage, and will not benefit from any scheme which has been introduced by the Government. They cannot be rehoused by the local housing authority, in the main through no fault of the council. That, as I have stated, has been deliberate Government policy.

The Chairman of the Environment Committee referred to the needs of special groups in the community for council dwellings. I pointed out that many people – obviously those on below-average incomes, as well as many others – are not in a position to obtain a mortgage. Imagine a person with no substantial savings who earns less than the average income and is trying to buy a place in Greater London at current house prices. To some extent, that problem occurs in other parts of the country as well.

This explains why local authorities are spending £1 million a month on bed-and-breakfast accommodation. Research has shown that, for a couple with two children, the saving in providing new council accommodation rather than putting them in bed-and-breakfast accommodation would be between £7,000 and £10,000 a year. Is it not disgraceful that so many people, including couples with children, are now in bed-and-breakfast accommodation? What will the Government do about the problem? What additional assistance, if any, will they give local authorities so that it is not necessary to place families in that unsatisfactory accommodation?

The report from the Environment Committee notes concern about the state of repair of the existing housing sector. Wisely, they point out that neglected maintenance is not merely postponed but gives rise to the need for even more maintenance later on. It is a very telling point and one would hope that the Government take it on board.

The Committee cross-examined witnesses from the Department of the Environment. Some £19 billion is needed for all the necessary work to be undertaken. That figure was not disputed by the civil servants who gave evidence before the Environment Committee.

Last week, in a speech that was amazing even by the standards of this Government, the Minister for Information Technology stated that councils were demanding extra billions for repairing and modernising council housing. He complained about that. He said that the claims were exaggerated and were designed to curry favour with the unions. He condemned demands for extra spending by his ministerial colleagues as electoral bribes. In his warped view, he said that council housing breeds slums, delinquency, vandalism and waste. What a truly disgraceful and ignorant attack by a Minister of the Crown upon the millions of residents who live in council dwellings. That Minister showed himself to be utterly unfit to hold public office.

It is of some interest that so far not one of his ministerial colleagues has come to his defence, including the Prime Minister. I immediately tabled a question to the Prime Minister, as one would expect an hon. Member to do. I asked her if her hon. Friend's speech last Monday week reflected Government policy. The Prime Minister gave some sort of justification for the Government's housing policy, but she never mentioned the Minister or his speech. I do not know whether that was considered to be some repudiation of his remarks.

It is likely that the comments of that Minister reflect to an extent the prejudices and dislikes of public sector housing that some of his colleagues, including some in the Cabinet, may have. Clearly, if that is the position, those Ministers will not say anything in public. I should not be at all surprised if the general feeling in the Government is that that Minister opened his mouth too wide. It has been said that the speech was supposed to give him some prominence, that he was fed up with being obscure, that perhaps it was a bid for promotion. The next time that there is a Government reshuffle, we shall see whether his gamble has worked.

Undoubtedly, up and down the country, there are estates that the Environment Committee commented on which need to be modernised, improved and repaired as quickly as possible. I make no apology for returning to the subject of an estate in my constituency. I have mentioned it before. It causes me a great deal of anxiety, but even greater anxiety is caused to the tenants who have to live on that pre-war estate.

These houses, as I believe the Minister should know by now, were built between 1934 and 1938. They are desperately in need of modernisation. They lack modern facilities and in many cases there are no indoor toilets. The kitchens are unplastered. Hand basins have not been provided over the years. The estate is urgently in need of modernisation.

The fault certainly does not lie with the tenants. No one in his right mind would suggest that tenants are responsible for a pre-war estate getting into its present condition, where the minimum of work has been carried out over the years. Of course, the work should have been done some time ago. Walsall metropolitan borough council has been keen for the estate to be modernised, but the housing investment programme allocation in recent years has been insufficient for the work to be carried out.

Last July I took a deputation from the residents' association to see civil servants at the Department, as no Minister was willing to see us. In the following month, the

[Mr. David Winnick]

senior official at the west midlands regional level went round the estate and saw the amount of work that needs to be done. More recently, negotiations have taken place between the council and the Government's urban housing renewal unit over funds. The unit has undoubtedly been trying to pressurise the council to sell some land and properties on the Rosehill estate to the private sector. The local authority has made it clear that it is not in favour of any such sale. There have been several meetings of residents and the tenants have also made it clear that they are not in favour of any land or houses being sold to the private sector. I should point out that this has nothing to do with selling to existing tenants.

In a written answer on 9 June the Under-Secretary of State who is to reply to this debate said that although the unit encouraged local authorities to take full advantage of obtaining private sector contributions

"there are no rigid preconditions for schemes supported by the urban housing renewal unit". [*Official Report*, 9 June 1986, Vol. 99, c. 22.]

The Under-Secretary is nodding. If that is the position, the local authority should not be under such pressure to sell off the land and houses in order to obtain the extra funds that are so necessary if work is to begin at the end of the summer.

It is essential that the Rosehill estate should be modernised. Indeed, I shall continue to table questions about it, because the funds should be made available and the work should begin at least by the end of the summer.

The Government have a deplorable housing record. People are increasingly coming to understand the need for more money to be spent on housing, as well as on the Health Service and education. Last night I was upstairs watching "Panorama". In the main it interviewed Tory voters, or at least those who had voted Tory. Several of them, I believe, were members of the Conservative party. It was clear that if there is a choice next Budget time between a cut in taxation and more public expenditure, they want more public expenditure. They are absolutely right, because that makes sense.

The Health Service, education and housing are desperately in need of more funding. Those interviewed last night were mostly owner-occupiers, just like most if not all Members of Parliament. But, unlike Ministers, they understand that those who do not have the means to become owner-occupiers still have a right to proper and adequate accommodation. That accommodation is only likely to be provided by local authorities and genuine housing associations. Incidentally, we should not forget how housing associations have also had their funds undermined during the past few years.

The previous debate involved employment issues. If local authorities had the finances necessary to build and modernise houses, many of those who are unemployed would be able to earn a living. It is estimated that roughly 25 per cent. of all those involved in the construction industry are currently unemployed. Would it not be sensible for those people to earn their living and provide the dwellings that are so urgently needed? However, we do not expect any sense from this Government.

We have been told that there will be no major changes in Rent Act regulations during the lifetime of this Parliament. However, we have not been told what changes might occur if the Government are re-elected. The Minister has a duty, before the next general election, to explain to the country what will happen if the Government are re-elected. Will the present regulations be abolished? Will there be a position similar to that under the Rent Act 1957 when all newly rented accommodation on the market was decontrolled, with no security for tenants and no ceiling to rents? The country will want to know that. It is no good Ministers trying to keep it a secret. I do not believe that the Government have any chance of being re-elected, but the Opposition, at every possible opportunity, will press the Government about what changes they intend to make if they are re-elected.

I have raised matters of great importance to many people. I mentioned the speech last week by the Minister for Information Technology. It is wrong for the Government to continue on a path that means that so many people are denied adequate housing. It is right and proper that Opposition Members use every opportunity, such as that presented tonight, to explain what is happening, to put their case and to try to get Ministers to understand how important it is that people should be properly housed.

9.16 pm

Mr. Jack Straw (Blackburn): I commend the speeches of my hon. Friends the Members for Bootle (Mr. Roberts), for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) and for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick). My hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, North reminded the House of the speech last week by the Minister for Information Technology, who made offensive and insulting remarks about those living on council estates. His description of them is something unknown to us. My hon. Friends and I know a little about living on council estates, where most of us spent our childhood. The Minister's description of delinquent vandals is something that we would not expect, even from Conservative Members.

My hon. Friend also raised the question of the Government's policy towards the Rent Acts. Ministers have said that there will be no major legislation before the next election, but that is because they have electoral cold feet. We want to know what conclusions were reached in the major review of the private rented sector that was carried out within the Department of the Environment last year. When will the results be published so that the House and the public can judge whether it would be right to embark once again on a major decontrol of the private rented sector?

Taken together, the Estimates of the Department of the Environment and the PSA under classes IX, X and XX amount to £13,035 million, which on any basis is a great deal of money. The principal function of the House is to order and superintend Supply to the Crown. That difficult task is made more difficult given the magnitude of the figures with which we are dealing.

I would like to begin by commending the hon. Members for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir Hugh Rossi) and his colleagues, including my hon. Friend the Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike), my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) and my hon. Friend the Member for Bootle for their work on the Select Committee on the Environment and for the excellent and perceptive reports they have produced. The reports emphasised much of the unsung work of the Select

Committee. They are a testament to the initiative taken by the right hon. Member for Chelmsford (Mr. St. John-Stevas) in the reforms that he introduced in 1979.

In both reports, the Select Committee has secured a fine balance in the subjects upon which it focused. There is always a tendency for council committees, and perhaps also for Select Committees, to favour the small, understandable items rather than the large, more important but less comprehensible items. I am sure that we can all tell stories of the millions of pounds worth of expenditure shooting through council committees while there were major arguments over the expenditure of £100 on the mayor's chain or a gown for the mayor's attendant.

In my judgment, the Select Committee was right to focus on one or two relatively small issues as sometimes, by small example, bigger issues are raised. Although the total expenditure on dog licences is, in the vast sweep of Government public spending, a mere drop, none the less the heat that the issue can generate is disproportionate to the expenditure and it is right that we should consider it.

I can see my hon. Friend the Member for Burnley smiling. Those of us who are acquainted with north-east Lancashire have burned on our souls the fact that the Labour party in that area went down a wrong turning over the control of dogs in parks and almost came to grief. When I was a member of Islington council, I learnt an early lesson in the art of the possible. When I was chairman of the housing management and maintenance committee of that worthy council, we were urged by a group of tenants on an especially difficult block estate to enforce the conditions of tenancy which stated that there should be no dogs. We set about enforcing those conditions and we were quickly down the road that led us to conclude that the only way to enforce these rules was to evict the tenants. We finally decided that some things were impossible to implement, no matter how desirable, and we were forced to back off.

Mr. Peter Pike (Burnley): My hon. Friend referred to the experience of Burnley council and the difficulties that arose over a dog ban in an small section of the parks in the borough council. I hope that my hon. Friend will stress to the House the difficulties of this kind of issue. Will he stress that whatever is done ultimately over the future of dog licences—whether there be an increase in the fee or an abolition of it—it is most important that action is taken nationally rather than that it should be left to the local level, where the aggravation caused will be out of all proportion to the implications of the case?

Mr. Straw: I share my hon. Friend's view from the experience in Burnley and from that experience burned on my soul while I served on Islington council.

This issue arouses an enormous amount of heat. As a parent, I am deeply concerned about the state of the parks in which my children have to play. Although I am not a consensus politician, I can offer the Minister the chance of all-party agreement on the issue of the control of dogs. This is generosity indeed. This issue can only be solved if it does not become one upon which hon. Members base party political affiliation. It easily could be such a case if it is not handled properly.

Sir Hugh Rossi: Will the hon. Gentleman spell out exactly what his offer is? His comments are very intriguing. His colleague, the hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike), suggested that the issue should be dealt with not at local level but at national level—that the Government should take the stick for any unpopularity that results. I would be interested to know whether the Labour party is now suggesting that it is prepared to implement the working party report recommendations that were sent to the previous Labour Government upon which no action was taken for many years.

Mr. Straw: My offer is to sit down with the Government, if they wish to do that, to see whether there is a way in which we can reach agreement. It is extremely difficult for any Government to act because they are scared of the political repercussions. The matter should not be a subject of the party political divide.

Before I was diverted, I was saying that the Select Committee has identified some areas of relatively small expenditure which are none the less important and that it was right to focus on some areas of major expenditure, especially housing maintenance and the home loan scheme, on which many millions are spent at the moment and on which many millions more will have to be spent in the future.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bootle covered the housing issues in great detail and with great eloquence. Class X amounts to £10·125 billion, of which £9·246 billion is devoted to rate support grant for England. The legend at the top of class X, vote 6, says that the vote is a cash limit. Whatever other decisions we would make about the level of rate support grant, we shall keep it cash-limited.

The vote is cash. Unlike the discussion of funny numbers in the public expenditure White Paper, we are here discussing cash which is being paid in aggregate to local authorities. We are not discussing the much more difficult figures in the public expenditure White Paper concerning overall local authority spending—that paid for by rates and that paid for by the Government. During the past three years, we have repeatedly argued that it would be far better for the Government to focus on what they contribute to local authorities rather than to try, through the public expenditure White Paper mechanism, to control that which they cannot truly control—total local authority expenditure. We have challenged Ministers to deny that, in the context of the things that they say that they worry about, such as the money supply and the public sector borrowing requirement, local authorities' current expenditure out of the rates cannot affect the major monetary aggregates because local authorities cannot borrow long-term to finance current expenditure.

The then Secretary of State dismissed such arguments when the Rates Act 1984 was going through Parliament. I am pleased to see that some Ministers accept that there is a good deal of validity in what we have said. The previous Secretary of State—now the Secretary of State for Education and Science—is reported as having said that he accepts in broad terms the case that we are making. The *Financial Times* reported on 27 May that even Treasury Ministers now accept a case such as we have made. As this is a large sum of money, I should be interested to have the Minister's views on the relationship between the Government and local government.

Perhaps the Minister would also like to say something about class X, vote 8, on rate rebates. At the moment, people on the lowest incomes receive a 100 per cent. rebate. In the Social Security Bill, which is now in another place, the Government are trying to ensure that, regardless of a person's poverty, everybody should have to pay at least 20

[Mr. Straw]

per cent. of their rates and, in future, 20 per cent. of their poll tax. The Government were defeated last night in another place. There has been a suggestion on the tapes that the Government will overturn that decision. Also on the tapes are the sage words of an hon. Member who is on the wet wing of the Conservative party, like the Under-Secretary of State—the hon. Member for Brentford and Ongar (Mr. McCrindle). I hope that the Government will follow his wise counsel and accept the defeat in the Lords. If they do, they will be doing themselves at least an electoral favour.

I should like to raise with the Minister the comment in the report of the Select Committee of the Environment about the administrative costs of the London Docklands development corporation. This is supposed to be the jewel in the crown of the Government. It is certainly true that the LDDC can spend money as if there were no tomorrow if one judges by the quality of the paper on which its PR documents are printed. It is an intriguing comment and I should like to hear the Minister's view on it. The comment appears at paragraph 3 in the report.

I should like to turn to the Property Services Agency which is class XX, vote 18. I shall deal first with one specific item before turning to the wider issues that are raised in the report about the property repayments system, dispersal, and the issue of rentals. The specific issue is about the proposals, as part of a major reorganisation, to close the area offices of the PSA at York, Leeds and Newcastle and to concentrate the work at the Leeds regional headquarters. This has caused a great deal of worry to the PSA staff in York. The staff side has been in direct correspondence with me and so has the Labour parliamentary candidate for York, Mr. Hugh Bayley, who has pursued the matter with great vigour with my colleagues and with me.

The PSA staff side and Mr. Bayley made two comments. First, they say that the proposal would lead to the loss of 60 jobs in York and possibly up to 20 redundancies. Secondly, they say it would lead to a substantial net loss to the PSA, and that it would not save money and there would be no increase in efficiency. The loss of jobs may be small when compared to the millions of people who have lost their jobs in the last six years, but it is serious. There is no point in saying that some of the people who lose their jobs will find jobs in Leeds, because those jobs will be lost to York.

I shall be happy to give the Minister the figures that I have been given about cost savings and outgoings. The figures were drawn up by the staff side and they suggest that on capital costs there will be savings of £300,000 and an outlay of £2·27 million. Therefore, there is a much greater capital outlay than there is savings. On running costs, there will be a saving of £380,000 and an outlay of £2·4 million. I hope that the Minister will give us far more details than he has given the House up to now about the kind of savings that are likely to be achieved.

I suspect that this exercise is part of some empire-building reorganisation and not part of a sensible proposal simply to reorganise the PSA. Insult is added to injury in York because I think it is acknowledged by senior officials, including I am told Mr. Geoffrey Chipperfield, at a meeting between him and the full-time officers of the union that the York PSA office is good and cost-effective. If that is the case, why should this reorganisation go ahead?

The hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green spoke of the rental policy of Government buildings. The subject is also raised in the report. Of the total of £994 million, some £225 million of the PSA vote is spent on rates. It is the largest single item. Three issues are raised here. The first is the method of charging under the property repayment system. The idea seems to be to charge Departments for the cost of the accommodation they use. That is a sensible idea, and one which encourages financial stringency. According to paragraph 8 of the Select Committee report, the discipline is a crude one because Departments are charged a standard rate whatever the accommodation they occupy. In other words, they are charged at a notional rate.

If the discipline is to work, it is essential that a Department should be charged for the cost of the accommodation that it occupies. There is plainly a difference between the cost of accommodation in Westminster and that, for example, in my constituency. The Committee is right to say that if Departments are charged only notional rents, it becomes a vast paper exercise with no benefits.

The second issue that is touched upon by the Select Committee's report is the dispersal of Civil Service jobs from London to the north. If Departments were charged, office by office, the economic cost of the actual rent of the accommodation would give natural encouragement through the mechanism of the market, to which Conservative Members are more attached than we are, to disperse jobs and accommodation from central London.

One reason why, as far as one can judge, there will be no savings in transferring the York office to Leeds is that rent levels are roughly the same. In fact, I think that they are rather less in York than in Leeds. But there are enormous differences in the cost of accommodation in central London and the north of England, as the excellent report from Debenham Tewson and Chinnocks has made clear.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: Perhaps more relevant is the fact that there is a considerable difference between renting a high street site and one that is slightly further from the centre of a town or city. I had hoped that minds would be concentrated on relocating offices to a place to which people would find it easier to travel and where parking might be easier as well as cheaper.

Mr. Straw: That is also true. Indeed, the report makes it clear that it is a lot cheaper to site across the river in London, even given rate levels, than it is to site this side of the river.

Let me give the combined rent and rate figures so that we are dealing with the total cost of accommodation which are provided in the report. In Westminster the cost is £35·20 per sq ft and in Lambeth £21·25, compared with Manchester which is £9·85, Sheffield £9·15 and Newcastle £8·70 a sq ft. There are enormous savings to be had if it is possible to locate staff outside London.

I do not underestimate the problems of dispersal. Some jobs have to be in central London. This is the capital city and the seat of government. But there is scope to do much more and it is tragic that the dispersal policies were abandoned by the Government in 1979. I hope that we shall hear from the Minister that the Government are now seriously looking at the possibility of changing that policy.

My last point is on the distinction between renting and buying that is made in the report. The point was well made

by the Chairman of the Select Committee. I say only that millions of pounds are being wasted by the fact that the PSA and the Department are trapped by a ludicrous Treasury convention. There is no good reason whatever for preventing the PSA from buying freeholds and every reason for establishing new conventions that is all they are; there is nothing God-given about them of the kind that any other company or decent public institution would follow so that capital is accounted for in a different way. I hope that we shall hear more from the Minister now than has been hinted at in the report.

The Estimates are important. I commend the work of the Committee and I look forward to the Minister's reply.

9.38 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Sir George Young): The debate has covered a wide range of issues across my Department and the PSA. I shall try to cover most of the points that hon. Members have made, focusing particularly on the recommendations of the Select Committee's report. If I do not cover all the points, I shall write to the hon. Members concerned.

I join in the tribute paid to my hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi), the Chairman of the Select Committee. The House and the Department are lucky to have an expert Committee with a skilled Chairman. As a former senior Minister he knows what questions to ask and where some of the bodies are buried.

I shall not be sidetracked by some of the broader issues that have been raised. I do not propose to deal with the rate support grant system which was raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, West (Mr. Jones). We have had several debates on housing policy generally, in which the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) has taken part, and I shall certainly not embark on a macroeconomic speech on some of the other issues that were raised.

Mr. Winnick *rose*

Sir George Young: I must try to answer some of the questions which have been posed. If I have time towards the end, I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman.

I propose to start with housing mobility, the first issue raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green. The Committee made a number of recommendations about the national mobility scheme. The scheme is a voluntary arrangement between local authorities, and the Government have no power to compel membership or compliance. Of course, we must try to persuade authorities to honour their commitment to offer 1 per cent. of vacancies to applicants for the scheme, and eventually to increase that percentage. I have just become the chairman of the National Mobility Steering Committee and I intend to use that position to discuss the possibility of expansion with the local authority associations.

The mobility scheme is just one part of our policy towards improving housing mobility. It is useful and we will do our best to develop it. We have the right to exchange as part of our tenants charter, and we have also implemented the tenants exchange scheme.

I now turn to the issue of dog licensing. The Committee said:

"The Department is obviously having difficulty in deciding what to do."

I would not dissent from that. I shared the Committee's hope when the House debated my Department's Estimates last year that the vexed question of dog licensing might have been resolved by now. We have long acknowledged, on financial grounds alone, that the present licensing arrangements are absurd. We remain determined to change them. As the House knows, it is not an issue on which any Government finds decisions easy, and it has not yet been possible to announce our conclusions on the future of dog licensing in Great Britain. Opinions are sharply divided, and I am grateful that this year the Committee has made a firm recommendation on the course which the Government should follow. We will, of course, consider that carefully before we reach a decision. However, I must remind the House that abolition of the requirement to have a licence to keep a dog would require primary legislation, and I cannot guarantee that an early opportunity for that will be available.

Mr. Alexander *rose*

Sir George Young: I shall finish this before I give way.

I understand the impatience and frustration underlying the motion tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green to reduce the Estimates in relation to provision for the issue of dog and game licences. As I have just said, I must plead with him and the House to be patient a little longer. The policy is notfficequite ready to leave the kennel. We want to consider the Committee's recommendations, which have been with us for less than two weeks.

I must stress that our arrangements with the Post Office, which collects the licence fee on behalf of local authorities, are contractual and we cannot bring them to an end overnight before an alternative to the present licensing system is in place. As I have said, the aboliton of the licence requires legislation. I think that it would be a precipitate step for the House to reduce Supply tonight, although I appreciate my hon. Friend's wish to see the present arrangements brought to an early end.

Sir Hugh Rossi: Can my hon. Friend say how long it would take to terminate the existing contractual arrangements with the Post Office if the decision was made to do that? Can he also explain why that cannot be done, even before the Government make up their mind whether to introduce a different scheme? My Committee was primarily concerned with the waste of public money.

Sir George Young: I think that there would be a penalty if the Government broke the contract with the Post Office. I am afraid that I cannot give my hon. Friend the precise details of the contractual arrangements with the Post Office or how much notice we would have to give. However, we could not bring them to an end overnight and we would have to compensate the Post Office. I shall of course write to my hon. Friend as soon as I have that information. However, I hope that my hon. Friend will feel able to withdraw the motion on the assurance that we wish to bring the present arrangements to an early end. We hope that it will not be too long before we can make a firm announcement.

The report suggested that we should review the home loan scheme in the light of present day conditions and the needs of first-time buyers. We regularly review housing policy and the part that the home loan scheme plays. It provides the first-time buyer who has saved for two years

[Sir George Young]

with a grant of £110 and a loan of £600 free of interest and capital repayments for five years. The total figure of £710 is a considerable sum to a marginal first-time purchaser and I know that it is welcome to many people. We are committed to increasing the level of owner-occupation and the assistance to first-time buyers will be kept under review. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will shortly be making an order increasing the limits in the light of house price movements. The limits are, and have been since the scheme's inception, reviewed regularly and revised when necessary.

Mr. Winnick: The Minister mentioned various schemes for owner-occupation and he will know of our view that there is also a need for rented accommodation. Does he associate himself with the remarks about council housing made by the Minister for Information Technology?

Sir George Young: I propose to reply to the debate and the recommendations of the Select Committee.

Mr. Winnick: Come on.

Sir George Young: I read a very good article by my hon. Friend the Minister for Information Technology in *The Sunday Times* which seemed to be an excellent statement of policy.

I share the concern expressed by many hon. Members about the condition of the nation's housing stock. We must keep it in a satisfactory condition. The latest evidence from the 1985 Greater London house condition survey shows no dramatic alteration since 1979, although the number of dwellings lacking amenities fell. The 1985 inquiry into the condition of the public sector stock showed that local authorities considered that significant sums needed to be spent. We took action and increased the capital resources available by £200 million, and authorities should now be giving increased priority to the problems of their stock.

As the hon. Member for Woolwich (Mr. Cartwright) recognised, more public spending is not the only answer. He talked about partnership, and authorities should develop imaginative solutions on problem estates, involving the private sector where possible. My Department's urban housing renewal unit is making good progress, going round authorities and discussing ways of turning round rundown estates, and schemes for 24 estates have already been approved.

We are not standing still and decisions are being made, but we need a full survey to help us decide priorities. That is the point of the English house condition survey every five years. The survey starts in September and will be larger than any previous survey, involving the collection of more information. Unfortunately, it will take time to analyse the results, and I would not want to predict how long that might be. However, in response to the Select Committee's request for a further report on these matters before it considers the 1987-88 Estimates, I shall let it have a note on the progress we have made.

Finally, on the Department of the Environment's Estimates, the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) mentioned the London Docklands development corporation. The Select Committee commented on the administrative costs of the corporation and I welcome, as it did, the progress being made to reduce its costs. There was an absolute fall in its administrative budgets in 1986-87 compared with 1985-86. I know that the corporation wants to make more progress, and I intend to encourage it.

If I do not deal with all the points made about the Property Services Agency, I shall write to hon. Members. This is the third time that the Select Committee has examined the PSA Estimates and, as we might expect from its Chairman and members, it has turned in a thoroughly useful report. I particularly welcome the constructive nature of its work. An essential part of the Committee's job is to monitor the PSA's current performance. I hope that we have been able to show that, where improvements are needed, they are in hand.

Much of the report is directed at making forward-looking recommendations on the way in which the PSA expenditure should be handled and presented. Some of them are not easy to accept and implement, particularly those which come up against the normal conventions, whatever hon. Members may think about them, which involve increased public expenditure. But all the recommendations are helpful and workmanlike. We should like to move in the direction proposed by the Committee, and its ideas and support will be valuable in making progress.

The Select Committee criticised the Government for not setting up a monitoring system when PRS started in 1983 which might have identified what economies were being made. With the benefit of hindsight, I accept that criticism, although it is fair to add that at the time this measure was one of several aimed generally at promoting greater cost consciousness among Civil Service managers. We would have argued, as indeed Lord Rayner did, that it was justified on those grounds. However, the changes that will take effect on 1 April 1987, following a major review of the system, are a step forward from the original concept of PRS. This time we have thought it right to monitor the effects.

Therefore, we asked all Departments to complete a questionnaire showing the current size of their occupations of the civil estate, their expenditure on their present delegated functions, and the staff resources deployed on PRS. We shall ask the same questions in subsequent years and so compare the position before and after. We have also commissioned annual performance reports from the new formed planning and liaison system that we are setting up between the PSA and our client Departments throughout the regions. We shall be looking more selectively at the value for money being achieved in certain properties where consultants will advise us on what is being achieved under the existing rules by the PSA and what happens when clients take on the increased delegations that they will have from 1 April next year.

I do not claim that these results will show conclusively that the PRS is solely responsible for any given level of savings, because one cannot always isolate any one pressure for economy from the many other measures that we are taking to promote cost effectiveness. We should at least have a much better starting base for considering the case for any further changes in the system when it is next reviewed in 1988.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green referred to commercial accounts. We see the potential advantage of commercial accounts, but we are also aware that, as well as possibly being expensive to introduce, they might not be easy to adapt to the PSA.

Before going ahead, we want to make a thorough study of the advantages to be gained and the cost involved. That is why we are calling in consultants to make a study of the options. We expect to do this during the summer. I cannot give a date for a completion of the study because it will, to a large extent, be dependent on what the study finds. We envisage the consultancy being divided into at least two stages so that we have an opportunity to stop and think about any problems revealed in the early work. I hope to be able to show the Committee at least the first fruits of this work when it examines the PSA on our Estimates for next year.

On capital expenditure, there have been a number of comments that the convention for the public sector was different from the convention for the private sector. The study to which I have referred will necessarily have to look at different treatments of PSA capital and current expenditure and we must await that study to see what options are available.

My hon. Friends the Members for Hornsey and Wood Green and for Hertfordshire, West spoke about buying offices as opposed to leasing them. It is some time since we did a detailed study of the economics of owning freeholds as opposed to leasing, and we should be happy to look at the situation again. The Committee makes the fair point that recent movements of the property market are likely to have reduced the current advantages of purchasing options. The inherent advantages of ownership are likely to be large enough for us to continue to gain, and we shall bear in mind the Committee's recommendations.

Sir Hugh Rossi: The point is not merely the possibility of being able to buy freeholds instead of leasing, but the ability to move into the market quickly if an opportunity comes to buy a freehold at an advantageous price. That requires immediate action and great flexibility. Can that be looked at?

Sir George Young: I hope that my hon. Friend's persuasive report will be read by the Treasury which, as he will know, has overall responsibility in public expenditure for decisions such as this. I accept that there are advantages in owning one's estate rather than leasing it.

There have been errors in estimating the procedures and the performance to which my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, West referred. No Minister can be happy that any errors in estimating should occur, but, at the very least, I hope that the size of the errors and the number of cases will be reduced in later years both by the use of improved control procedures and by stricter application of these to projects. An essential part of the procedures is close monitoring of performance. I am involved in this myself because all larger schemes have to be reported to me before a contract is let, and I shall be looking carefully at all of them to see that they are being properly controlled.

As I explained to the Committee in my letter of 19 May, published in the report, we have had cause to tighten up this procedure, which I regret did not operate properly in the case of the Natural History museum scheme. I trust that, as a result, there will be no further cases of that sort. More generally, the PSA has taken on board the need to look at performance not just case by case, the basis on which financial control has previously been carried out, but right across the board. This requires a statistical approach to measuring performance and in the short term may be limited by the need to do it manually. Within the next two years or so, we hope to be able to build this analysis into the replacement computerised management information system for new works projects which is part of the PSA's information technology strategy. We shall try to meet the Committee's request to include in next year's Estimates information about the design stage to which cost figures relate.

I turn to my hon. Friend's suggestion that £20 million should be removed from our Estimates. Of course I understand the concern about the large increase in cost. I share that concern, even though, as I believe the Committee recognised in its report, that is not characteristic of the PSA programme as a whole. The way to deal with such cases is to concentrate on improving the financial control of projects. As I have just said, we hope to make progress. However, it would not strengthen our hand if we reduced the PSA's major new works provision this year by £20 million.

As the Committee knows better than any other right hon. or hon. Member, the vote for this Estimate is very tightly drawn. Already we face major difficulties on new works and other subheads in keeping expenditure within the provision. Most of the expenditure under the new works subhead is by now related to work in progress. On the office programme, out of the total provision of £46 million, about £40 million relates to contracts that we have already let; and because of the pressure on the vote, the remaining £6 million of new starts must now be at risk. Very little, therefore, of the £40 million could be saved without bringing work to a stop and incurring large penalty payments.

To save £20 million would require a ban on all starts for specialised building projects. It would involve stopping progress on two new prisons, providing 1,310 places, and it would also involve stopping work on some court schemes. In both cases, the programmes are urgent. In view of the consequences, of which I hope my hon. Friend is aware, I trust that he will not press that motion to a Division.

I have in front of me a letter to the hon. Member for Blackburn about reorganisation in the north-east region of the PSA that I shall sign the moment that I sit down. I hope that he will find that it is a helpful response to the issues that have been raised.

On PRS, we moved from 1 April 1986 to a new system that assesses the market rental value of each property, building by building. Therefore, occupying Departments will get the full benefit of reduced rental payments by moving from expensive locations to cheaper ones.

The hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) referred to a matter that he raised in an Adjournment debate about three months ago. The project has not been abandoned. We are looking for the resources with which to make progress. I acknowledge the hon. Gentleman's concern about getting this project off the ground. Conditions are not satisfactory in the DHSS office that is involved. Subject to the usual discussions on resources that take place at about this time of the year, we hope to be able to reach a decision on the matter later this year.

The Committee also drew attention to the PSA maintenance backlog. We accept that more resources will be required. We are holding discussions with the Treasury about it, but I do not have to tell the House that maintenance demands have to be balanced against other

[Sir George Young]

public expenditure requirements. That is the purpose of the public expenditure survey upon which we have just embarked.

Mr. Winnick: What about Rosehill?

Sir George Young: I am able to confirm that there is no insistence on involvement with the private sector in Rosehill. If the hon. Gentleman looks at the schemes that have been approved by the urban housing renewal unit, he will find that disposal is not a component of the majority of the schemes. However, I hope that he recognises that many Labour-controlled local authorities have entered into agreements with the private sector that involve disposal. The agreements are supported by tenants and local residents. I hope, too, that the hon. Gentleman will not adopt a dogmatic approach by denying the role that the private sector has to play in tackling the problems on estates such as Rosehill.

Vigorous action has been taken by the PSA in the past two or three years to improve performance in those areas where criticism has been voiced. I refer in particular to the steps that have been taken to stamp out fraud and corruption and to improve the management and monitoring of the maintenance operations that are carried out by the PSA's territorial organisation. As recommended by the Committee, we have substantially increased the amount of work that is delegated to occupying Departments under the PRS scheme.

The Committee's report shows that we need to improve the procedures for handling major new works, although the failures have been isolated. I assure the House that the necessary improvements will be tackled vigorously. In effecting those improvements, the PSA's chief executive will be assisted by three new outside members of the PSA's executive board who will bring to it expertise in building, property and finance. Having said that, I hope that the probation upon which my hon. Friend placed me over the £20 million will now be discharged.

9.59 pm

Sir Hugh Rossi: By leave of the House, Mr. Speaker, may I say that I accept the difficulties that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State has mentioned with respect to the £20 million. We shall investigate the PSA in depth and, therefore, keep our powder dry on that aspect.

As for dog licences, I await my hon. Friend's letter on the contractual relationship with the Post Office. Again, we shall keep our powder dry on that. Possibly, we shall return to that matter at the first opportunity. On that basis, I shall not move the motions.

Question deferred, pursuant to paragraph (2)(c) of Standing Order No. 19 (Consideration of Estimates).

It being Ten o'clock, MR. SPEAKER *proceeded to put forthwith the Questions which he was directed by Standing Order No. 19(5) (Consideration of Estimates) to put at that hour.*

ESTIMATES 1986-87

Class VIII, Vote 3

Question,

That a further sum, not exceeding £27,735,000, be granted to Her Majesty out of Consolidated Fund to defray the charges which will come in course of payment during the year ending on 31st March 1987 for expenditure by the Department of Employment on the administration of benefit services and on central and miscellaneous services.

put and agreed to.

Class IX

Question,

That a further sum, not exceeding £1,010,095,000, be granted to Her Majesty out of the Consolidated Fund to defray the charges which will come in course of payment during the year ending on 31st March 1987 for expenditure by the Department of the Environment on Housing, as set out in House of Commons Papers No. 284-IX.

put and agreed to.

Mr. Speaker *then proceeded to put forthwith the Questions necessary to dispose of the remaining Estimates appointed for consideration this day.*

Class X

Question,

That a further sum, not exceeding £5,820,177,000, be granted to Her Majesty out of the Consolidated Fund to defray the charges which will come in course of payment during the year ending on 31st March 1987 for expenditure by the Department of the Environment on Other Environmental Services, as set out in House of Commons Paper No. 284-X.

put and agreed to.

Class XX, Vote 18

Question,

That in respect of Class XX, Vote 18, for expenditure by the Property Services Agency of the Department of the Environment on acquisitions, public building work, accommodation services, administration and certain other services for civil purposes in the United Kingdom, the balance to be surrendered to the Consolidated Fund be £171,101,000.

put and agreed to.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting, the Commonwealth Development Corporation Bill *[Lords]* and the Land Registration Bill *[Lords]* may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.—*[Mr. Malone.]*

Commonwealth Development Corporation Bill *[Lords]*

As amended (in the Standing Committee), considered.

New Clause 1

TAX EXEMPTION

"The Commonwealth Development Corporation shall be exempt from all taxes and imports imposed on bodies corporate in the United Kingdom."—*[Mr. Bowen Wells.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

10.2 pm

Mr. Bowen Wells (Hertford and Stortford): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

This recommendation was made to the Government in 1982 by the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs in the report on the Commonwealth Development Corporation. I should like to run through briefly the reasons why the Select Committee considered why this would be an advantageous position for the CDC.

The British Government taxes the CDC's profits in this country, and the host country in which the investment is made also taxes the CDC's operations, project by project or, alternatively, as a corporation as a whole within the country in which the investment is made. This means that there is a leaching of money, first to the host country. We might say that this is a sensible and proper arrangement whereby the Government, by facilitating the CDC's investment in that country, gain tax that they can use for social and political purposes, as they so decide. At the same time, it reduces the amount of money available to the CDC, and therefore to the country in which that investment is made, which can then be re-invested in profitable enterprises in that country and in other developing countries. When that money is repatriated to this country, it is again subject to British taxation.

Let me point out the extent to which the Commonwealth Development Corporation — a concessionary-funded organisation—is beginning to pay tax in this country. According to its annual report, in 1981 it had to pay £7·1 million in taxation; in 1982, £7·1 million; in 1983, £400,000, in 1984, £7·4 million; and in 1985, £3·8 million. That is money clawed back through taxation into the Government's hands, thereby reducing the amount available to the corporation to put into its reserves and re-invest in developments in the countries which the Treasury had agreed, when it made the investment in the corporation, should benefit from that investment.

In other words, there is the usual crazy position where, on the one hand, the Treasury gives money to the Commonwealth Development Corporation to invest in profitable enterprises overseas and, on the other, takes money from it in the form of taxation. The Treasury grabs back the money into its own hands for universal British public use. It is absurd that the Treasury should do that. The money should be left in the corporation and should not be taxed. The Treasury should allow the corporation to turn over the money for development purposes.

Let us consider the overall position of the Commonwealth Development Corporation regarding Government finances. Even if hon. Members do not take into account the taxation figures I have just cited, they will find that, in 1981, the Government gave the corporation £16·1 million, less principal and interest paid to the Government. In 1982, the amount was £5·1 million. In 1983, it was £10·9 million; in 1984, £36·7 million and, in 1985, £13·3 million. For that, the Commonwealth Development Corporation invested an enormous amount of money. Without boring the House with the figures, I shall just say that in 1985 alone, the figure was £106·4 million. Therefore, for an investment of £13·3 million in 1985, less the taxation paid to the Government of £3·8 million, the corporation invested an amount of £106·4 million in new projects overseas. The amount was £106·4 million in the year and £907·7 million total investment and committed at the year end. On a leverage of about £9 million, the corporation invested £106·4 million. That was a good record for the Government. It could have been increased by £3·8 million if the Government had not taken the taxation from the corporation.

Obviously, a host Government will not permit the Commonwealth Development Corporation to be tax-exempt in its own country, if the effect of being tax-exempt in its own country adds to the tax take of the British Government. Clearly, the host country will seek to take the money from the corporation in the form of taxation so that less is given to the Treasury in this country. That seems to be a crazy position. It does not apply to the World Bank. I believe that the Commonwealth Development Corporation's investments overseas are equally as good and are of the same category as those of the World Bank.

The World Bank enjoys total tax exemption in the host country and in the United States where the headquarters of the Bank are situated. In that way, the World Bank is able to regenerate money and make more money available for development overseas.

The taxation system of the Commonwealth Development Corporation is one of the crazier — it is not the craziest — financial operations of the Treasury and the Overseas Development Administration. I urge that we make sense of the position. We should exempt the Commonwealth Development Corporation from taxation in this country on a reciprocal basis only. That is all that I put forward. If we exempt the Corporation from tax in this country, the host country in which the CBC is operating should also exempt the Corporation from tax in that country.

I have no doubt that the Minister has been briefed by the Treasury to respond to the new clause. The observations of the Government on the work of the Commonwealth Development Corporation were made in April 1983, in paragraph 16 of Cmnd. 8857, where it comments on the Select Committee's recommendation that the corporation should be tax-exempt in this country. Let us read this little bit of bureaucratic gobbledegook:

"The 1978 Act, which consolidated previous legislation relating to CDC, expressly provides that it is not exempt from tax liability"—

as if that was a justification in itself.

"There are other state corporations and state-owned companies and private sector bodies whose overseas activities parallel CDC's in many respects."

Now we see the bureaucrat and the administrator at work. We cannot exempt the CDC for fear of the implications for other state corporations. There is no other state corporation that is in any way the same as the CDC. It is an absurd argument. No other corporation is charged with investing overseas, to stimulate private investment in

[Mr. Bowen Wells]

viable and profitable projects overseas. Therefore, that statement is absurd. I should be grateful if those who were responsible for that sentence could at least realise that hon. Members are not quite so foolish as they take us for.

Paragraph 16 continues:

"Exemption would require complex legislation"

There is a threat to this House.

"and would be technically and practically difficult to administer."

They are dealing with one corporation, and they cannot administer that. Is that not an extraordinary recognition of failure and inability on the part of the tax authorities?

Even my own tax returns, which are not uncomplicated are much simpler than exempting the CDC from tax in this country, but, that is the sort of gobbledegook we are given in the House, and we are expected to take it. I say "expected to take it", but there has been no response from the Overseas Development Administration. So far as I know, the Treasury may have been saying something, but of course the House is not privy to those discussions.

No doubt, if I raised the matter in a late, late-night debate, or early in the morning, there would be a peremptory reply from an overtired Minister, who would say that this is our reply and just accept it. But I do not believe that we should just accept it. The paragraph continues:

"The Inland Revenue keeps CDC's interests in mind when negotiating double taxation agreements. These agreements would become more difficult to secure if separate arrangements were made for individual bodies. The Government does not therefore accept that giving special exemption from UK corporation tax would, in a broader view, be to the UK's advantage."

That sort of weak excuse is not acceptable to the House or to the country. If we gave the money and Parliament voted the money to be invested by CDC overseas in profitable investments which then returned to the corporation dividends and any profit, and the capital was repaid to the Government—I have shown that in the figures — surely it would be a sensible and simple measure for the Treasury to accept the new clause CDC would then be exempt from tax in this country, and would be directed by the Minister to make certain that in investment agreements with the host countries tax exemption would be negotiated on a reciprocal basis, on the basis of the permission given by the Treasury to do so, if it also waived its concern. In that way we would make available, as does the whole Bill, additional non interest-bearing resources to CDC for work for which Parliament and the Treasury decided the money should be given.

10.15 pm

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): Like the Standing Committee, the House has reason to be grateful to the hon. Member for Hertford and Stortford (Mr. Wells) for enabling us to discuss a measure that invites us to consider the role of the CDC itself. In that spirit, I shall ask the Minister some questions in the hope that they will clarify a few of the issues that stem from the new clause.

The hon. Member for Hertford and Stortford referred to the World Bank. I had not envisaged that the CDC and the World Bank fulfilled precisely the same function, and it would be interesting to know whether the Minister shares my view.

In what measure does the CDC spend public as well as private money? To what extent is the money that the CDC invests in various projects designed to secure a return on capital, and to what extent is it in a sense competing at more reasonable rates with private capital? I am really asking what sort of animal we are talking about. Is the modern CDC a hybrid that is designed to implement Government aid and development policy without there being any financial return for the United Kingdom? Alternatively, are we talking about a corporation that has an increasingly mixed portfolio, containing both aid projects that are comparable with those in the private sector with which it may be competing?

We need to know how the Minister perceives the CDC's status and function before we can consider the proposals put forward by the hon. Member for Hertford and Stortford, and it would be helpful if the Minister could answer some of those points.

The Minister for Overseas Development (Mr. Timothy Raison): The hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) seemed to use the new clause as a vehicle for raising the whole question of the function and scope of the CDC. I should have thought that that was stretching the wording of the new clause a bit far.

However, the Bill does not envisage a dramatic change in the CDC's role. Its functions and objectives are pretty well known throughout the world. The Bill is useful in that it strengthens the CDC's ability to carry out those functions, but it does not represent a major change. The CDC bears some comparison with the World Bank. After all, they are both important development organisations in their different ways. One of the characteristics of the CDC is that it operates in the developing world. But it does not operate as an aid agency pure and simple in terms of giving away money in support of good projects. It is proud of its tradition of getting a good return on investment. In other words, it is looking for financially viable projects. We do not think that that will change.

I was asked whether the CDC was spending public as well as private money. It is, of course, spending public money. It does not spend private money—that is not its job. Nevertheless, it helps the private sector. An important part of its activities involves helping the private sector by operating in parallel with, or in support of, private sector schemes. It works in partnership with the private sector. Thus, this animal will not change dramatically as a result of the Bill.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hertford and Stortford (Mr. Wells) spoke about his new clause with his customary eloquence, bringing to bear his great depth of knowledge of the CDC, which he has known for a number of years. I am always happy to listen carefully to what he says. I realise that he has a point, that he has fairly made, which is that if the CDC did not have to pay tax, it would have more money to spend on its admirable activities. That is incontrovertible, and I cannot deny it for one minute. On the other hand, in a moment I will come to the reasons why we do not think it wise for the House to adopt the new clause.

There is one point on which my hon. Friend left me a little puzzled. He said that the new clause envisaged reciprocity, that is, that this tax exemption would apply only when the countries where the CDC was operating also applied a tax exemption. I cannot see anything in the new clause that indicates that this reciprocity would be

there — it is certainly not stated explicitly. I do not understand how he thinks, if the new clause were accepted, his idea of reciprocity would be accepted.

Mr. Bowen Wells: My right hon. Friend is correct to be puzzled. When Back Benchers introduce new clauses I believe that they are at a severe disadvantage. My right hon. Friend will recall that he immediately criticises for technical deficiencies, advised by the well-briefed people in his Department, almost any new clause that is tabled. Certainly that is my experience from the Finance Bill. I therefore kept the clause as simple as possible.

I believe that my right hon. Friend and the CDC are perfectly capable of negotiating agreements with host countries administratively, saying, "Look, we are tax-exempt in Britain and we therefore expect you to give us tax exemption as the host country." It has to be an example set by Britain. We first have to take the action to exempt the corporation from the tax, and we then argue with the host countries whether they should do likewise.

Mr. Raison: My hon. Friend has given an explanation. On this occasion, it is not my advisers who have led me to believe that there is an oddity about the clause in relation to the way that he described it; it is all my own work. I am not sure that my concern is completely allayed by my hon. Friend. As I have always said, I do not believe in drawing on pure technicalities to overthrow amendments by hon. Members on either side of the House who have a real point to make. However, it seems to me, although I understand my hon. Friend's explanation, that this does not give the reciprocity to which he is attached.

Nevertheless, it is for other reasons, which my hon. Friend no doubt will regard as excessively bureaucratic, Treasury-minded and all sorts of other awful things, that I do not feel able to accept the new clause. It is not just that the tax treatment of the Commonwealth Development Corporation by the Government is in accordance with the policy of all previous Governments as far as I know—I would not rest the argument on that — but I think one is entitled to say that there is a valid distinction to be made between bodies such as Government Departments, which in a sense relate to the Crown and are immune from taxation, and other bodies that are subject to taxation.

The most obvious example that I would give of other corporate bodies subject to taxation is the nationalised industries, but there are others. These corporate bodies are treated for tax in the same way as companies in the private sector. They have an independent corporate existence, they are not mere creatures of the Government and I believe that the corporation would recognise this. In many cases, these corporations are in competition with the private sector. This may not be particularly true of CDC, but it is certainly true of other such corporate bodies. I think that my hon. Friend would be among the first to protest if public corporations automatically got some kind of privileged treatment in comparison with private companies.

Within this class of corporate bodies, there are many, such as the CDC, in receipt of concessionary funds or even subsidies from the Government. Many are in competition with private sector companies, and others such as the CDC operate overseas. I am sure that a number of those bodies would claim that they had distinctive merits and financial methods. Again, like our predecessors, we feel that it is more just as a general concept to subject all those corporations and companies to the same taxation. If we were to exempt the CDC from that normal practice, inescapably we would have endless claims from other bodies demanding the same privileged treatment.

An important point is that it would be very odd to tackle such taxation within the purview of this narrow Bill about the CDC. It has implications for other corporations, and the House would find it a rather peculiar way of going about its business to legislate under the auspices of this Bill.

I have acknowledged that if the CDC did not have to pay tax it would have a little more money to spend on its excellent work. However, the tax is not really a major burden. My hon. Friend gave a figure for taxation for 1985 that I do not recognise as valid. I think that the figure is £1·8 million as opposed to the £3·4 million that he suggested —

Mr. Bowen Wells: It is in the annual report.

Mr. Raison: I made the figure £1·8 million or £1·9 million for 1985. I stand to be corrected, but I was looking into the matter a few moments ago and I believe the figure to be £1·8 million. Against that, during the financial year 1985-86 the CDC received £41 million in concessionary loans from the aid programme, which is obviously a much more substantial sum. Therefore, the taxation does not really impose an onerous burden. In the discussions about the Bill, the CDC did not say to me that it wished the Bill to be used as a vehicle to remove the burden of taxation. I have not been pressured on that point.

If the House thinks for a moment or two about the sheer common sense of the matter, it will appreciate the force of the argument that this Bill is not really the way to tackle the taxation of such corporate bodies. I therefore ask the House to reject the new clause.

Mr. Bowen Wells: I thank my right hon. Friend for explaining why he will not accept the new clause, and I understand his reasons. He has to deal with the Treasury on this issue and, as he said, the Treasury is obviously frightened that there would be implications for other corporations. I am glad that we have had this opportunity to emphasise that, as parliamentarians, we do not agree with the Treasury making absurd and unnecessary complications in what is essentially a simple issue. I do not think that my right hon. Friend believes that it should do that, but he cannot say that and I understand why.

My right hon. Friend suggested that he wanted to treat the CDC as a nationalised industry. Are the ODA and the Treasury consistent in treating it as a nationalised industry in terms of investigation, monitoring and interest and capital repayments? In fact, their treatment is wholly inconsistent. If my right hon. Friend agrees that the CDC should be treated as a nationalised industry throughout the Civil Service, the CDC and the QDA budgets would benefit enormously. I shall not dwell on that point because it is one on which I have not been fully briefed. However, if my right hon. Friend investigates the matter, he will find that there are serious inconsistencies in the way in which the Treasurey treats the CDC.

My right hon. Friend argued that he did not want to include taxation in the purview of the Bill.

10.30 pm

The Select Committee made recommendations about the CDC in 1982, yet the House has not debated the

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corporation in the intervening period. Indeed, although it has been usual for the chairman of the CDC to have a motion proposed in the other place so that Parliament could discuss the CDC budget and the return on its money, that has not happened for a considerable time. Nor has a relevant Bill been promoted by the ODA or the Minister.

Back Benchers do not have the opportunity to influence Government policy decisions other than by trying to tack provisions on to Government measures. In Congress, such tacking on takes place all the time. In this country many measures would be improved if, when introduced, all manner of provisions could be tacked on to them. In a way, that is happening with this Bill in that it provides additional resources to the CDC, and I congratulate the Government on taking that step.

Mr. Tom Clarke: I found it necessary to ask the questions that I put earlier precisely because we have not had a debate of the type to which the hon. Gentleman refers. I was anxious to discuss the new clause in the context of the Government's thinking about the CDC. My impression so far in the debate is that the Government view the CDC as being between the World Bank and a nationalised industry.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. I have permitted a wide debate to take place, but I remind hon. Members that we are discussing a new clause which deals with taxes and imposts. We cannot debate the whole of the CDC in discussing the new clause.

Mr. Wells: I accept the wisdom of your ruling, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I hope that the hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) will take part in the Third Reading debate, which I confidently expect will succeed the Committee and report stages of the Bill this evening.

I hope that I am in order in referring to the World Bank, because the new clause relates to taxation treatment and the treatment of the CDC for tax purposes is different from that applied to the World Bank, although the only distinction is that the CDC undertakes the direct management of projects whereas the World Bank does not. In every other way, the CDC's operations are parallel to those of the World Bank. It is a smaller organisation which does its investment bilaterally—and, in my view, more sensitively and more effectively—but it is very similar to the World Bank.

That is why it should receive the same taxation treatment, both in respect of the host country in which the investment is made, and in this country, from which the original investment comes. To do other than that is ridiculous. The general public would agree if they were told, "Here is the Treasury giving money for development overseas, yet when the money returns it is taxed."

The Minister has explained his position and we, as parliamentarians, have explained why we do not accept the bureaucratic arguments he has been forced to adduce. We have brought the issue to the top of the filing tray, where I hope it will stay. I am confident—because of the existence of this measure—that the civil servants will think again, and I hope that before long the Minister will introduce a Bill to implement what we have suggested tonight. For the time being, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the motion.

Motion and clause, by leave withdrawn.

Clause 1

AMENDMENTS OF COMMONWEALTH DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION ACT 1978

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I now call the hon. Member for Hertford and Stortford (Mr. Wells) to move amendment No. 1.

Mr. Bowen Wells: I need not delay the House for long in dealing with this sensible new clause, the arguments for which, relating to immigration, were rehearsed in the report of the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs in 1982. One of the problems in the present Bill

Mr. Raison: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I believe that my hon. Friend is under a misapprehension. I understand that you have not selected new clause 2 which deals with immigration.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: We are dealing with amendment No. 1.

Mr. Wells: On a point of order Sir Paul. I thought that I had tabled new clause 2.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. New clause 2 has not been selected. I have called amendment No. 1 and the hon. Gentleman must speak to that amendment.

Mr. Wells: Further to my point of order, can I have an explanation of this, if not now, at some other time?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Gentleman knows that it is not usual for the Chair to give explanations about selections. If the hon. Gentleman is puzzled and would like to have a private word with me at some other time, I will try to enlighten him. We are now dealing with amendment 1.

Mr. Wells: I would be grateful for such a discussion.

I now beg to move amendment No. 1, in page 2, line 18, after 'may,', insert

'after consultation with the Corporation and'.

This was the subject of discussions between my right hon. Friend the Minister and members of the Committee. It involves whether we should allow the Minister the power to give grants to the CDC. The CDC has never been eligible to receive grants from the ODA. It has been financed through loans. Many people have criticised that as inappropriate, as the corporation is risk-taking and should therefore be financed by equity capital and not loan capital. It has battled for many years against that disability. It has now generated its own funds, which enable it, in effect, to have equity capital, although the Government did not give it such equity capital.

An equity and loan arrangement for the corporation would be the correct way in which to tackle the issue. I made that point in Committee. That would, of course, mean a reorganisation of the corporation's finances and balance sheets, but I do not see why my right hon. Friend the Minister should not have thought that that was a sensible way in which to solve the problem in the Bill. None the less the Minister has not done that.

The Minister has taken the power to give grants. That could fundamentally alter the relationship between the ODA and the CDC. I would like my right hon. Friend to explain what he has in mind to do with the grants that he is asking the House to give him the power to bestow. I believe that that power could do what my right hon.

Friend does not really want to do. It could ruin the CDC in its present form and reduce it to a profitless and relatively useless organisation, in the day-to-day control of the ODA officials.

I accept that the purpose of the powers could be to increase the resources of the corporation. I would say "Hoorah" to that. However, why do we want to give grants rather than loans? My right hon. Friend said in Committee that he wanted to reduce the amount of money paid out of the ODA budget to the CDC by giving it grants. Grants are manifestly more valuable than loans. How much more valuable is a question of judgment and of arithmetic to which we will not be privy. Grants could be used to affect the CDC's core funding. That would affect the independence of the CDC board.

My right hon. Friend and I know that, if the ODA gives grants, the ODA will therefore have to require the CDC to apply for grant money. If it is granted, the ODA must issue the grant on the basis of a prospectus or proposal put up by the CDC. It will then be incumbent on the ODA to ensure that the grant money is used for the purpose for which it was granted.

The Foreign Affairs Select Committee will ask my right hon. Friend what he has done with the grant money that he has given to the CDC. The relationship between the ODA and the CDC, which is an arm's length relationship at the moment, will be destroyed. The CDC board's independence will be diminished and the ODA will take over. My right hon. Friend and the ODA have given me every assurance that that is not their intention. I believe that to be true, but the possibility of what I have described exists. That fear is certainly shared by the management and board of the CDC.

The arrangement will affect the discipline that the board can exert over its management in the field. Because the management does not have to repay the capital and the interest, the management will be able to make loans and investments which are below the standards that the CDC now expects. That could lead to the CDC being unable to repay its capital and interest and unable to invest in successful projects overseas. The management of the companies established by the CDC will have a diminished discipline to make a proper return on capital. The arguments with the host Government to ensure the profitability of a company will be weakened, and the necessity to remit funds from the host country to Britain will also be diminished.

There are some positive aspects to making grants, which we all accept. My right hon. Friend can give the CDC grant money in support of projects in which it has invested, such as roads, education, health and housing to meet costs which, in a developed country, a normal project does not have to bear. It means that my right hon. Friend can give technical co-operation assistance to CDC projects. Trained personnel can therefore assist projects by training management in technical resources and undertake investment in agricultural training centres in Swaziland, for example, in research. I applaud all of that, but I should like my right hon. Friend to spell out how he intends to use the proposed power.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): The hon. Member for Hertford and Stortford (Mr. Wells) has distinguished himself by speaking more often and at greater length on this Bill than the two Opposition parties added together. I do not intend to imperil his record by speaking at great length. I listened to his argument at several stages of the Bill. I was not a member of the Committee and, although I read the report of the Committee proceedings and noted his comments, I am still not convinced. The picture that the hon. Gentleman conjures up is one of the Overseas Development Administration smothering the CDC with grants to such an extent that the officials of the CDC look up with horror at the sight of yet another gift-bearing emissary from the ODA coming to the door with more grants and more control. In my wildest dreams I cannot conceive of this situation coming about.

10.45 pm

The hon. Gentleman may be right in his analysis of what might happen if anyone were to undertake such a smothering exercise, because he well knows the workings of the CDC. No one in the House knows them better than he does, and no one in the House would dare to argue in such detail about them. I cannot envisage a situation in which the ODA would be in a position to make such extensive dispersals as would pose a threat to the CDC, nor can I imagine that the CDC would be forced to accept such largesse if it was genuinely worried that its independence was being threatened. I agree with the hon. Gentleman that a situation may arise in which it is pressured to accept a grant instead of a loan for a specific project. But if the situation was as difficult as he described, it would be open to the CDC to resist the blandishments.

Mr. Bowen Wells: Without the amendment that I have suggested, the CDC will have no option. If the amendment is accepted, the Minister at the time will have to consult the CDC. I should be grateful if the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) could agree to the amendment. It would have a humble and limited effect: the Minister would have to consult the CDC before he gave it a grant.

Mr. Beith: The Minister may well find something wrong with it, although I cannot imagine that the ODA would give a grant to anybody without first consulting him about it. I would be the first to suspect Government Departments of not consulting. I have frequently criticised them for failing to consult people. But the one Department which usually consults is the one which is proposing to give money to somebody. Not only does it consult, but it inquires in the various ways that the hon. Gentleman has mentioned.

The hon. Gentleman may have a point, but he has not convinced me. Even if my wildest dreams are realised and an alliance Administration has stepped up the annual rate of overseas aid to meet within five years the United Nations target and disbursements are being made thick and fast in pursuit of this policy, he has not convinced me that one of the consequences would be that the independence of the CDC would be greatly jeopardised because of the number of grants being made to it in preference to loans. Not even my imaginings about Ministers who may succeed the present Minister lead me to share the fears expressed by the hon. Member for Hertford and Stortford. I would, of course, wish the Minister to consult with the CDC before making grants, and I should be very surprised if he did not do so.

Mr. Jim Lester (Broxtowe): I support the amendment. We all recognise the value of the CDC and the

[Mr. Jim Lester]

contribution that it makes. If there is any suspicion that by changing the formula its independence will be threatened or that it will feel in any way less able to operate in the same way as it has operated in the past — an operation which has been widely acclaimed and supported by every investigation of the House into its affairs — then the acceptance of a minimal amendment which relieves that suspicion is well worthwhile.

I do not necessarily share the analysis of the situation by my hon. Friend the Member for Hertford and Stortford (Mr. Wells), but if the amendment is accepted it will reinforce the independence of the CDC and ensure its ability to make that contribution to development that we would all applaud and support.

Mr. Raison: It has been useful to have this short debate, and it was right that my hon. Friend the Member for Hertford and Stortford (Mr. Wells) should have put forward the amendment. We discussed this matter at fairly considerable length in Committee, and I do not think that I shall be expected to explain why we are introducing this grant provision element in the Bill. However, my hon. Friend asked one or two specific questions about that aspect and I shall briefly respond to him.

As I said in Committee, the introduction of the grant scheme can give useful support to the CDC — that is what the whole thing is about. It provides a flexibility in ways of financing the CDC as well as the opportunity to provide the parallel or supporting operations to which my hon. Friend has referred and which he favours.

We certainly do not see in the Bill a drastic change in the Government's attitude towards the CDC. We have had a long and friendly association with the CDC in our joint business of assisting and investing in developing countries. We fully recognise that the CDC must fund and invest in projects that show a good financial return and are economically sound. We have no desire to relax the financial discipline which has been one of the good features of the CDC's management. I certainly am not trying to take away from it its reputation as an aid agency of a kind which nevertheless manages to operate against strict commercial standards. That has been its proud boast, and I hope that it will continue to be its proud boast. I have no desire that things should be otherwise.

Nor do we in the ODA desire to engage in day-to-day interference in the management of the CDC. We have confidence in the management, and it is not the job of the ODA to run the organisation. It is the job of the CDC's board to run its organisation in accordance with sound investment principles, but again operating within the developing world.

Of course, in the last resort, we have responsibility for the CDC and that has always been accepted. It remains a statutory body financed by concessional funds from the aid programme, but we do not want a day-to-day interference in its management. I am grateful to the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) for recognising that it is not our desire to do any of those things.

However, I recognise that it is important that if we implement this grant-giving power we should do so in conjunction with the board of the CDC. I made it clear in Committee that that was our intention, but my hon. Friend the member for Hertford and Stortford has put forward an amendment which would write that into the statute. I am happy to accept my hon. Friend's amendment, and I hope that the House will agree to it.

Amendment agreed to.

Motion made, and Question proposed, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

10.52 pm

Mr. Tom Clarke: The Bill is essentially a short technical measure. Despite some of the reservations which the Opposition have about what appears to be the Government's extension of some of their monetarist philosophies into the field of development — a view most eloquently expressed by my hon. Friend the Member for Vauxhall (Mr. Holland) — several times in Committee, the Minister will be pleased to hear that there will be no attempt on our part to obstruct the Bill's passage through the House.

In Committee the Minister attempted to outline the main issues in the Bill as he sees them, and I am sure that he will do so again this evening. Four main points arise from the Bill. First, the CDC will now be able to borrow on the financial markets. Secondly, it can do so in more than one overseas country. Thirdly, the Government can guarantee borrowing, and, fourthly, the Government, as we have heard, can make grants. I hope that that is a fair summary of the main points of the Bill, but I am sure that the Minister will point out any omissions from that fairly quick summary.

The Bill naturally reflects the substantial and worthwhile development of the work of the CDC. It recognises that in trade and technical assistance underdeveloped countries are increasingly able to help one another and are not solely dependent for aid and technical assistance on the developed world. While we accept our own responsibilities in these matters, we welcome this recognition of co-operation and co-ordination of effort among Third-world countries.

In another place Baroness Young gave us an example of the kind of project which the Bill would seek to facilitate. She mentioned that the CDC has provided funds for Shelter Afrique, a Kenyan-based organisation which, in turn, supplies finance for housing activities in a number of countries in the continent of Africa. Because of present legislation, the CDC has to confine the use of finance to Kenya itself. When the Bill is enacted, the CDC could, as I understand it, if it wishes, provide finance for Shelter Afrique to support housing developments in other countries. That is an example of how the CDC would be allowed to extend its activities.

In our discussions this evening reference has been made to the World bank. It is not my intention to delay the House in its consideration of the Bill. However, some of the World bank's attitudes—I know that this is a matter for a more comprehensive debate — especially about conditionality, do not lend themselves to the philosophy which we would expect the CDC to adopt. Therefore, although I am convinced, as the Minister has said, that there are some similarities, I hope that in time we will see that there are considerable differences in approach as they affect individual countries.

One of the saddest commentaries of our times was contained in Baroness Young's view that some of those projects would not easily attract private sector finance from those who are looking for a quick profit. That may have influenced the Government and the Minister to take

the view that they have and that is enshrined in the Bill on the question of grants. Certainly it was a major matter in Committee. The hon. Member for Hertford and Stortford (Mr. Wells) expressed a strong view, tonight, as the House would have expected. He took the view that these grants should not be used as a device to reduce loans. I think that it is fair for me to point out that my hon. Friend the Member for Vauxhall also saw many aspects of the Bill as a Government attempt to reduce the public sector borrowing requirement. He said that he would be watching that very closely.

I have to repeat the question put by my hon. Friend the Member for Vauxhall in Committee:

"Will the Minister give an assurance . . . that the CDC will never get a grant from his Department or from the Exchequer simply to subsidise the higher interest rates that would have to be paid on these Euromarket loans?" — [*Official Report, Second Reading Committee*, 26 February 1986; c. 7.]

He used the word "Euromarket" in the general sense of global financial market loans. As I have said, we shall be watching that aspect of the legislation very closely.

I come briefly to the work of the CDC in the context of the Bill. The Bill gives us the opportunity as it did the Committee, to talk about the efforts of the CDC and, in so doing, to acknowledge the splendid work which that organisation has done and will no doubt continue to do. It is an organisation which is widely respected, not only in the House but throughout the United Kingdom and, I think it is fair to say, in the Commonwealth itself. I had the opportunity, with some of my hon. Friends, to visit at least one of its projects in Papua New Guinea and again in Swaziland. I think that the CDC deserves the greatest possible praise for its efforts in bringing investment, employment and prosperity to those parts of the world, and long may those efforts continue. That is what we seek to encourage. However, we are also bearing in mind the need for greater emphasis on agriculture and rural development, and the involvement of grass roots organisations which articulate and serve the needs of local people. That is also extremely important.

Those views were reflected in the last annual report of the Commonwealth Development Corporation, in the remarks of the chairman and in the management report. In view of our concern about Africa, I wish to refer briefly to the chairman's remarks whih give a good indication of the Bill's objectives, especially for the poorest parts of the Commonwealth and the world. The chairman said:

"Africa has perhaps suffered more than any other area from the combination of falling commodity prices, over-ambitious domestic investment policies and debt burdens made more weighty by the long period of high interest rates."

Unfortunately, when we compare this year's annual report with that for last year we see that there are still aspects of crisis for the Third world. We see the contrast between 1984 and 1985. Drought has been alleviated a little, but the world debt problem is as great as ever. I know that the Minister would want the Bill to be effective in trying to deal with the many problems that arise from the debt crisis which the world faces. Certainly it would be nice to see the whole British aid programme expanding at the same rate as the CDC programme, and to see the same priority and emphasis being given to these issues.

We must consider the CDC and the Bill in the context of current and, perhaps, even future debt problems. The CDC's sense of urgency regarding debt is correct, reflecting the critical nature of the issues facing developing countries, especially those in Africa. One of the aspects of the Bill and of our discussions both in Committee and in the House which delights me is that we have started again to use the word "Commonwealth" with some pride. Some of us were disappointed during our debate on South Africa when the Commonwealth seemed to be frowned on by a minority of Conservative Members. It is important that the Commonwealth should be seen as playing an important part in offering a solution to development problems, while at the same time the work of the CDC expands successfully into non-Commonwealth areas.

The Minister would be somewhat astonished if I did not at some stage refer, albeit briefly, to the problems of the Mindanao project in the Philippines. My views are on record in Committee, and I do not withdraw anything I said there. However, I am sure that all hon. Members will agree that it is most important that all hon. Members, including, I hope, the Minister, who seems to find reasons for disagreeing when most hon. Members appear to be uttering the obvious, learn the lessons from that experience. If we have, in the spirit of constructive criticism which I have endeavoured to offer both this evening and in Committee, surely we can look to the future with confidence.

The guidelines given to the corporation some years ago called for emphasis on helping poor countries — presumably that is what the Minister envisages in this legislation — with particular priority for investment in the projects concerned with the renewal of natural resources. Therefore, it was a little disappointing to find that disbursements in 1985 totalled £82·2 million, sharply down from the 1984 figure of over £109 million, of which only 62 per cent., as against 82 per cent., went to poorer countries.

Bearing in mind the future work of the CDC, I ask the Minister three brief questions. First, on the status of the CDC, does he see it as a disburser of British aid and essentially humanitarian, or as a private development corporation? Secondly, will he encourage it to try to resolve whether it is working on behalf of communities, or necessarily with Governments and was not this one of the issues posed by the Mindanao project? Thirdly, is there not a case for the CDC to renew its models of agricultural development, which might have been progressive in the 1960s, but are open to criticism today?

The potential contribution of CDC to enabling people throughout the world to lead decent lives without fear of hunger or poverty, and participating in the development of their communities, is immense. Both the CDC and the House recognise the needs of Africa for long-term solutions even more than immediate injections of relief. It was George Orwell who said some time ago that we might expect to live in a world where one half of the universe saw the other half on television suffering or dying from starvation. The stark reality of that prediction is that it was an understatement. One third of the world is watching two thirds of humanity on the verge of starvation or worse.

When the late John Strachey signalled the introduction of the legislation that led to the CDC being set up, he said:

"We believe that this new departure — and it is a new departure — is essential because the world would not tolerate much longer the leaving fallow of undeveloped areas".—

[*Official Report*, 6 November 1947; Vol. 443, c. 2018.]

[Mr. Tom Clarke]

That is true, and our great regret is that 40 years later, we have still not come near to realising the objective that he set or the achievements that he and the House would have liked.

I give a broad, if cautious, welcome to the Bill. We are grateful for the vision that those responsible for the CDC have provided in the past for future generations. In that spirit, the Labour party will not impede the Bill. However, we shall monitor its progress, when enacted, with the greatest possible care.

11.7 pm

Mr. Bowen Wells: I shall not detain the House for long. It has already been indulgent of my interests in this subject. However, I make it clear that I welcome the Bill wholeheartedly. It is a response to an Adjournment debate that took place in 1982, with my hon. Friend the then Financial Secretary to the Treasury, at about 6 am, during the proceedings on the Consolidated Fund Bill. The argument put by him was that the CDC was subject to the PSBR requirements that had been firmly established, and were administered, by the Treasury, and that even if the CDC were to borrow overseas, invest that money overseas, and receive repayment overseas, that was a borrowing that had to count as part of the PSBR.

That manifest absurdity is being put right in the Bill enabling the CDC to borrow and lend overseas, and ensuing that that does not have an impact on the PSBR. This is an ingenious way to have managed to do this. I am sorry that the time of officials and the House has had to be taken to invent this way to get round economic dogma and definitions. However, the fact that ODA and Treasury officials and my right hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development have spent that time upon it demonstrates their commitment to the Commonwealth Development Corporation and their concern to provide the necessary resources with which to expand its very valuable work overseas.

The whole of the corporation's finances are involved in a mix of ODA financial receipts at concessionary rates of interest and borrowing on commercial terms, thus making more money available for the essentially commercial, profitable and viable investments that it is making overseas. I welcome that development. It is the way in which development can take place in the most sensible and disciplined way possible.

I pay tribute to the CDC's results this year. They emphasise my belief that the CDC is of unique benefit to countries overseas. I do not share the fears of the hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke). One only has to look at the results of the CDs commitments this year, which amount to about £106 million. They will create 12,800 new permanent jobs overseas. I should have thought that all right hon. and hon. Members would welcome that result. A livelihood will be provided for 94,200 small and impoverished farmers. I wish it were in Mindanao where some of the poorest and most deprived people in the world live. I do not share the apprehensions of the hon. Member for Monklands, West, other than his apprehensions about the human rights difficulties that face those small and impoverished farmers. I believe that the CDC's efforts will improve their standard of living and enable them to withstand that kind of oppression.

About 210,000 hectares have been brought into cultivation or have been rehabilitated, either as estates or as small farmer or outgrower projects, with plantings of oil, palms, rubber, maize, sunflower, rape, cotton, beans, hardwoods, coffee and tea. Those are major investments in basic commodities that are produced for export. They will provide foreign exchange which will enable the standard of living in those countries to be improved. That investment will result in orders in the United Kingdom. That, too, is important. The orders will benefit this country, just as economic development worldwide will benefit this country. At least £19 million worth of orders will be generated during the implementation phase of these projects. The result in foreign exchange earnings for the host countries is very important.

The ability of countries overseas to import essential spare parts and improve the infrastructure will result in foreign exchange earnings for the host countries of at least £270 million per annum. That is a very proud record. We can all take pride in it. My right hon. Friend is entirely justified in his support for the CDC and in his desire to increase the amount of money that is available to it, and he deserves our wholehearted support.

11.13 pm

Mr. Beith: On behalf of the alliance, I welcome the Bill without any reservations. Its provisions are wholly desirable. They remove irksome and unnecessary restrictions upon the work of the Commonwealth Development Corporation. The Government are to be commended for introducing the Bill. I cannot, however, commend the Government's business managers. If anything has delayed the Bill, the activities of right hon. and hon. Members have not delayed it. The Bill had its Second Reading on 26 February, but only now have right hon. and hon. Members been given the opportunity to debate it on Third Reading.

One might think, having heard the comments of the hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke), that the proceedings in Standing Committee involved a protracted and deep dialectic about the Government's monetary policies, but the entire proceedings in Standing Committee lasted 40 minutes.

Mr. Tom Clarke: That is not so.

Mr. Beith: That is indeed the case. I have the text in front of me. The proceedings began at 10.30 and ended at 11.10 am, which by my reckoning is 40 minutes. Neither I nor the hon. Member for Monklands, West was present.

Mr. Tom Clarke: If the hon. Gentleman does his homework he will find that there were two sittings. The first lasted a great deal longer.

Mr. Beith: That is not so. The hon. Gentleman has not done his homework. There was a Second Reading Committee on the Bill, of which he and I were members, which lasted for 1 hour and 40 minutes. There was a Standing Committee which sat once for 40 minutes.

I stand by the comments I made originally. Neither the Second Reading Committee debate nor the Standing Committee debate was protracted, and rightly so. I make the point merely to underline that the general wish of hon. Members has been to get the Bill on to the statute book as quickly as possible. If anyone is to blame for not doing so, it must be the Government's business managers. The

contents of the Bill well deserve the commendation of the House. I have a rare opportunity to welcome a Bill without any reservations whatsoever.

11.15 pm

Mr. Raison: I rise bathed in the bonhomie which the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) has just expressed. I had intended to draw to the attention of the House the fact that in an earlier intervention he said that, in his wildest dreams, he could imagine a doubling of our GNP percentage for aid. In other words, he was saying that the Liberal party's official position corresponds with his wildest dreams, which does not quite have a ring of conviction about it. However, I shall not tease him because he has been extremely helpful to us this evening. I thank him for that. I also thank other hon. Members who have contributed to the passage of the Bill.

I think that we have given the Bill a reasonable amount of attention. It would have been a pity if the Bill had simply gone through on the nod without any discussion, because it concerns an important matter. The future of the Commonwealth Development Corporation is important. I, the Government and, I am glad to find, the House have great respect for the corporation. I do not begrudge the minutes in Committee and the short number of hours on Second Reading that have been spent discussing it.

The hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) welcomed the Bill. I am grateful to him for that. I think that at one point he described it as an extension of our monetarist philosophy. I did not quite know what he meant by that. The introduction of a grant-giving power is not normally thought of as a monetarist activity. Whatever else one may have to say about it, no doubt, deep down in the hon. Gentleman's subconscious, something is stirring which he is about to release.

Mr. Tom Clarke: When the right hon. Gentleman reads *Hansard*, he will see that I was referring to the views of my hon. Friend the Member for Vauxhall (Mr. Holland). I thought it right that those views should be placed on the record.

Mr. Raison: The hon. Member for Vauxhall (Mr. Holland) would see monetarism under any stone or in any corner that he chose to look. I am only surprised that the hon. Member for Monklands, West should see himself in the role of the mouthpeace of the hon. Member for Vauxhall who is, if I may say so, a different kind of creature from himself.

Mr. Tom Clarke: And from the Minister.

Mr. Raison: And from myself also. I claim no identity with the hon. Member for Vauxhall.

As the hon. Member for Monklands, West said, the Bill enables the CDC to borrow and operate in overseas countries. As my hon. Friend the Member for Hertford and Stortford (Mr. Wells) said, it can do so without recourse to the public sector borrowing requirement. That gives a greater flexibility. I think that everybody would welcome that. Under the Bill, the Government have the duty to guarantee such borrowing. The Bill introduces the grants facility which we discussed earlier. I think that all those measures add up to greater scope for the Commonwealth Development Corporation.

The hon. Member for Monklands, West referred to Shelter Afrique. I think that he accepted that one of the merits of the Bill is that it could permit support for such an operation, as my noble Friend Baroness Young said in the other place. That is another advantage. The hon. Gentleman made some comparisons between the CDC's operations and World Bank conditionality. I believe that what the World Bank is doing, in trying to bring about structural adjustment in a genuine attempt to get to the root of the economic problems of Africa and other countries, is all to the good. I very much support that. The CDC is a somewhat different operation in that respect from the World Bank. I hope that the CDC will be used for real development. That is what the Bill is about.

The hon. Gentleman asked me three questions. He asked me whether I see the CDC as a disburser of humanitarian aid or a private corporation. I do not see it as either exactly. It is not exactly a private corporation. It can work in partnership with and give strength to the private sector. One of the healthiest aspects of the United Nations special session on Africa a few days ago was the recognition of the importance of the private sector.

The CDC is not exactly a humanitarian aid organisation. It is operating in developing countries, contributing to the strengthening of their economies, especially important sectors such as agriculture. It is not exactly a charitable organisation. It is trying to contribute to fundamental development.

As to whether it works with communities or with Governments, in operating in a Third world or other country, one must recognise that they have legitimate Governments. One may not like them, but they are Governments. It is difficult to waltz into a country and say, "We shall forget about the Government and do our own thing." Of course, the CDC is concerned to do things that are worth while in the economic and social development of the places in which it operates. That is an important part of aid strategy generally and the CDC contributes to it.

The hon. Member for Monklands, West raised the vexed question of Mindanao, and I understand his concern. We discussed the issue at some length in Committee and I cannot add much to what the hon. Gentleman has said. Since the change of Government in the Philippines, pressure from certain voluntary organisations on that matter seems to have abated. I do not know whether that is because they find the new regime more to their taste, as clearly many people do. Perhaps there are lessons to e learnt from this affair. However, the CDC can claim that jobs and prosperity are being generated in that area, and that, should not be dismissed.

The hon. Member for Monklands, West asked whether the CDC would review its models of agricultural development. The corporation is always prepared to bthink about the most effective ways of operating. It brings to that consideration enormous practical experience. The CDC works in the field. We are perhaps all tempted at times to pontificate about developments, but the CDC is the body out in the field. The way in which it applies its expertise is very much to the good.

I think that I have covered the main points raised in this short debate. We are right to be proud of the CDC as an organisation. As my hon. Friend the Member for Hertford and Stortford (Mr. Wells) said, the Bill will strengthen the CDC in its activities. I commend it to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed, with amendments.

Land Registration Bill *[Lords]*

As amended (in the Standing Committee), considered.

Order for Third Reading read.—[Queen's Consent, on behalf of the Crown, and Prince of Wales's Consent, on behalf of the Duchy of Cornwall, signified].

11.21 pm

The Solicitor-General (Sir Patrick Mayhew): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

This short but technically complex Bill gives effect to the Law Commission's report on land registration, No. 125. Its purpose is to simplify and modernise three aspects of the law on land registration which seemed to the commission in need of reform—the conversion of title, the registration and protection of leases and the method of determining the priority of dealings in certain equitable interests in registered land.

At this time of night, I do not think that it would be profitable to detain the House with a detailed explanation of the Bill's provisions. It is enough to say that it has been generally welcomed as a useful measure of law reform which should make the system of land registration easier to understand and operate. I commend the Bill to the House.

11.23 pm

Mr. Nicholas Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, East): Legislation arising from Law Commission reports has a small cult following in the House. The Solicitor-General and I emerge into the Chamber, usually very late at night, to practise our rites. I should like, in that spirit and with your indulgence, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to offer my congratulations and those of my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Aberavon (Mr. Morris) to the Solicitor-General on his elevation to the Privy Council. As someone who was born in the Solicitor-General's constituency, may I say that I hope that he will take a pride in being thus honoured.

The Land Registration Bill is not contentious, as anyone who has studied the *Official Report* of the Second Reading Committee and the Standing Committee will readily confirm. The Solicitor-General and I heard in Committee this morning on another matter some hard words about the Law Commission, which were unjustified and came from Poujadist elements.

It is traditional on these occasions to thank the Law Commission. For myself, that is not just a matter of form. In my modest Front Bench responsibilities, I have had an opportunity, of necessity, to gain an insight into the Law Commission's work. My appreciation has grown with my understanding of it and my thanks are sincere.

The Bill is not contentious or wide in its scope. It is a useful and practical reform to simplify and update the law relating to lease registrations and the byways of registered land. I am pleased to commend its passage to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed.

Dornoch Firth (Crossing)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Durant.]*

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): In the past week, two parliamentary answers have been given concerning the Dornoch Firth crossing, which is in my constituency. One was an answer to my question by the Minister of State, Department of Transport, and the other reply was given to the hon. Member for Moray (Mr. Pollock).

The latter answer was given by the Secretary of State for Scotland. He said that it was his intention to proceed with plans to construct a road bridge over the Dornoch Firth. He said:

"Subject to the availability of finance and the satisfactory completion of statutory procedures, construction of the approach roads is planned to begin in financial year 1987-88, with construction of the bridge structure to follow in 1988-89. My Department will be holding a design-and-build competition for the bridge, the first stage of which will be to issue an invitation at the beginning of July to selected competitors for the submission of design proposals."—[*Official Report*, 18 June 1986; Vol. 99; c. *532*.]

That reply was, I suppose, encouraging, because it marked another stage in a very long saga that goes back to the mid-1960s when it was first proposed to construct a road bridge across the Dornoch Firth, as part of a scheme to bridge the three firths north of Inverness and to greatly shorten the transportation route between the north coast and the markets of the south.

The answer by the Minister of State related, however, to the possibility of a rail bridge being constructed across the Dornoch Firth, in conjuction with that road. That answer was negative in that the Minister indicated—it is important that I repeat these words too in the context of the debate—that the British Railways Board was not proceeding with that proposal. The Minister said that no detailed request had been made for special funding. He understood that British Rail had been considering the case for a rail crossing of the Dornoch Firth and it had had discussions with the Scottish Office and various interested bodies.

I wish to draw attention to this part of the reply. He understood that British Rail:

"cannot make a financial case for funding the scheme wholly themselves; nor can it show that sufficient additional funding would be available from other sources."—[*Official Report*, 17 June 1986; Vol. 99, c. *481*.]

Turning to the significance of the link between those two answers, it is right to sketch in the history of the project and, indeed, the projects. So far as I am concerned, they have dogged my every step in the House of Commons over a period of close on 20 years.

On 22 July 1969, Dr. Dickson Mabon agreed to my request that a feasibility study of the Dornoch Firth should be made. That, I think, was one of the earliest references to the matter in the House. On 9 May 1972 in an Adjournment debate on the subject I deployed the arguments in favour of the road crossing at some length, and received a wholly negative reply from the then junior Minister at the Scottish Office, now the Secretary of State for Defence. I petitioned the House on behalf of my constituents in 1973, and pressed the Highlands and Islands Development Board to conduct an economic survey of its importance. In October 1975, that survey was completed. It was not until 1978 that Lord Kirkhill, then

the Minister of State, Scottish Office, announced, on 10 March, the then Labour Government's decision in principle to build the bridge.

Following the change of Government in 1979, however, once again the whole process went into slow motion. The then Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, now the Secretary of State for Scotland, the right hon. and learned Member for Edinburgh, Pentlands (Mr. Rifkind) said on 17 June 1981, in answer to a question from me, that the earliest date for the crossing being constructed would be the financial year 1985-86. That is almost exactly five years ago. I draw attention to the considerable slippage that there has been in the Government's best hopes since that time.

There was a more encouraging response from the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, the hon. Member for Argyll and Bute (Mr. MacKay), whose presence at the debate I particularly welcome as a Member of Parliament representing the Highlands, if not as the most munificent of Ministers. In July 1984, in the course of a debate in the Scottish Grand Committee, he told me that plans were going ahead as fast as possible, and it was hoped that work might begin in 1986. We are well into 1986, and we are now told by the Secretary of State for Scotland in a written answer of 18 June that work will not begin in 1986 and, indeed, we shall be very lucky to see any work begun before 1987-88. We are told that that is contingent upon funds being made available.

I hope that in replying to the debate the Minister will have something to say about the funding of the road bridge because that is a matter of considerable importance. There are too many escape clauses in the Secretary of State's written answer to me. I fear very much that there may be further slippage in what has been a sorry tale of delay from the beginning.

I turn now to the question of the associated rail bridge. This is a much more recent development. It is true that it was mooted in the initial economic study conducted by the Highlands and Islands Development Board back in 1975, and it did not find favour with the consultants who were employed by the Highlands and Islands Development Board at that time. The beginning of the modern proposal for the association of the rail bridge I think could be dated from the announcement of the then manager of British Rail, Scottish region, Mr. Christopher Green, on 17 January 1985, at a press conference held in Inverness following his first meeting with the Highlands Regional Council and the Highlands and Islands Development Board, that this was a proposal that British Rail favoured. In his statement he waxed lyrical about the prospects for the project and said that Sutherland could become a little Switzerland if it went ahead. He warned that if the major opportunity that he described was missed, the hour's difference between road and rail times could prove catastrophic for the line's future.

Mr. Green pointed out that the journey by rail would be 33 per cent. slower than the road journey if the rail bridge was not built. He said that he hoped that, as £300 million was being spent on the A9 between Perth and Wick there would be some investment in the railway. He said that there was a precedent for help from the Scottish Office and that the European Community looked favourably on equal treatment for road and rail.

That was a considerable launch for an exciting and imaginative proposal. I became involved in considerable discussion and a lightning exchange of letters with ScotRail in the spring of that year. I made it plain at all times that I had two major concerns about the rail project, and I aired them in public at a meeting I held in Lairg that year. The concerns were that the loop, which has become known as the Lairg loop, should be kept open for a residual service, and that the plan to build the rail bridge should not delay the construction of the road bridge, whose importance to the revival and regeneration of the economy I regarded as paramount. That was always clearly understood to be my position by ScotRail and the Minister.

I wrote to the Minister in the autumn of last year and he replied on 11 November. I raised the question of the timing and asked him to make the assumption that British Rail had found the money for the project. On that basis, I asked whether he anticipated the same time scale for a combined road-rail crossing of the Dornoch firth. He gave me an extraordinarily interesting answer. He understood my concern about timing, but also affirmed much more than I had asked. First, he said that his Department had been in close co-operation with British Rail on the possibility of a joint crossing of the firth. He said that his Department had told British Rail that proposals for a joint venture would be considered favourably provided that they did not delay unduly the proposed road scheme.

How favourably the Scottish Office has considered the project must now be called into question. Indeed, it is part of the purpose of this debate to elicit what is the Government's current attitude to the project in the light of what has happened this week.

Lest there be any doubt about where British Rail stood when the proposal was originally put forward, Mr. Christopher Green, the general manager of ScotRail as it had then become, said, in a key letter in the history of this affair dated 29 April 1985, that he had had a very useful second round of meetings with the Highlands regional council and the Highlands and Islands Development Board in March, when they were able to summarise the results of their research.

Mr. Green made three points. The first was that the bridge could be built within the time scale of the road works for about £11 million; secondly, that if ScotRail did nothing it would lose 20 to 25 per cent. of its passengers when the new road opened, which put the whole future of the line at risk; and thirdly, that it might just be possible to achieve a financial payback over 30 years for rail cut-off option in isolation.

Those points are of considerable significance. They reveal that a modest sum—£4·5 million to £5 million—was being sought from the Scottish Office. It was clear from public statements that the European Community would meet 50 per cent. of the cost of the project, that the Highlands and Islands Development Board was prepared to meet a substantial tranche of the expenditure—it had said that publicly—and that the Highlands regional council would meet £1 million of the cost.

A modest sum indeed, therefore, was being sought from the Scottish Office, which, the Minister had assured me, was working in close co-operation with British Rail, and had told British Rail that proposals for a joint venture would be considered favourably.

Imagine my astonishment when a Department of Transport Minister announced last week that British Rail could not show that sufficient additional funding would be available from other sources. The funding from other sources that was missing was the £4·5 million from the

[Mr. Robert Maclennan]

Scottish Office. I exploded in rage and anger at the thought that there had been some deception. I do not know where the deception was and I make no charges against the Minister, who did not answer my question and who simply said that he had nothing to add to what he had already said.

This modest sum should be forthcoming for this extremely important project, which has enjoyed the support of the whole community and which, I believe, is supported throughout Scotland. The Scottish Council for Development and Industry said on 29 August last:

"We believe that the additional cost of a rail crossing on the agreed road bridge across the Dornoch Firth would be a sound investment in the infrastructure of the Highlands and would secure the future of the rail network north of Inverness."

Mr. Donald McCullum, the council's chairman, said:

"It would be a fitting conclusion if these objectives would come together. I hope that the Scottish Office and the Department of Transport will share British Rail's vision and will support this imaginative investment."

The reason for this debate is not to trawl over errors or mistaken decisions. It is to avoid further mistakes being made. Its purpose is to make the Minister aware of the importance of not foreclosing on the option of a rail bridge being built in the future. He and the Scottish Office must not accept for the road bridge a design, for which a competition begins in July, which would be incompatible with a rail bridge. I have asked the Minister to bear this in mind when issuing guidelines when tenders are invited.

I hope that the Minister will give me a positive response tonight, and I am grateful to him for coming to the House at this late hour and for agreeing to see me and my colleagues about this matter later in the week.

11.43 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Michael Ancram): I am grateful to the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) for raising the question of the Dornoch bridge and the future of the north line. I am particularly grateful for the chance to set the record straight in the light of a considerable amount of misinformation and ill-informed comment that has appeared in the press and elsewhere in the last week.

I realise that post-mortems serve only a limited purpose, but I hope I shall have time to comment on the future of the line to Thurso and Wick. In view of the remarks of the hon. Gentleman, perhaps I should like to begin by establishing categorically three crucial facts. The first is that, when ScotRail initially approached my Department in November 1984 with the suggestion that a rail element be included in the road bridge project, it was given a positive response and the offer of technical assistance.

It was made clear to ScotRail then, and again throughout the following year, that the assistance was being offered on two conditions. The first was that ScotRail should not delay the road bridge project, which the hon. Gentleman supports, and the second was that ScotRail would meet its own share of the costs. Given the ordinary way in which rail projects in Scotland are funded, I hardly think that it would have expected otherwise.

In other words, ScotRail was aware right from the start that in working up its proposals it should not expect any special Government funding for the project. I would mention, in passing, that British Rail already receives, of course, very substantial annual subsidies from Government and, in so far as the Dornoch crossing is concerned, if it had decided to go ahead it would have stood to save about £1·5 million by combining a rail crossing with the proposed road crossing, by comparison with the cost of building a separate rail crossing. I released last week the full text of a letter which I wrote to Mrs. Winifred Ewing, MEP on 23 April 1985 — and which was quite extraordinarily, selectively and partially quoted in the *Glasgow Herald* last Thursday to give a completely misleading impression — which made the position on funding quite clear.

The second point which I should like to establish clearly is that neither I nor my Department was ever approached formally by ScotRail with a request for special funding to be made available from Government. Nor did the Railways Board submit any investment proposal to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport. It is true that there were continuing discussions between ScotRail officials and my own and on a number of occasions the difficulties about funding were raised. However, at no stage was ScotRail given any indication that special funding from the Scottish Office would be available.

Nevertheless, I did not in the course of consideration of this issue rule out any possibilities of special funding. If a detailed case had been made to me, I would have considered it on its merits. I made this abundantly clear when I wrote to the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) in April 1986 when I said that I would be prepared to look carefully at any proposal that was submitted to me. But no case was submitted. ScotRail, or if not ScotRail then the British Railways Board, was not prepared to back a scheme, the financial appraisal of which had by then become apparent. I will return to this point.

The third area in which clarification is necessary is that concerning possible European funding. Here, too, we were not prepared to consider recommending European regional development fund grant until we had a detailed application in our hands and could see whether or not it was plausible. It would have been quite wrong of us to have prejudged an issue without all the facts being available. But to obtain the facts we needed an application from ScotRail. We never received it. *The Scotsman* last Thursday quotes the Member for Caithness and Sutherland as quoting, in turn, European Community officials as saying that there were precedents for ERDF help for projects such as this. That is a self-evident point. Valuable ERDF support has been received in the past for transport infrastructure projects in areas such as the Highlands. As I am on record as having said at a much earlier stage in the consideration of this matter, the proposed Dornoch rail crossing would have appeared in principle a reasonable case for such assistance, but there is an important distinction between eligibility in principle and a satisfactory project on the ground worthy of support.

The case would have to be judged on its detailed merits, and it would have to be judged by the rules requiring value for money that apply in the case of ERDF grants as much as they do in any other case of proposed public expenditure. The European Community rules state that any infrastructure project costing more than 15

million ecus—which is approximately £8·5 million—has to be subject to an appropriate socio-economic benefit assessment. It is there for a purpose, to require sufficient information on the project to be available for a judgment on it to be made. The statements that have been made by hon. Gentlemen in this last week somehow seem to suggest that this could be ignored, or pre-empted. That is simply not the case, and I suspect that they know it. ScotRail too is very familiar with ERDF procedures. It is a frequent applicant to the fund through the Scottish Office, and is currently benefiting from ERDF grant for a number of projects in Scotland. It is therefore well aware of how the system operates. In the light of this, its repeated public statements that 50 per cent. funding of the proposed Dornoch rail crossing would be provided by the European Community were, to say the least, premature.

The hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland mentioned the Highlands and Islands Development Board guarantees. As I understand it, the HIDB did not give any such undertaking. That was a misquotation on the hon. Gentleman's part. So why then did ScotRail never make a formal application for funding, either by my Department or by the European Community? The facts are plain, and rest in the figures which emerged at the end of ScotRail's consideration of this project. These are that the rail link —even allowing a benefit of some £1·5 million from combining it with the road bridge—would cost £12·7 million. That is ScotRail's own figure, and, in my view and that of my advisers, is likely to be a very conservative one. The purpose of the investment would have been to secure a revenue of some £120,000 a year—that is 20 per cent. of the present passenger custom which ScotRail estimates will be lost if the road bridge proceeds without the rail bridge. I emphasise that these figures are not mine—they are ScotRail's. It is self-evident from them that the investment could not have been justified on any sensible criterion. That is surely why no application for funding was made.

The hon. Gentleman has asked tonight that the options be kept open to allow a rail crossing to be built at a later date, if that proves possible. In the first place, I can give an assurance that the line of the route for the road crossing would not jeopardise any future proposals by British Rail to undertake a rail crossing similar to that planned, and reflected in its provisional order.

The engineering differences between constructing a combined road and rail bridge and a road-only crossing are such that, to design the road bridge on the chance that a rail component might be added later would involve substantial additional expenditure which could not be justified. If, however, British Rail decided to proceed with its scheme as a separate rail crossing in the future, my Department would be prepared to make available to it the results of the substantial amount of preparatory work, including geological and soil investigations, carried out by consulting engineers for the road bridge. I hope that that might be considered helpful.

I should explain why the proposed road bridge across the Dornoch Firth is now proceeding without the rail component. There is no reason now to hold up the road bridge, which shows a positive rate of return on the proposed investment in it. It appears unlikely in the extreme, from ScotRail's figure, that any delay in building the road bridge would lead to any different decision about the rail crossing.

The hon. Member has himself gone on record on a number of occasions, including tonight, to say that the road bridge must not be unnecessarily delayed. Indeed, in July 1984, in the Scottish Grand Committee, he was attacking the Government for being dilatory in building the road bridge. Not a mention then on his part about concern for the railway line, or the need for a rail element. Indeed, the question of the railway did not emerge until some months after the road bridge proposal had been confirmed, and then it did not emerge from the hon. Gentleman. All he wanted then was the road bridge, and he wanted it fast. In saying that, I am sure that he was reflecting the views of almost everyone in the area, who recognised the benefits to be derived from the proposed road bridge. The proposed timetable, subject to the availability of finance and the satisfactory completion of statutory procedures, is for construction of the approach roads to begin in the financial year 1987-88 with construction of the bridge structure itself to follow in 1988-89. I do not believe that the hon. Gentleman is asking me to let this timetable slip, especially after his previous strictures.

I should like to say something about the future of the north line. Hon. Members will by now be aware that ScotRail had made it clear that it has no plans to close the line north of the Dornoch Firth as a result of the decision not to proceed with the rail bridge project. I am aware that that worried the hon. Gentleman and I am sure that he was as pleased as me about ScotRail's announcement that its planned improvements on the line remain unaffected by this decision. It is important to bear in mind that there will be no change in the railway's competitive position vis-à-vis bus operators until the road bridge is complete. ScotRail therefore has several years—until at least 1991—to prepare itself for any increased competition that the road bridge will bring.

Also, although the road bridge will undoubtedly make rail services less competitive on timing than at present, they will still have a number of other competitive advantages which they should be well able to exploit. Many people quite simply prefer to travel on trains, particularly in winter. There must be considerable opportunities for exploiting the tourist potential of the line, especially with the introduction of the new Sprinter trains, which I understand is shortly to take place. There is no doubt that a lot can still be done to market this service, and I am sure that ScotRail will do so with the enthusiasm that it has recently demonstrated on other parts of its network.

Returning finally to the matter of the proposed rail bridge, I hope that I have shown that ScotRail had every possible opportunity to establish a case for its proposal. The reasons why it has been unable to do so and has decided not to proceed with its proposals are patently self-evident. Its reasons are shown in the figures that I mentioned earlier. It is important that the people of Caithness and Sutherland are about to get a splendid road bridge which will improve access for them and contribute to the economic welfare of their area. They have pressed for that. They will also enjoy a considerable improvement in the rail service available to them, both in terms of comfort and reliability, through the new investment that ScotRail plan. I am confident that this offers a real hope for the long-term future of the line as well as for the prosperity of the region.

[Mr. Michael Ancram]

Obviously, everybody would always like to see the best project available, but, in terms of the figures that I have given the House, the decision taken by British Rail was understandable. I hope that misrepresentations and misinformation similar to those that were put out about the project during last week will now cease.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at four minutes to Twelve o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 25 June 1986

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

NEW WRIT

For Newcastle-under-Lyme, in the room of John Golding Esq. (Chiltern Hundreds).—*[Mr. Foster.]*

PRIVATE BUSINESS

BLYTH HARBOUR BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

Order for Second Reading read.

To be read a Second time tomorrow.

Oral Answers to Questions

ENVIRONMENT

House Building (Brent)

1. **Mr. Pavitt** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the number of house building starts, both private and public, in the London borough of Brent during 1985; and if he will make a statement.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Sir George Young): The London borough of Brent reported 455 starts during 1985, the highest number since 1977. Of these, 188 were private sector and 267 public sector.

Mr. Pavitt: Is the Minister seized of the depth of the crisis in Brent, where only six local authority houses were built last year and where 18,000 people are on the waiting list? Is he aware that there are 650 homeless families? Does he realise that at least 4,916 families are on the high priority transfer list from high rise blocks? Every Saturday morning I am torn to pieces by the family and human tragedies of people who cannot face the problem of not having a roof over their heads.

Sir George Young: I am not sure that the hon. Gentleman heard my reply. Starts last year were the highest since 1977. There were 455 starts in 1985, as against 111 in 1979.

The hon. Gentleman was right to say that there are some 600 families living in unattractive circumstances in bed-and-breakfast accommodation, but there are 825 empty dwellings in Brent's ownership, of which 319 have been vacant for more than one year and 180 for more than two years. Brent should bring those properties back into use.

Mr. Lyell: Is there any arrangement whereby some of those seeking homes could move into the 1,500 houses that have been vacant in Southwark for more than a year?

Sir George Young: Brent is entitled to nominate people, through the London area mobility scheme. Last year it had a quota of 568 lettings, but took only 263 of them. There is an opportunity for Brent to attack its housing problem by making fuller use of London's mobility scheme.

House Prices

2. **Mr. Simon Hughes** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the percentage increase in average house prices in *(a)* Greater London and *(b)* the south-east of England in each of the three last years for which figures are available.

The Minister for Housing, Urban Affairs and Construction (Mr. John Patten): The rises in house prices in Greater London are estimated to have been 12 per cent. from 1982 to 1983, then 16 per cent. to 1984 and 14 per cent. to 1985. For the rest of the south-east, the estimates are 13 per cent., 13 per cent,. and 10 per cent.

Mr. Hughes: Does the Minister realise that those figures compare with increases in average wages that are considerably below those levels—about 9 per cent., 7 per cent. and 8 per cent. for the same three years in Greater London? Does not that, coupled with unemployment that now puts 14 London constituencies in the top 50 for rising unemployment, mean that very few people can buy first homes in London? What will he do about it, and how soon will he provide the opportunity to purchase for those at the bottom end of the earnings scale or those who are not employed at all?

Mr. Patten: First, I invite the hon. Gentleman to join me in putting the maximum possible pressure on the boroughs involved to ensure not only that all the derelict land that they have is brought forward for housing but that they do not in any circumstances delay the planning process, which is one of the things that prevents proper new building taking place. I listened to what the hon. Gentleman said about the need to bring about more low-cost housing development. That is why we intend to do all that we possibly can to encourage shared ownership in the capital and the south-east.

Mr. Jessel: Do not current house prices in the south-east make the £30,000 limit on mortgages for tax relief somewhat out of date?

Mr. Patten: Not at the moment.

Mr. Winnick: Does the Minister recognise that his answer means that his Department should do what it can to encourage local authorities to build so that many people who are not in a position to buy are able to be rehoused by local authorities? Even if we take into consideration the number of empty properties—some of which are not being done up because of lack of cash—there remain hundreds of thousands who stand no chance of buying their own homes and who are in desperate need of local authority accommodation. Does the Minister associate himself with the insulting and offensive remarks that were made last week by the Minister for Information Technology? Are those his views?

Mr. Patten: I shall answer the hon. Gentleman's first question. The answer is very much in the hands of local authorities. The message of "build, build, build," helped throughout the 1960s and 1970s to bring about the problems that we have today. Build in haste, repair at

leisure. There has been under-investment in housing repair. That is why we have so many empty houses in council ownership and why we have homelessness.

Green Belt

3. **Mr. Robert B. Jones** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he intends to make any changes to the Government's policies on the green belt.

The Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Nicholas Ridley): No, Sir. The policy on development in the green belt remains as set out in my Department's circular 14/84.

Mr. Jones: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for his defence of the green belt. Can he confirm that where the local planning authority, the borough or district council, is opposed to the release of land from the green belt, such as in my own constituency, he will reinforce the stance of the council and not seek to release land against its wishes?

Mr. Ridley: We must take into account the structure plans. Together with the green belt policy and the nature of any structure plans that are in existence, my role is to make an interpretation if appeals come to me.

Mr. Colvin: My hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, West (Mr. Jones) is lucky to know where his green belt is. My constituents and the planners who look after their interests have been waiting for months for the publication of the South Hampshire structure plan. Can my right hon. Friend give me any idea when that plan is likely to see the light of day?

Mr. Ridley: Shortly.

Water Authorities (Privatisation)

4. **Sir Geoffrey Finsberg** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he is now in a position to state when he plans the conversion of the Thames water authority into a water supply public limited company; and if he will make a statement.

11. **Mr. Sims** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress he has made with plans to privatise the water authorities.

Mr. Ridley: The Government intend to introduce legislation to restructure the 10 water authorities in England and Wales as water service public limited companies. They will then be floated when market conditions and the circumstances of the individual companies allow.

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: I thank my right hon. Friend for that reply. Will he use the intervening period to make it crystal clear that the 25 per cent. of the population who already get their water from private companies are not suffering deprivation, sewerage trouble, high prices, and all the other nonsense that is put about by the Opposition parties and the trade unions?

Mr. Ridley: I agree entirely with my hon. Friend. He is right to draw attention to the position of the 28 statutory water companies, which supply about one quarter of the water in England and Wales, including large cities such as Newcastle and Bristol. The companies operate to the same tight legislative requirements as the water authorities on the purity of drinking water, and so on. They have an excellent record in maintaining standards of all kinds.

Mr. Sims: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the Thames water authority is ready, willing and, indeed, eager to become a public limited company and to do so on terms that will be favourable for both employees and customers? Can he confirm that the legislation that he will introduce will enable Thames to be privatised as soon as it wishes without necessarily having to wait until the other nine authorities are ready to go forward?

Mr. Ridley: I agree with what my hon. Friend says about the Thames water authority. It is encouraging that there is competition from a number of water authorities to be first into the private sector. There is a reluctance also, I think, to be last into it. The order in which it will be right for the authorities to go into the private sector will depend on the state of readiness at the time.

Mr. Spearing: Does the Secretary of State agree that the policy involves selling off the ownership and control of the River Thames from Teddington to Cirencester and Tewkesbury? Does he recall that in the debate on Monday his hon. Friend the Minister for Housing, Urban Affairs and Construction confirmed that the Government would welcome private overseas capital in a shareholding of that river? Will the right hon. Gentleman tell the House the maximum proportion that he envisages will be permitted to private capital? Is not the idea of the sale of the River Thames or any other river in the country to private ownership entirely against the views of the majority of people of this country?

Mr. Ridley: I must correct the hon. Gentleman, in that Tewkesbury is in the Severn catchment area, although Cirencester is in the Thames catchment area. I must correct him also in another, more important, respect. I see no objection whatsoever to the import of capital into this country. Many of our industries rely on imported capital and many of our jobs rely on capital which we have exported overseas. I do not take the narrow, blinkered attitude that the hon. Gentleman takes to the free flow of capital in world markets.

Mr. Allan Roberts: Has not the Secretary of State just confirmed that the French could actually buy the North-West water authority and the Thames water authority, and that the British people could buy not only their energy but their water from the French? Does he really believe that the British people want that? Will he confirm that the so-called private water authorities are merely franchising companies which sell water which they get from the existing publicly owned water authorities and that not one of them is responsible for pollution or sewerage matters, in which there is no profit? If the water authorities are privatised, will the country not suffer as a result?

Mr. Ridley: The hon. Gentleman knows that in many privatisations the Government have thought it appropriate to take a golden share to control the degree of foreign ownership. When the House considers the matter, we can discuss the pros and cons of such a policy on water. It is not something that can be taken away. It is not possible to close down the North-West water authority. I feel that the problem is nothing like as important as the Opposition seem to be majoring on.

It is true that private water companies do not perform the entire functions of the water cycle, but the functions that they do perform—I think the hon. Gentleman will accept this—are of a first-class standard.

Mr. Steen: Will my right hon. Friend have a word with his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport and ensure that he knows what will happen to the chairman of British Rail if he does not change his mind about the sale of French water on all British Rail trains? It is impossible to get English water on British Rail trains, except for cleaning one's teeth on the night train, which the chairman of British Rail said that it is the only thing that it is good for.

Mr. Ridley: My hon. Friend invites me to talk to my former self, which is a temptation I must now resist. I suggest that it might be advantageous if we could get Malvern water on SNCF.

Mr. O'Brien: In view of the right hon. Gentleman's reply to the question about the speed with which some water authorities will be privatised, will he tell the House how charges will be levied on domestic consumers when the water authorities are in the private sector? If there is to be a delay in metering or initiating other services, will he agree to the private sector using the rating system to collect charges from domestic consumers?

Mr. Ridley: The private sector has been charging customers for water for centuries in those areas where water is still under private control. There have been remarkably few complaints or questions asked about that practice. I do not see why that should not continue.

Dr. Cunningham: First, I take this opportunity to congratulate the right hon. Gentleman on his appointment to his important office. We are aware that behind his well-known eccentricities of view lies a fairly shrewed political brain. As he has referred to his tendency to talk to himself, I should advise him that many people in local government fervently hope that he will go on doing that, and leave them alone.

As for the right hon. Gentleman's proposals to privatise Britain's water resources, I remind him that even his own eccentricities cannot cover the fact that the Government are proposing to hand over water consumers to private enterprise monopolies without competition or choice. A rip-off of the taxpayers' assets is likely to be followed by a rip-off of water consumers. How can the right hon. Gentleman, of all people, possibly justify that?

Mr. Ridley: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his welcome to my sitting in this position. I can reciprocate by saying how pleased I am to find him sitting in his position, on the Opposition, and I hope that he will remain there for a very long time.

I am fascinated that in my new post I am to have the label "eccentric". I am used to having labels of one sort or another, so I say in gratitude to the hon. Gentleman that this one is much more acceptable than some I have had.

The hon. Gentleman has left out of account the fact that many companies have performed infinitely better in the private sector. I can compare this with British Telecom, where privatisation of what was nearly a natural monopoly has taken place. One cannot meet anyone who does not now remark how greatly improved telephone services are.

Local Authority Housing

5. **Mr. Cartwright** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he next plans to meet representatives of the local authority associations to discuss ways of reducing the backlog of repair work identified in his Department's inquiry into the condition of the local authority housing stock in England.

Mr. Ridley: I will be meeting representatives of the local authority associations to discuss various housing issues at the Housing Consultative Council meeting on 8 July.

Mr. Cartwright: Does the Secretary of State accept the Audit Commission's estimate that about £900 million is added each year to the council house repair bill? Does that not mean that, at the present rate of investment, it will take us about 90 years to bring all council housing up to an acceptable standard?

In view of the seriousness of the problem, what steps is the right hon. Gentleman taking to ensure that local authorities display greater interest in co-operating with the private sector in the repair and rehabilitation of council estates?

Mr. Ridley: I have barely received, let alone had time to study, the report. If that proves to be the case, it must be said that local authorities have for many years failed to keep their housing stock in good order.

It is extraordinary that, after decades of managing local authority housing, local councils have now come along with a capital problem, which appears to be great, because of their neglect to keep rents at a level which would enable them to keep their houses in good order. Further evidence of that is the fact that spending per house on repair and maintenance and on capital improvements was abysmally low when we came to power. Since 1980-81 spending per house has gone up by 21·5 per cent. in real terms. We now have figures of £2·5 billion a year on maintenance, £1·2 billion on capital and £1·4 billion on revenue expenditure, which are far better figures than when we first came to power. It is that which has gone wrong in the past. Not enough has been spent to maintain the houses, and that is why we have such a bad situation of disrepair.

Mr. Heddle: Is it not a national scandal that so many local authorities are keeping many council houses empty for so long? Is not their negligence contributing to the misery of homelessness? Does my right hon. Friend agree that one solution to the problem is to allow do-it-yourself experts who are waiting for council houses to take over those council houses for a rent-free period and do them up at their own expense, because the local authority would have left them empty in any event?

Mr. Ridley: I agree with my hon. Friend. He has made a sound point. The fundamental problem is that those houses have been allowed to exist without being repaired and the local authorities have not had sufficient revenue to do so. Whether the repairs are done by allowing the tenant to do it at his own expense, or whether the tenant pays more so that the local authority can do it, is a secondary issue. The point is that it should never have been allowed to happen in the first place.

Mr. Michie: As the Government's own estimates of the backlog of repairs or cost is about £19 billion, how can the Government justify further constraint on money for repairs by local authorities?

Mr. Ridley: I take seriously the appalling situation of disrepair in local authority houses. That is something I shall be looking at to see how we can best deal with it. I should have thought that the whole House would agree

that we should not allow further disrepair. We should avoid the mistakes of the past in failing to maintain houses as we go along out of the housing revenue accounts.

Mr. Yeo: Will my right hon. Friend consider allowing local authorities to use a greater proportion of their capital receipts, perhaps returning to the 40 per cent. level which was the figure until the beginning of last year, as a means of addressing this problem?

Mr. Ridley: That is something that I am busy studying at the moment. The areas where the main disrepair has been allowed to grow tend to be in large municipal housing estates where there are small accumulated receipts. Areas where there are large accumulated receipts tend to be where the local authority has kept its housing in a much better state of repair. There is a serious mismatch between resources and needs.

Mr. Raynsford: Does the Secretary of State accept the need for substantial additional resources to be made available to those inner city authorities which have the greatest concentrations of problems? Will he possibly even consider using those capital receipts, which are available elsewhere, to help those authorities with the greatest need?

Mr. Ridley: My hon. Friends will be delighted to hear that the Labour party thinks that the prudent housekeeping of many Tory district councils, which has resulted in accumulated receipts, should be forcibly taken away from them and given to spendthrift authorities which fail to keep their housing in good order.

Mr. Hickmet: Does my right hon. Friend accept that those local authorities which have gone out to private contractors to have the housing stock maintained have spent their money more effeciently and cost-effectively? Is it not a fact that one of the principal problems with the maintainence of the housing stock is the inefficiency of the direct labour organisations in many areas? Is that not aggravated by the refusal of Labour-controlled local authorities to accept the lowest tender from private contractors?

Mr. Ridley: I do not believe that the reason my hon. Friend gives is the only one. It seems to me that the essential need is for a local authority to get itself sufficient resources and to use those resources to secure the greatest value for money possible, to make sure that its housing stock does not deteriorate. It is not only rates and grant that are available to a local authority; it is the tenants' income itself, which could be spent on the tenants' houses, if there was a proper level of rent.

Mr. John Fraser: May we take it that we have therefore elicited from the Secretary of State that he agrees with the Audit Commission that there is a crisis of serious proportions in the condition of our local authority housing stock? If that is so, and the right hon. Gentleman talks, as he did recently when he was appointed, of prudent housekeeping how can it be prudent housekeeping when local authorities which have a legacy of system-built houses and non-traditional homes are sometimes not allowed to spend their own money to keep together houses that are literally falling apart? Surely it is just ideological nonsense to suggest that any help from the public sector will not solve the enormous problem identified by the Association of Metropolitan Authorities, the Audit Commission and his own Department.

Mr. Ridley: The hon. Gentleman must not put words into my mouth. I did not accept the Audit Commission's description of a crisis. As I said, I have not had a chance to study its report yet, and I am not commenting on it. I accept that there is a large element of disrepair in some local authority housing estates as well as in municipal estates. I should like to make just one point, that that disrepair should not have been allowed to arise. We have two things to do now. First, we have to see how best to clear up the areas of neglect of those local authorities. Secondly, we have to put it fairly on the line that local authorities should not allow further neglect and deterioration. Because several local authorities have neglected to keep their houses in a fit state for their tenants to live in, the hon. Gentleman turns round and blames the Government. He should be blaming the local authorities, and he knows it.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark *rose*

Mr. Speaker: Mr. . . .

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: Beaumont-Dark.

Mr. Speaker: Mr. Beaumont-Dark.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: It does us all good to have our names forgotten at times.

Will my right hon. Friend accept congratulations from the Conservative Benches on attaining his distinguished office, to which I am sure he will lend his originality and interest? We shall watch with fascination his progress. Does my right hon. Friend accept that one of the problems that we have is that many of us are exactly and entirely behind the sale of council houses, which gives people choice, but feel that that money should then be available to repair the stock of council houses? If we delay spending £250 this year, it will be £400 next year and dereliction the year after. Could we not encourage both sale and repair, which would be to the benefit of all the people?

Mr. Ridley: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his welcome and the even more attractive adjectives than those used by the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham). As Question Time goes on it gets better and better.

I agree with my hon. Friend that the combination of privatisation and repair of council houses is what we want, but on several estates the condition of the council houses is such that I do not believe that anybody would want to buy them as they are. That is a special problem, to which I intend to turn my attention, but let it be absolutely clear that I am saying only that I recognise that there is a problem in certain areas. At the same, time I believe that we must make sure that we do not get into a worse position, by ensuring that local authorities take their responsibilities seriously.

Local Government (Widdicombe Report)

6. **Mr. Bruce** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he proposes to issue the Government's response to the Widdicombe report on local government practices and procedures; and if he will make a statement.

12. **Mr. Clay** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he proposes to publish the final report of the Widdicombe committee on local government.

15. **Mr. Chope** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what response he has received to the publication of the main report of the Widdicombe committee on local government.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mrs. Angela Rumbold): I refer the hon. Gentlemen and my hon. Friend to the answer given by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to my hon. Friend the Member for Broxbourne (Mr. Rowe) on 19 June.

Mr. Bruce: I thank the Minister for that helpful reply.

Mr. Allan Roberts: You have been "Rumbold"!

Mr. Bruce: Why have the Government been so quiet about the publication of the report, given the enthusiasm with which they set up the inquiry? Is it because the Widdicombe report has tackled the problem of one-party domination in local councils, has supported democracy in local councils and has made constructive recommendations on how to strengthen them? Will the Government recognise that not only must they consult, but that there must be an early debate in the House and that they must act on the recommendations?

Mrs. Rumbold: I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman believes that the report has been received quietly. It received wide coverage in the press and was welcomed widely by many people in local government. The report has responded fully to the concerns across party political lines that local democracy has been somewhat under threat in a few councils. As a result, we have a good report, which contains about 88 proposals, which present a balanced and interrelated package. We shall have serious consultation on this matter.

Mr. Clay: Is it not true that the proposals to ban people of the rank of principal officer and above from effective political activity is the gravest attack on employment civil liberties since the banning of trade unions at GCHQ? Is it not true that the practice of party representatives attending council group meetings is almost as widespread in the Tory party as it is in the Labour party? The proposed ban is causing grave concern and disquiet. Will the Minister ensure that those aspects of the Widdicombe proposals which try to separate party politics from elected local government are rejected? If not, will she be consistent and demand the removal of the chairman of the Tory party from the Cabinet?

Mrs. Rumbold: I do not accept the later part of the hon. Gentleman's question. The report will be subject to the fullest and widest consultation among all the parties concerned. On his earlier point about principal officers and above not being allowed to sit on local councils, I remind him that no civil servants are allowed to be Members of this House.

Mr. Chope: Did my hon. Friend notice the warm reception given to the report in *The Guardian* editorial? Will that encourage her to seek early legislation to deal with the worst excesses of political corruption, which still cause consternation in local government?

Mrs. Rumbold: I understand my hon. Friend's anxiety about the worse excesses of political corruption. I read the warm response to the publication in *The Guardian*. I repeat that the package of 88 recommendations deserves sensible consideration and consultation before the Government take action.

Mr. Tony Banks: Does the Minister support the idea of ending one-party policy committees on local councils? If so, how will that apply to the London borough of Newham, where all 60 councillors are Labour and there is no opposition? Why is it different for central Government as opposed to local government? If we open policy committee meetings in local government, why not open them in central Government and allow the Opposition into Cabinet meetings?

Mrs. Rumbold: The House will not be in the slightest bit interested in my views on the report. My Department will be happy to receive the views of the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) on the report in due course.

Mr. Squire: Will my hon. Friend commend the members of the Widdicombe committee on an excellent job — at first sight — which demands much attention before we can make detailed comment? Will she note that the House would appreciate a full-scale debate in advance of the Government producing their proposals on Widdicombe, so that hon. Members can add their input to the important debate on the health of local government?

Mrs. Rumbold: I thank my hon. Friend for his remarks and draw his attention to the response of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to my hon. Friend the Member for Broxbourne the other day, when he thanked Mr. David Widdicombe and his fellow committee members most sincerely for their report and commented that the committee's study had been thorough and that the report was impressive in the extent of its coverage and the scope of its findings.

As for a debate on the report, that is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House.

Dr. Cunningham: Will the Under-Secretary accept that the sort of language that she is using and the fact that she is responding to the question lead us to conclude that Widdicombe will be quietly sidelined by the Government, probably because it offers no justification for the wilder allegations of the Conservative party about the state of affairs of local government in this country? For example, does the Under-Secretary accept the comment of Mr. David Widdicombe in his foreword:

"There is a solid base of normality in local government"?

Will the hon. Lady realise that we cannot accept not only the retention of personal surcharge, but its expansion to cover elected members in Scotland? We also cannot accept the proposal of Mr. Widdicombe's committee that chief executives should have extended legal powers over democratically elected councillors.

Widdicombe is disappointing because it has failed to address itself to the opportunity with which it was presented to strengthen and enhance local democracy in Britain.

Mrs. Rumbold: The hon. Member has made the point well that, whatever my lack of seniority, there is considerable uncertainty about the responses of Opposition Members and my hon. Friends, which points to the need for serious consideration through consultation. I hope that that will be achieved in the responses of hon. Members and the many outside organisations and individuals who are interested in local government.

Inner Cities

7. **Mr. Knowles** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he is taking to encourage private sector involvement in the regeneration of the inner cities.

Mr. John Patten: The Housing and Planning Bill will enable assistance to be given to regeneration carried out by the private sector.

Mr. Knowles: I thank my hon. Friend for that reply, albeit ever so brief, but may I encourage him to go further and let us know about the prospects for more urban development corporations, what is to happen on urban regeneration grants and how decisions on that aspect will link with the announcement the other day of our right hon. and learned Friend the Paymaster General about inner cities?

Mr. Patten: The private sector created most of our great cities, and the private sector has a critical role to play in regenerating our great cities. That is why we are taking powers in the Housing and Planning Bill to pay urban regeneration grants. We are extremely grateful to all the Opposition parties for their support for those grants, which have also been welcomed by the private sector. Of course, urban development corporations are well worth considering, and we should perhaps be considering having more UDCs.

Mr. Alton: Does the Minister not agree that it might help to stimulate greater private sector investment in the inner cities if the Government looked again at whether VAT ought to be charged on building work in those areas and at the possibility of increasing the derelict land grant? Does the hon. Gentleman, have a word to say about last week's speech by the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine), who said that he was critical of the level of aid being given to inner cities by the Government?

Mr. Patten: We are spending at record levels on derelict land grants, and substantial amounts of derelict land—about 2,500 acres—are cleared in inner city areas every year. One problem is to make sure that something is put up on that land—houses or industry. We are trying, through urban development grants and the new urban regeneration grants, to attract as much private sector funding as possible. Our experience with the urban development grant shows that for every pound of public sector money put in, we attract between £4 and £5 of private sector money.

Mr. Chapman: Will my hon. Friend confirm that even if the Government doubled the resources presently going into the inner cities that would not begin to meet the size of the problem involved in tackling the necessary works? Therefore, the only way is to attract private investment, and the best way to do that is not merely to consider extending the UDC concept to other parts of inner cities, but actually to create them, and with the same commitment that we had when we created the new town corporations.

Mr. Patten: I note what my hon. Friend, with his considerable experience of these matters, says. I know of no observer of the inner city scene, be it my right hon. Friend the Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) or anybody else, who believes that public money alone will lead to the regeneration of the inner cities. That is why we desperately need to attract private sector money into the inner cities. We are doing so. Urban regeneration grants will help. Urban development corporations may well help. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and I listen carefully to what my hon. Friend says.

Mr. Freeson: Will the Minister pursue with the Chancellor of the Exchequer the abolition of the Treasury rule that forbids housing associations from tying in housing association grants with borrowing from the private market for the provision of rented accommodation? Does he agree that this is one of the biggest stumbling blocks to the expansion of housing association rented accommodation during a period of severe restriction on public expenditure? Will he act on that?

Mr. Patten: I note what the right hon. Gentleman, with his long experience of these matters, has said. We have received some very interesting proposals from the Housing Corporation about these points. Also, from time to time, happily, I have the chance of discussions with my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Mr. Cormack: When my hon. Friend is considering these matters, does he agree with me that the Henley approach is to be preferred to the Chertsey and Walton hypothesis?

Mr. Patten: I always listen carefully to all that my right hon. and hon. Friends have to say, and the speech of my right hon. Friend the Member for Henley was most thought provoking.

Mr. John Fraser: Does the Minister recognise that one very serious inhibition on small private investment in the inner cities is the great difficulty in places such as Brixton and Handsworth of obtaining insurance on business premises? Lambeth and Birmingham recently called a conference on these matters. What are the Government doing about it?

Mr. Patten: I am happy to say that my right hon. and learned Friend the Paymaster General is already looking at this issue in connection with the eight areas exercise. I think that that will produce some results in the not too distant future, which will be of great help right across the inner city scene.

Defective Housing (Basildon)

8. **Mr. Amess** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what recent representations he has received about repairing defective system-built housing in Basildon; and what action he proposes to take in consequence.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Richard Tracey): I have recently received a number of letters from my hon. Friend on behalf of his constituents and direct from owner-occupiers of houses built by Basildon development corporation, using the Lindsay Parkinson HSSB design. Recently I visited the area, together with my hon. Friend, and I hope to announce shortly what steps can be taken to assist.

Mr. Amess: I thank my hon. Friend and his Department for the assistance that they have so far been able to give to my constituents with their problems. I urge him to act as quickly as possible so that defective properties are repurchased, or the owners receive full compensation, or the properties are repaired, or are given a clean bill of health.

Mr. Tracey: I appreciate the various remedies that have been put forward by my hon. Friend, but, as I told him recently, I shall be very glad to have a meeting with representatives of the Vange Action Group. I am very conscious of the need for an early decision.

Mr. Hardy: May I say to the Minister with responsibility for sport that I hope that defective housing will be more successfully tackled than was the World Cup by the English football team? Serious though the problems may be in Basildon, may I make the point that this is a national problem and that it requires urgent attention and the provision of national assistance to local authorities and development corporations before the year is out?

Mr. Tracey: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will not consider that I am giving him the elbow, but housing in this country is considerably better than much of the housing that I saw when I was in Mexico. Of course, the Government of Mexico are much more closely associated with the party opposite than they are with the party of this side of the House.

Hon. Members: Send him off!

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is supposed to be about housing in Basildon.

Mr. Tracey: You are quite right, Mr. Speaker. The only housing that we know of similar to that in Basildon is in Watford.

Planning Decisions (Appeals)

9. **Mr. Adley** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to uphold on appeal the planning decisions of local authorities.

Mr. Tracey: No, Sir. The law requires that each case be decided on its merits.

Mr. Adley: That is a relief. Is my hon. Friend aware that the answer given earlier by the Secretary of State to the effect that the green belt, if protected by the structure plan, is safe with him will be welcome to many hon. Members on the Tory Benches, especially in the light of a grotesque application in my constituency to which objection has been taken not only by Christchurch council but by Wimborne and New Forest councils and by Dorset county council? Will my hon. Friend bear in mind that if district councils, as planning authorities, backed by county councils, begin to feel that every time they refuse an application that is contrary to the structure plan and which affects green belt land, those decisions will be overturned by his Department, local government will be even more disillusioned about central Government? Surely none of us wants to see that.

Mr. Tracey: My hon. Friend raises some interesting points. He will not expect me to comment on a specific case. He should raise the general aspect of this issue with my right hon. Friend when he and his colleagues meet him.

Mr. Simon Hughes: May I ask the Minister——

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Give him an easy one.

Mr. Hughes: I was about to say that I was going to give the Minister an easy ball. There has been a settlement whereby the Globe theatre is likely to be built on the South Bank. If the matter of planning in respect of this comes before the Department of the Environment, can the House have the assurance that the Department will do everything it can to encourage the rebuilding of Shakespeare's Globe after 400 years?

Mr. Tracey: I was privileged to be born in Stratford-on-Avon and I have considerable sympathy for anything to do with William Shakespeare. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman fully realises that all material matters will be considered.

Mr. Wiggin: Is my hon. Friend aware that many local authorities are being forced to make planning decisions against their wishes? That is because under the rules, the circulars and the structure plans, they know that if the matter goes to appeal and they lose it is likely to cost a great deal of money. Will he seriously consider the question of my hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley)?

Mr. Tracey: Since 1947 Parliament has provided a right of appeal to the Secretary of State against local planning decisions. In considering such appeals the Secretary of State will have regard to all material planning considerations. I repeat what I said to my hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley), that these general points should be raised at the meeting with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State.

Mr. Tony Banks: The Minister has done well, so far. In view of his sports portfolio, will he take an interest in the planning permission to redevelop Stamford Bridge and call that in so as to make sure that we preserve good football at Stamford Bridge?

Mr. Tracey: I have once again to say that I cannot discuss the merits of any particular case at the Dispatch Box.

Palace of Westminster

10. **Mr. Gerald Bowden** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he now expects the restoration of the exterior of the Palace of Westminster to be completed.

Sir George Young: The current work on the Terrace elevation and Lord Chancellor's Tower should be completed in November. Plans for the next phase are under consideration and I hope to make an announcement later in the year. There is much still to be done and it will take a number of years to complete this massive task.

Mr. Bowden: As the restoration work which has already been completed has done so much to enhance the architectural heritage of this part of London and proved such a popular tourist focus, we look forward with great anticipation to the completion of the work. May I, as a surveyor, ask my hon. Friend what stone cleaning technique he proposes to use for the remainder of the work —the wet or the dry?

Sir George Young: My hon. Friend is right to say that the Palace of Westminster is a major tourist attraction and that it is right to show it at its best. As for cleaning techniques, he rightly says that there are two approaches, one wet, one dry. The wet one heals the affected areas by the steady application of dripping water and the dry one involves a vigorous attack with air and grit. I prefer the former.

Local Authority Services

13. **Mr. Corbett** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many responses have been received by his Department to the consultation paper, "Competition in the Provision of Local Authority Services", published in February 1985.

Mrs. Rumbold: My Department had received more than 450 responses by 30 October 1985, and a list of the main respondents was placed in the Library on that date. One or two further comments have been received since then.

Mr. Corbett: Will the Minister confirm that the majority of responses from councils of all political colours have opposed the compulsory extension of tendering? Is not the real answer to allow local councils to spend the money that they need to have the size of work force that they want to carry out their duties officially?

Mrs. Rumbold: No, Sir. The responses were varied and wide and it would be quite difficult to determine whether they came down on one side or the other. There are clear signs that competitive tendering has helped to provide efficient and effective services and that it does not disturb the good running of local authorities.

Urban Programme

14. **Mr. Carttiss** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many jobs have been created under the urban programme.

Mr. John Patten: The urban programme has created or retained about 24,000 jobs each year through support to capital projects since it was substantially expanded in 1982-83, and projects approved for urban development grant should generate some 20,000 permanent jobs.

Mr. Speaker: I call Mr. Chope.

Mr.Carttiss: In the light of his reply, does my hon. Friend agree that well targeted—

Mr. Speaker: Order. I got the wrong name. I call Mr. Carttiss.

Mr. Carttiss: We seem to be in the business of getting the wrong names today, but never mind.

Does my hon. Friend agree that, in the light of his reply, well targeted schemes to help inner-city areas are a more effective way in which to promote economic growth and to provide real jobs in the community?

Mr. Patten: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. We need the best possible targeting on inner city areas which are suitable for development. Above all else, we must concentrate on areas where there can be the type of regeneration that leads to successful job creation, such as the urban programme has been responsible for. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and I intend that, in future, the economic job-creating components of the urban programme will get an increased share of available moneys.

Mr. McNamara: Does the Minister agree that one of the major obstacles in the programme is the need for money to be spent by the end of the current financial year? Is he aware that, by delaying approval, his Department is putting an intolerable burden on local authorities, which must ensure that they get their specifications and tenders out and that the work is done by the end of the year?

Mr. Patten: I understand that my Department's urban housing renewal unit has, with the co-operation of the hon. Gentleman's city council, recently approved a scheme for one of the big housing estates in his constituency. The council is confident of being able to spend that money. It just requires proper co-operation and planning between the Department and the council. We are very pleased to help in Hull, and I hope that the hon. Gentleman's constituents are also pleased.

Local Authority Land (Planning Permission)

16. **Mr. Nicholas Baker** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will bring forward proposals to limit the power of local authorities to give planning permission over land they own.

Mr. Tracey: In general, the present arrangements for making this type of decision appear to operate satisfactorily, but the Select Committee on the Environment referred to this matter in its recent examination of witnesses and we shall consider the matter again if it makes recommendations on it in its forthcoming report.

Mr. Baker: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that reply. However, will he look at the general principle, because there is something seriously wrong? Would he not be concerned, like me, if a local education authority, such as Dorset county council, gave itself permission to sell a piece of land belonging to a school playing field despite the objections of all the other local authorities and everybody interested in, or adjacent to, the project? That is a matter of concern, and I hope that my hon. Friend will look into it.

Mr. Tracey: My hon. Friend will not expect me to comment on the particular case that he has raised. However, he can rest assured that we are sympathetic to his general point. Local planning authorities are, of course, answerable to their electorates for the way in which they discharge their responsibilities. They do not have complete freedom of action. However, my hon. Friend can rest assured that we shall consider the matter carefully.

African National Congress (Talks)

3.30 pm

Mr. George Robertson (Hamilton) *(by private notice)* asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, if he will make a statement on the talks yesterday with the African National Congress.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mrs. Lynda Chalker): At Her Majesty's Government's invitation, Mr. Oliver Tambo, acting president of the African National Congress, called on me on 24 June. I expressed grave concern at the continuing violence in South Africa and emphasised that violence could never lead to a solution to South Africa's problems. A suspension of violence on all sides was essential to create a climate for real dialogue and negotiations. I also stressed to Mr. Tambo the British Government's continuing commitment to the early and complete elimination of apartheid. It was a useful and candid exchange of views.

Mr. Robertson: I congratulate the Minister on her courage in changing the Prime Minister's line by meeting Mr. Oliver Tambo. We, and the majority of British people, warmly welcome the Government's recognition, however belated, of the reality that the ANC speaks for the voiceless millions in South Africa.

Does the Minister realise that that historic meeting will be seen as little more than a gesture unless it becomes part of a process of dialogue with real opinion in South Africa — a country described by Mrs. Helen Suzman last night as being like a latin American dictatorship — and part of a process of pressure, through meaningful sanctions, on the economy of South Africa? Even today's edition of the *Financial Times* says that the policies of the Government in Pretoria have finally made sanctions unavoidable.

Will the Government now take steps to protect Britain's national interest and international responsibilities? At the EEC summit tomorrow, will the Government finally take a lead in abandoning their role as the last supporters of apartheid in the world, and instead put the maximum pressure on South Africa in order to prevent the bloodshed predicted by the Eminent Persons Group? If the Minister needs guidance at this difficult time in her dealings with the ANC, will she look to the bankers and business men, who also met Mr. Tambo yesterday, and will she reject with contempt the isolated, unrepresentative voices from the past which may come from the Benches behind her?

Mrs. Chalker: Our meeting yesterday was a further step in our efforts to promote dialogue and a suspension of violence, following the official-level contacts which took place in February, and subsequently. It is generally held that the African National Congress represents a large number of black voices but not exclusively. I shall quote what Mr. Nelson Mandela said to Mrs. Helen Suzman on 5 May:

"All groups across the political spectrum, including Chief Buthelezi's Inkatha, should be involved in negotiations for a new South Africa."

We cannot disagree with that sensible comment.

The hon. Gentleman asked for meaningful action. The European Council meets tomorrow and on Friday. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary will have in mind all the possible meaningful action that might need to be taken. We are concerned about British interests — of course we are — but we also want to bring an end to violence and make a real start to dialogue and negotiations. We shall have no hesitation in leading the way, in the most effective way possible, to bring about an end to apartheid.

Mr. Julian Amery (Brighton, Pavilion): Does my hon. Friend agree that, while the ANC undoubtedly represents an important section of black African opinion in South Africa, it by no means represents the whole of that opinion, and perhaps not even a majority? Does my hon. Friend appreciate that her meeting with Mr. Tambo could have given the impression to moderate Africans, who are not pro-apartheid but are anti-ANC, that the British Government are coming down firmly in favour of regarding the ANC as the principal negotiating partner with whom Mr. Botha should be doing business? Will she take this opportunity to make it clear that we do not regard the ANC as the principal negotiating partner, but only one of many?

Mrs. Chalker: I can reassure my right hon. Friend that the African National Congress is indeed one of many. It is impossible to say exactly whether it represents the majority of black opinion, but as I said a few moments ago, it is clear that ANC leaders believe that other voices should also be heard in a dialogue between all peoples.

I do not think that the meeting that I held yesterday on behalf of Her Majesty's Government will give the wrong impression to other groups because I have always made it clear, as has my right hon. and learned Friend, that the dialogue has to be between all groups. The fact that Mr. Oliver Tambo was in London yesterday was a coincidence, so far as we were concerned, but it was an opportunity to open a dialogue which may be very valuable in bringing an end to violence and in making a start to dialogue and negotiation.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): Is the hon. Lady aware that we welcome the meeting and the apparently constructive spirit in which it took place? Is the hon. Lady also willing to meet Dr. Allan Boesak of the United Democratic Front who is coming to, or might even be in, London? When the hon. Lady talks about the suspension of violence, does she realise that most of the violence is by the South African Government, with whom Her Majesty's Government are seeking a dialogue?

Mrs. Chalker: Any suggestions that Ministers should meet various people will be considered on their merits, as they occur and according to the situation at the time. Of course we condemn violence, from wherever it comes, because we firmly believe that no resolution of the awful problems in South Africa can be attained by continuing violence, whether it involves bombings in Durban, the awful bombings yesterday on Johannesburg, which we have condemned, or the earlier bombings on 19 May on Lusaka, Harare and Gaborone. They are all to be deplored.

Mr. Mark Carlisle (Warrington, South): Does my hon. Friend accept that many of my right hon. and hon. Friends believe that she was right to see the ANC, as an important voice to be heard at this time? Will she repudiate totally the comment from the Opposition Front Bench that our party is the last supporter of apartheid? Will she remind the Opposition Front Bench that it was this Government

[Mr. Mark Carlisle]

who managed to negotiate a settlement in Zimbabwe? Will she assure us that the Government, with our friends in the Commonwealth, will lead in taking any necessary measures to put all possible pressure on the South African Government to ensure the maintenance of the Commonwealth and the fundamental change needed in South Africa?

Mrs. Chalker: I wholeheartedly agree with my right hon. and learned Friend. We shall certainly never be lagging in our condemnation of apartheid. It is true that the settlement at the Lancaster house talks on Zimbabwe, however difficult it was to come by, shows good signs for the long term in bringing about the sort of multiracial society for which so many people in the Conservative party have worked so hard in the past.

Of course we want the Commonwealth to take a lead, and we want to take a lead within the Commonwealth. The most important action is to take effective measures, because to take measures that simply bring greater trouble would do no good, either for the Commonwealth or for this country, and certainly not for the black people of South Africa.

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): Will the hon. Lady continue to act with the courage that she demonstrated yesterday, and urge the Cabinet to ensure that any possible commission that involves Europe will consider sanctions as well as representations?

Will the hon. Lady deplore the actions of a regime that is obviously so insecure that not only has it cancelled its farcical press conferences but has felt it necessary to do what Mr. Gorbachev did not do — steal the shadow Foreign Secretary's camera?

Mrs. Chalker: I was not aware of the last violation of law that the hon. Gentleman mentioned.

Members of the Cabinet and my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister will go with an open mind and considerable information to the European Council, to our colleagues the leaders of the economic Seven and to the Commonwealth review meeting to discuss in what effective way we can bring about a change of attitude by the South African Government.

Of course we deplore the actions of a regime that institutes a state of emergency with 180-day detentions. We have done that throughout, and we shall continue to do so. Representations are today being made to the South African Government, both in Pretoria and in London, about the state of emergency, the arrests and the detention without trial.

Sir Peter Emery (Honiton): When carrying through Government policy after the interview yesterday, will my hon. Friend try to ensure that the Government do not find themselves isolated either from the Commonwealth or from the EEC in being unwilling to take the lead in positive action to show that we absolutely condemn the racist and repressive measures of the South African Government? We should be in the lead, not following.

Mrs. Chalker: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for what he has said. I shall draw his remarks to the attention of my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary and of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister.

Mr. Guy Barnett (Greenwich): Does the hon. Lady appreciate that violence by black South Africans cannot and will not be suspended until Nelson Mandela is released, and that peaceful negotiations cannot and will not begin until that happens?

Mrs. Chalker: The hon. Gentleman knows only too well that we have repeatedly called for the unconditional release of Nelson Mandela and other detainees, because we believe that that would release a man who could lead not only moderate opinion but some of those whose actions have become out of hand and who are under the control of no one. We hope that there will be an early unconditional release of Nelson Mandela and others like him.

Mr. Cyril D. Townsend (Bexleyheath): Should not the Foreign Office be congratulated on the timing of this cautious preliminary contact? Will my hon. Friend remind the House of the number of other European countries that have made similar contacts with the ANC? Is it not especially farcical to compare the position in South Africa with that in Northern Ireland?

Mrs. Chalker: My hon. Friend is absolutely right to say that it is wrong to compare the position in South Africa with that in Northern Ireland, where there is a universal franchise. The same position simply does not exist.

Whatever contacts each country of the European Community — or, indeed, the Commonwealth — is seeking, they must be carried out in the manner that is most effective in bringing an end to apartheid.

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): Is it not a fact that, where there is no democracy and there is brutal and terrible repression of the majority of the people on a racialist basis, the majority are bound at some stage to fight back and to use violence? Is it not also a fact that the real violence, as the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) said, was the state visit of Mr. Botha here, who was welcomed here not long ago by the Prime Minister against the wishes of the people? The Opposition welcome the discussions that the Minister has had with Mr. Tambo, but it is not sufficient merely to sympathise. We want economic sanctions imposed against South Africa to help the people of that country towards freedom.

Mrs. Chalker: I should remind the hon. Gentleman that only yesterday the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) said:

> "I am grateful and flattered by the Prime Minister's interest . . . does she understand that the sanctions that will be most effective are not general economic sanctions but financial sanctions?"—[*Official Report*, 24 June 1986; Vol. 100, c. 177.]

That is the deputy leader of the Labour party. We understand the frustration of many people in South Africa, both black and white, but violence will not solve the problems of that country. An end to apartheid, however, will do a great deal to bring violence to an end. I remind the hon. Gentleman that dialogue means more than talking when suitable opportunities may occur to someone like Mr. Oliver Tambo; it means talking so as to influence the South African Government.

Mr. Anthony Nelson (Chichester): Will my hon. Friend explain why, if it is wrong to receive the PLO because it refuses to eschew terrorism and violence, it was right to receive the ANC, which openly espouses such action?

Mrs. Chalker: Our official-level contacts and my meetings yesterday constitute an attempt which Her Majesty's Government believe should be made to try to bring an end to violence and a start to dialogue. The contacts that have occurred in the past involving the middle east and the links that have been established are to that very same end, which is to bring an end to violence.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): In the representations that have been made today by the Government to the South African Government in Pretoria and elsewhere, what reference was made to the 115 key trade union leaders, ranging from shop stewards to general secretaries, who are part of the 3,000 who have been arrested and detained in the past 10 days? Many of these trade union leaders represent workers in the subsidiaries of British firms. What representations were made to secure their release? Or are the profits that come from the £12,000 million investment of British companies in South Africa more important than the rights of workers in that country?

Mrs. Chalker: As far as I am aware, the representations are being made at this very moment in London and Pretoria. Representations are being made on behalf of all those who, under the state of emergency, have been arrested and detained, whether they be trade union leaders, church leaders, innocent churchgoers or anyone else.

Mr. Jerry Wiggin (Weston-super-Mare): Will my hon. Friend accept that she failed totally to answer the question of my hon. Friend the Member for Chichester (Mr. Nelson)? Do we now take it that the British Government will treat with terrorists?

Mrs. Chalker: As my hon. Friends have often said, we seek to promote dialogue to achieve negotiation. A man who certainly impressed yesterday with his total dislike of violence may indeed be able to help in that process towards dialogue and an end to violence. I have to say to my hon. Friend that I spent over half the time yesterday talking about the negative effects of violence and seeking not just to persuade but also to impress upon Mr. Tambo exactly how this, as well as any other violence, was exacerbating the situation. I believe that it was right to do so on behalf of Her Majesty's Government. We are in no way treating with terrorists. We are trying to solve a problem which the House believes has continued for far too long, and not trying to exacerbate it.

Opposition Day

[17TH ALLOTTED DAY]

Unemployed People (Mortgage Interest)

Mr. Speaker: I have selected the amendment in the name of the Prime Minister.

3.50 pm

Mr. Michael Meacher (Oldham, West): I beg to move,

That this House condemns the Government's proposal to halve mortgage interest cover for the unemployed and others for the first six months of supplementary benefit, which will sharply increase mortgage arrears leading to evictions and undermine home ownership by discouraging building societies from lending to low earners; and calls on the Government to withdraw this proposal in the interests of a policy for the family which guarantees security of tenure of the family home.

Recently, the Prime Minister trumpeted, again, her belief in a policy for the family. It is difficult to think of any policy more damaging to the family than that which threatens it with the loss of its home, yet that is exactly the effect of the Government's intention to halve mortgage interest payments for the unemployed for the first six months of supplementary benefit. It will sentence thousands to rising mortgage arrears and evictions as a penalty for being unemployed.

Instead of concentrating help on those in greatest need, as the Government claim is the object of their social security policies, the measure will concentrate maximum harm precisely at the point when people need help most —when people, through no fault of their own, lose their job. Contrary to everything that the Government claim they stand for, it will undermine home ownership by discouraging building societies from lending to those on lower incomes, and it will be the final nail in the coffin that ditches thousands who exercise their right to buy.

The Government seek to justify all that on two grounds. First, they say that the cost of mortgage interest payments to supplementary benefit claimants has risen rapidly to too high a level. That is due partly to the spread of home ownership which the Government have encouraged and is partly due to higher house prices, for which claimants can hardly be held responsible.

The truth is that more is being spent because there are more claimants, especially more unemployed claimants, and their needs are greater because house prices have risen much faster than inflation. That is not a reason for denying people such help.

The Government's second pretext for the measure is that the help given is so generous that people are better off out of work. That result is arrived at, I submit, by the use of figures so studiously contrived that the Government are implicitly admitting the implausibility of their case.

The Government, according to their note supplied to the Social Security Advisory Committee, took the example of a £16,000 mortgage, which they say is the average mortgage for a two-child family, and related it to a family on low earnings—£80 to £120 a week. Virtually nobody on earnings as low as that would have a mortgage of £16,000. It is only that thoroughly implausible combination which yields the conclusion which the Government are so determined to fabricate—that a man buying a house is better off out of work than in work. It is clear, to anyone who thinks about it for more than a moment, that the Government's figures and their conclusion are completely unreal.

Even if the work incentive argument had some force for unemployed claimants, it would be wholly irrelevant in almost half the cases. That is because a large number of owner-occupiers on supplementary benefit are not unemployed – they are pensioners or lone parents. In 1982, only 60 per cent. of owner occupiers claiming supplementary benefit were available for work. For the other 40 per cent., the discouragement to work argument, which is so precious to the Prime Minister, is irrelevant. I am well aware, of course, that the Government have tried to meet that objection by exempting pensioners from their proposals. But what about single parents and sick and disabled people? Are they to be sacrificed in the interests of the Prime Minister's obsession with the "why work" syndrome?

I put it to the House that the Government's case does not stand up to examination. The central principle called in aid by the Prime Minister in defence of this proposal in her letter to my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition — it is repeated in the Government's amendment to our motion — points in precisely the opposite direction. In her letter, the right hon. Lady said:

"The aim of the main proposal . . . is to strike a fair and reasonable balance between the borrower, the lender and the taxpayer."

Is it striking a fair balance for the Government to save £30 million by cutting mortgage interest payments to the poorest people on supplementary benefit, while at the same time paying out £370 million in mortgage tax relief to the top earners on more than £30,000 a year? Is it striking a fair balance to select for cuts in mortgage interest payments the 90,000 households — the Government's figure — in poverty who are struggling to buy a house while, at the same time, those households getting mortgage interest tax relief at the top rate of 60 per cent., who also happen to number 90,000 households, are left to enjoy their privileges untouched? Far from striking a fair balance, I submit that these proposals will produce grotesque unfairness between those in desperate need facing eviction and those on the highest incomes who cream off ever bigger tax perks every year.

Like several other measures in the Social Security Bill, this proposal is almost universally condemned. A Child Poverty Action Group survey of the responses of 60 key organisations to the Green Paper found no support for the proposal, even from the Institute of Directors, which is well known for its support for the Government on almost everything else. The National Consumer Council in its booklet entitled "Behind with the Mortgage", which was published last year, states:

"The safety net provided by mortgage interest payments to those owners faced with unemployment or relationship breakdown is crucial in avoiding repossession and homelessness during the early stages of default when financial problems may escalate to such a level that it becomes impossible to recover from them."

The Building Societies Association, which is the body most concerned about this—it is very concerned—declared in last year's report entitled "Mortgage Repayment Difficulties" that cuts in supplementary benefit would lead "to a much greater increase in arrears and repossessions."

The Institute of Housing, in its response to the Green Paper, asks that

"assistance with interest payments be continued at the same level for the meantime."

Referring to one of the other points which Ministers have used to mitigate the damage done by the proposal, the institute went on to say that it:

"considers it unlikely that mortgage insurance arrangements, in their present form and premium level, could fill the gap provided by supplementary benefit for either the long-term unemployed or low-income owner-occupiers."

The matter has been referred to the Social Security Advisory Committee, the Government's advisory body, but I think that we already well know its views. It stated:

"We do not think a scheme of this kind could be justified at all, unless the building societies and other mortgage lending bodies were prepared to give comprehensive assurances about the availability of rescheduling."

Of course, no such assurances have been given, and it is unlikely that they will be.

By far the most telling of all, in my view, is the report of the Department's own policy inspectorate which does not support the Government's case. Out of a sample of 330 claimants it shows that the average mortgage payment was £72 a month, and supplementary benefit cover will now be withdrawn for nearly half that sum. The report is in the Library and many hon. Members may have seen it. However, one in four are paying between £100 and £250 a month. For them, with an average mortgage of about £15,000 — if anything, that is a conservative figure — the interest payment is about £34 a week. Therefore, the Government are proposing to cut their weekly income by no less than £17. In the year-long bitter miners' strike the Government docked £17 a week off the miners. The Government are now transferring their vindictiveness to home owners and kicking the most vulnerable of them when they are down.

Further, there is no doubt that this measure will cause intense hardship. Already the trend for repossession is rising sharply, even before the measure is introduced. In 1979, building societies repossessed 2,500 homes and by last year, the number was seven times that at 16,500. Since, the Government's own admission——

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): Is my hon. Friend aware — I hope that he will go to Liverpool to see — that there are streets upon streets of houses in Liverpool where two or three years ago there were no "For sale" signs. Increasingly, people are now being faced with having to sell and if they cannot sell they are being faced with eviction. That is a growing trend, especially in an area such as Liverpool with its terribly high level of unemployment. This measure will increase that trend and make it absolutely appalling for the people in those areas.

Mr. Meacher: My hon. Friend is correct. It is undoubtedly inner-city areas — Liverpool is as hard hit as any — that will bear the brunt of this measure if the Government are unwise and callous enough to put it through.

By the Government's own admision, 90,000 households will be affected by the latest proposal. Therefore, it must be certain that the rate of repossession and eviction — this is the point of my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer) — will double or perhaps increase by even more, to at least 30,000 to 50,000 a year. It is easy in the House to give simple figures of that kind, but those figures conceal an enormous amount of personal misery. I hope that all hon. Members will agree that there is little worse in human experience than being driven from one's own home.

The fact that that will undoubtedly happen is revealed by the DHSS policy inspectorate's own report. It found that more than a quarter of the claimants in the sample had already been forced to approach the lender for a reduction in their mortgage payments. However, only two thirds had been able to negotiate a reduction, usually for only three months at a time. All those people were asking was to be allowed to pay the whole of their mortgage interest. Imagine what would have happened if they had approached the lenders and said that they wanted to pay only half the interest. Even under the present rules one claimant had been forced to put his home up for sale, and two others were under pressure to do so. Surely, under these proposals, that number is bound to rise dramatically.

There are other less obvious but no less damaging consequences. If mortgage interest is not met in full for the first six months on benefit but instead the loan is rescheduled at a higher amount once the six months is over, which is what the Government are proposing and hoping, a claimant could well have less incentive to return to work. The rescheduled payment could have risen to a level difficult to manage on low wages, and I believe that there would then be a strong temptation to remain on supplementary benefit until a better paid job came along. I put that to the Government because it is very important to their case.

There is another irony in the Government's proposal, the whole aim of which is to save £30 million. It may turn out, even in financial terms, to be counter-productive. Mortgage arrears are increasingly a significant cause of homelessness. In 1985, one in every 10 families was homeless owing to mortgage arrears. That is double the figure of four years ago. Since many of those made homeless as a result of mortgage arrears end up in bed and breakfast accommodation — I submit that many of them will — the financial cost to the DHSS could easily turn out to be greater than the £30 million which it is hoped to save.

From that standpoint, the proposal to restrict mortgage interest payments through supplementary benefit presents a totally false economy, quite apart from the morality of it. I am simply talking here about the financial aspect. If the Government are determined to make savings in this area, a much fairer and more rewarding route would be to restrict mortgage interest tax relief to the standard rate. That would save £250 million, eight times as much as this proposal, without any of its immensely damaging side effects.

By contrast, this proposal will indirectly press building societies into restricting their lending to those in secure employment. It will discourage lending down market in all cases that are marginal or where people are at risk of unemployment. By the same token, it will also probably threaten the Government's inner-city initiative because building societies will be unwilling to invest in low-cost properties mortgaged with those risks. Furthermore, this proposal will ensure that home owners are treated significantly less generously in future than tenants. It is remarkable that we should have such a proposal from the Government and it is a discrimination which sits extremely oddly with the Government's constantly expressed policy of encouraging owner occupation as the preferred form of tenure.

If the Government genuinely believe that there is a problem of escalating benefit expenditure on mortgage interest, they should tackle its causes, which are high

[Mr. Meacher]

unemployment and high interest rates, rather than its symptoms. What is not acceptable, especially from a Government who like to talk of concentrating help on those in need and from a Prime Minister who likes to talk about a policy for the family, is a proposal which deliberately hits families precisely when they are most vulnerable. That is why we now unreservedly call on the Government to withdraw this proposal in the interests of a genuine policy for the family which guarantees that most priceless asset for all families, security of tenure in the family home.

4.7 pm

The Minister for Social Security (Mr. Tony Newton): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

'congratulates the Government on the success of its policies to encourage home ownership; recognises the need to achieve a proper balance between the responsibilities of the borrower, the lender and the tax payer, and greater fairness as between those on Supplementary Benefit for short periods and those in low paid employment; and notes the proposals to this end that the Government has put forward for consultation to the Social Security Advisory Committee.'.

I feel bound to comment at the outset that there is something faintly ironic in the sight and sound of the hon. Member for Oldham, West, (Mr. Meacher) appearing today as the homeowners' friend. It is barely a year, if that, since the newspapers were full of stories, to the horror of his right hon. and hon. Friends, of his desire completely to abolish mortgage interest tax relief. His dedication to that cause is a byword throughout the country.

Mr. Meacher: I do not want to intervene but I must if the Minister is going to start his remarks with a deliberate fabrication of that kind. I ask him to withdraw. I never made any such allegation, I do not believe it, and I never said it. I remind him that we are not talking today about whether people are wealthy enough to receive tax relief at a certain level, but about people in desperate poverty and whether aid should be taken away from them, leading to eviction.

Mr. Newton: All I can say is that the hon. Gentleman succeeded in misleading a large part of the British press and most of his colleagues on his Front Bench by the proposals that he put forward a year or so ago. What is more, it is a matter of clear public knowledge that throughout the past six years the Labour party at national and, more important in this context, local level, has dragged its feet on the sale of council houses and on the increased right to buy that the present Government have ensured. Whatever else may be said about today's debate, the spectacle of the Labour Front Bench seeking to parade as the party of home ownership lacks a good deal of credibility.

Mr. Robert B. Jones (Hertfordshire, West): My hon. Friend does not need to go as far back as the speech made by the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher). Had he been present in yesterday's debate, he would have heard the hon. Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts), speaking from the Opposition Front Bench, say that tax relief on mortgages of £12,000 or so was acceptable, but tax relief on mortgages verging on £30,000 was unacceptable, implying what the Labour party would do.

Mr. Newton: I did not have the privilege of hearing the hon. Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts), but that would fit with the position that the Labour party adopted at the general election, which was one of hostility to the modest increase that the Conservative Government had made in the size of mortgages that could rank for tax relief. The fact is that the Labour party has consistently opposed almost every practical step that has been taken to encourage home ownership.

The truth is that we are having this debate today only because the hon. Member for Oldham, West has been frustrated in some of his ambitions in the past. If he had had his way, the people for whom he now claims to speak would not be receiving supplementary benefit for mortgage interest because he would have seen to it that they would never have become home owners in the first place. That is the reality of the position that the hon. Gentleman has sought to create. His appearance today is about as credible as Dracula turning up as a blood donor.

As I said when we previously debated this proposal, there has been no mystery about the Government's view that this area of the benefits system needed consideration and review, or, indeed, about the Government's thinking on what the conclusion might be. As I reminded the House on the previous occasion when we debated the issue briefly during the passage of the Social Security Bill, the Green Paper published almost exactly a year ago specifically said:

> "The Government intend to discuss with building societies and other interested bodies arrangements whereby less of the burden—particularly for people on benefit for a short time—falls immediately and directly on the social security system."

That proposition was echoed in the White Paper at the end of last year, in which we said:

> "The Government will continue to discuss with building societies and other major lenders what changes might be appropriate, including the possibility of a limit on the proportion of mortgage interest which would be met during an initial period in receipt of benefit."

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State referred to the same matter when he gave evidence to the Select Committee on Social Services in January. It was raised in Committee on the Social Security Bill, a fact that the hon. Member for Oldham, West appeared to have forgotten on the last occasion when he spoke about the matter. The hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) asked me about it, and again I specifically set out the nature and direction of our thinking.

What is more, far from seeking to disguise the fact that we felt that that area needed examination and what sort of examination we were undertaking, we took specific steps to amend the leaflets which, under the right-to-buy legislation, go to those inquiring about their right to buy. We amended the leaflet to draw specific attention to the fact that the Government had made the proposal. It was amended last year, to draw attention to what had been in the Green Paper. Indeed, an addendum note was added to it after the White Paper, to make it absolutely clear what the Government's thinking was.

Therefore, I refute any suggestion of the sort that has been made, to the effect that the Government have proceeded in a stealthy or underhand way. We have made our intentions clear to the House. We have made our intentions clear to those considering buying their property under the right-to-buy legislation. We are now proceeding in an absolutely normal, above board and straightforward

way to put forward proposals for public consultation to the Social Security Advisory Committee. Of course, we shall consider its view.

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark (Birmingham, Selly Oak): My view on this potential Bill is well known—I think that it is somewhat less than satisfactory. As I understood it, many of us complained at the time that the social security payments going to people were not being used for the purposes for which the money was being given. They were being used for something else. If the money goes directly to a building society or the person who holds the mortgage, that is common sense because it stops people being dispossessed of their homes. Will my hon. Friend explain to some of us who are somewhat unhappy how he thinks it helps to add to people's worries at their most vulnerable time—their first six months of unemployment, which must be appalling? How can one explain to them that there is not a lack of generosity of spirit in the proposal, which is not what I would call good Conservatism?

Mr. Newton: I shall come directly to my hon. Friend's point, which is about the fairness of the system, and the balance between the claims of different claimants in the system—in this case, according to the time that they have been on benefit. However, I should like to make it clear that that issue is separate from that of whether this or any other part of the benefit system is abused. Abuse might occur within the present or future rules. That might happen because it is just as possible that half the interest will not get passed on as that the whole of the interest was not passed on. That problem needs to be addressed. However, that is separate from the broader issues that my hon. Friend has raised, to which I shall come in a moment.

Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop (Tiverton): My hon. Friend referred to the amended leaflet. Is it or is it not the Government's intention to renege on the undertaking given in the unamended leaflet to people who bought their homes, that if they received unemployment or supplementary benefit, the interest would be paid? Is it or is it not the Government's intention to renege on that undertaking, given in writing in the leaflet, on the basis of which people entered into commitments which otherwise they might not have entered into?

Mr. Newton: I appreciate the implication of my hon. Friend's question, but it seems to me that, as with any leaflet describing the benefits system, such a leaflet can be taken only as a description of the position at the time when it is published. I think that that is commonly understood.

I note my hon. Friend's point, and I was aware of his concern. I ask him to consider that the implication of his question, if carried to its logical conclusion, would go far wider than the specific issue of whether this part of the benfit system should be changed. In the situation that my hon. Friend adumbrated, a person's entitlement to supplementary benefit could be affected by a variety of changes. For example, the substantial increase in invalidity benefit that the Government made at the social security uprating before last, in November 1984, took many long-term sick and disabled people out of supplementary benefit because it increased their invalidity benefit. On the logic that my hon. Friend has been putting forward, that, too, could be construed as a change affecting their entitlement to the full payment of mortgage interest.

Ms. Clare Short (Birmingham, Ladywood): No one would claim to have been misled if a change is made from which he gains.

Mr. Newton: The basic fact is that, to be entitled to benefit for mortgage interest, one has to be on supplementary benefit. Therefore, the logic of my hon. Friend's implied position is that anything that changes the potential entitlement to supplementary benefit of someone buying his own house is to be treated in the way he has suggested. At the very least, I ask my hon. Friend to take account of that position, but above all I ask him to take account of the fact that leaflets, whether about the right to buy or describing the social security benefits system, can be taken only as a description of the position at the time when they are published.

Let me now refer to the proposals. I should like to clear one thing out of the way before I come to the proposal that is the main focus of the debate. I should make it clear that there are several other proposals in the draft regulations that have been put to the Social Security Advisory Committee, of which the House should be reminded. Two of these proposals are designed to be beneficial to claimants and I hope that they will be welcomed by the House in that respect.

The first is designed to ensure that a loan taken out to repay an earlier advance used to acquire an interest in a home or to carry out essential repairs or improvements to it will be eligible for benefit on the same basis as an original loan. That is entirely beneficial and I assume that Opposition Members and others will welcome that.

The second proposal is for a special disregard of income from mortgage protection policies to meet the balance of mortgage payments. That is a sensible and beneficial provision which must be considered in the context of the main proposal and which I am sure that the House will welcome.

There are also two other smaller proposals designed to allow greater scope to tighten up on the extent to which the benefits system helps to meet payments on loans taken out for business purposes or payments on very expensive or large homes with a high mortgage. It was implicit in the remarks made by the hon. Member for Oldham, West that it is reasonable—whatever else we may disagree about—to impose limits on a system which is primarily intended to help protect an individual's interest in the home in which he or she lives.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): The Minister has referred to the Social Security Bill and the Government's thinking on certain aspects of the Bill. Bearing in mind the defeat that the Government suffered on the Bill in another place, and accepting the great anxiety of many people who would be adversely affected by the Bill if it is enacted, will the Minister take this opportunity to explain the Government's intentions about the proposals?

Mr. Newton: I am glad to see that you are smiling, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You will no doubt respond generously to my immediate evasion of the hon. Gentleman's request as that would take us well beyond the rules of order in the context of this debate.

I am happy to tell the House that the Government were not defeated in another place on the proposal that we are discussing today. This proposal was brought in in another

[Mr. Newton]

place by a side wind. The proposal was not contained in the Social Security Bill as originaly drafted. It was introduced by a side wind.

Ms. Clare Short: What is a side wind?

Mr. Newton: That is an amendment that dragged the proposal into the context of discussion on the Bill. Their Lordships kindly did not press the matter to a vote and we were not defeated on the issue. I will not comment further on the other points raised by the hon. Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden).

Mr. Frank Field: Why not?

Mr. Newton: I will not comment on them because to do so would be out of order.

I would now like to consider the principal proposal and the points of concern expressed by Opposition Members and by one or two of my hon. Friends. The main proposal, as the House is aware, is to limit the amount of supplementary benefit payable for mortgage interest to 50 per cent. of the total for the first six months on benefit for everyone under 60 years of age. The hon. Member for Oldham, West rightly acknowledged that that does not apply to people over pensionable age or to those slightly under pensionable age in respect of men.

Some people might have been led to believe, by the controversy that attended the matter when the proposal was announced, that we proposed to abolish supplementary payments for mortgage interest. Quite apart from the issue affecting those aged over 60, it is important to understand the limited nature of the proposals. They fully protect those whose claims continue beyond six months and they do not affect those over 60. Our estimate, as the hon. Member for Oldham, West has acknowledged, is that the proposals affect about one fifth of the expenditure in that area—£30 million out of a total of £150 million. They will affect some 90,000 claimants at any one time. The figure of £30 million compares with £9,000 million which is paid to building societies in mortgage interest. The 90,000 figure must be considered against the 6 million borrowers.

We have made it clear that when a claim lasts more than six months, mortgage interest would be met in full. Moreover, where the limitation has caused arrears and these are capitalised into a higher outstanding loan, the extra interest on the higher loan would also be met. That is specifically designed to protect the position of those whose claim does not turn out to be short term.

I must stress to my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Mr. Beaumont-Dark) that, despite the numbers of people who, unhappily, are unemployed for longer periods, most spells of unemployment, even now, are relatively short. Approximately one quarter of the people who become unemployed leave the register within four weeks. Half leave it within three months and two thirds within six months.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: My hon. Friend continues to raise more worries as to why the hell we are messing with this matter. If, on my hon. Friend's figures, most people are unemployed for only a short time, two thirds for this much time and one third for that much time, we seem to be causing a lot of misery, woe and concern for peanuts. Why are we doing that? I suggest that my hon. Friend should say little and try to get the proposals through.

Mr. Newton: I hope that my hon. Friend will not dismiss the point that I was trying to make, especially as the hon. Member for Oldham, West specifically said that in some cases these payments can amount to significant sums of money and run into hundreds of pounds a month. In fact, people would probably lose tax relief as a result of the hon. Gentleman's proposal. It is legitimate to ask whether mortgage payments for people with large mortgages and in normally well-paid jobs, who may simply be between jobs or unemployed for a short period, should be completely picked up on supplementary benefit from day one——

Mr. Frank Field *rose*——

Mr. Newton: —and paid for through the tax system by many people whose income over the year will be significantly less than those to whom the supplementary benefit payments are being made. An issue of equity is involved, especially when we consider people with large mortgages who are out of work for short periods. I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Selly Oak will not dismiss that point.

Mr. Field: I am grateful to the Minister for giving way after he has drawn our attention to the reasons why the House should not support those people who are unemployed and who probably vote Tory rather than for any other party. Is not the Minister misleading the House when he suggests that these unemployed people immediately become eligible for supplementary benefit? Many people do not become eligible for supplementary benefit for a long time. It is not a case of people with large mortgage payments opting out of jobs and opting on to benefit. These people will have suffered a considerable drop of income over a long period of time before they receive benefit.

Mr. Newton: That may be true in some cases but not in as many as I suspect the hon. Gentleman may think. It will, of course, depend on the amount of capital the person possesses and that may rule him out of supplementary benefit.

I am sure that the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field), with his expertise, would agree that if someone—albeit with a large income but who may conceivably have mortgaged himself to a high level and does not have much capital—unhappily falls into this position, the existence of the large mortgage is likely to bring him immediately on to supplementary benefit. If he has a mortgage payment of £200 or £250 a month, his supplementary benefit entitlement would be some £250 and £300 a month or possibly more if he has two or three children. In those circumstances it is unlikely that any other entitlement to income would rule him out of supplementary benefit. He may well get immediate payment of supplementary benefit for mortgage interest from the outset because of the sheer size of the mortgage.

Mr. Field: What the Minister says is true, but he still needs to explain to the House why the Government are bringing in a measure that will hit their supporters more than any others.

Mr. Newton: The Government have made it clear that one of their concerns is to ensure fairness between groups within the benefits system and especially for those who are in low-paid employment, but not in the benefits system. In addition, we are anxious to focus the available resources

as effectively as possible on those who most clearly need help. That is the context in which our proposal is put forward.

Mr. Keith Raffan (Delyn): My hon. Friend must accept that the Government's proposal will increase anxiety among the unemployed. It must do so. Even if, as my hon. Friend rightly said, most people are unemployed for a relatively short period, they do not know that they will be unemployed for only a short time. In two towns in my constituency where 41 per cent. of the men are unemployed, the Government's proposal is increasing anxiety enormously. Even if people want to sell their homes, they cannot do so because there is no market for them. There are at least half a dozen families in my constituency where the fathers commute 300 or 400 miles during the week to get jobs, while supporting their homes in my constituency. There is no way that my hon. Friend can get away from the fact that the Government's proposal will increase anxiety.

Mr. Newton: I recognise the force with which my hon. Friend speaks and we shall take account of his anxieties alongside the considerations that I am putting forward. I must ask him to bear in mind that mortgage payments can also be a source of anxiety to those in relatively low-paid employment, who will often be paying the taxes to meet the needs on which my hon. Friend focused.

It is right for the Government to consider the balance between the various considerations, and that is precisely what we are seeking to do. We think that it is appropriate to strike a balance—

Ms. Clare Short: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Newton: Yes, but I had better not give way too often, because I am sure that a number of hon. Friends wish to take part in this debate.

Ms. Short: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. He must know that low-paid workers are most vulnerable to unemployment and intermittent spells of unemployment. The Government's proposal will hit those people. Will the Minister please not talk about people with massive mortgages? Such people are usually wealthy and will often have savings. They will not be hit. The low-paid struggling to keep out of unemployment—possibly going in and out of unemployment—will be worried, frightened and hurt by the Government's proposal.

Mr. Newton: That group can find that they are worse off being in low-paid employment than being on benefit. The linking rule proposals accept that there is a problem about people who are in work for short periods. We have sought to ensure in the draft regulations that they will not be disadvantaged.

We are seeking to strike a balance between a variety of considerations, including the amount of help that borrowers can legitimately expect to receive from the benefits system in securing a capital asset that will normally grow in value, the guarantee that a lender should expect from the benefits system in protecting the loan that he advances and what it is reasonable to expect the taxpayer to bear.

We have sought a balance that takes account of what is reasonable and sustainable for the borrower. The latest estimate of the average payment of supplementary benefit for the first six months on benefit is £16 per week. On that basis, the average amount to be paid on an outstanding mortgage if a claim lasted for the full six months—as I said, many will not—would be about £200, which hardly merits the sort of language used by the hon. Member for Oldham, West.

I am sorry that my hon. Friend the Member for Selly Oak has temporarily left his place, because I wanted to tell him that another consideration is equity between home owners who are out of work and can receive full payment of mortgage interest from the first day on benefit and home owners in work, but on low incomes that may not be much above the benefits that they would receive if they were out of work.

The hon. Member for Oldham, West raised a number of issues in connection with the figures that we put to the Social Security Advisory Committee. I do not think that the hon. Gentleman questioned the validity of the figures, which clearly show that working families with a £16,000 mortgage, which is the average loan outstanding for such families, have an income while out of work that is appreciably higher than their income while in work if they are in the earnings range of £80 to £120 a week. As to whether those families are representative—a point raised by the hon. Member for Oldham, West—the available data show that there were 130,000 working families—with children—who have mortgages of over £10,000 and earnings below £150 a week. Of those families, 30,000 had mortgages of over £20,000. The problem of equity cannot be dismissed as a trivial one.

We also provided data for families with a £10,000 mortgage and they showed that for the earnings range £80 to £120 a week, income from supplementary benefit was very close to income from work. Whatever else Opposition Members say, I hope that they will recognise that a problem exists.

Alongside our proposals and some of the considerations that led the Government to put those proposals before the SSAC, I have tried to put to the House the view that anyone concerned with the equity of the benefits system and the balance of demands made on the taxpayer and on those receiving benefits must address a range of questions.

There are questions to be asked about whether it is reasonable that the taxpayer should pick up the whole of the bill for purchasing an appreciating capital asset from the first day on benefit, even for what may be very short periods and when many of those paying the bills may be little or no better off than those whose bills are being paid.

Mr. Nick Raynsford (Fulham): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Newton: No. I have given way enough.

There are questions about whether it is right that lenders should expect or be given the guarantee that this part of the benefits system implies and about whether we should maintain a system that can undoubtedly contribute significantly to the unemployment trap, which all of us agree should be tackled. We must also ask how far such expenditure can be seen as a proper priority at a time when there are so many other pressing demands.

I say no more to the House than that those are problems which can and should be addressed within our overall plans for social security, which seek to make the system fairer between those who are in work and those who are out of work, to tackle the unemployment trap and, above all, to ensure that the huge resources devoted

[Mr. Newton]

to social security are channelled as effectively as possible to those who most clearly need the help that the taxpayer can and should provide.

Our proposals seek to address those problems. They have been put forward for consultation in the normal way and we shall, of course, consider the outcome of that consultation carefully and fully before coming to any final conclusions. We shall also consider what is said in the debate. In that spirit, I invite the House to reject the motion and endorse the Government's amendment.

4.38 pm

Mr. Gordon Oakes (Halton): I am one of the two Opposition Members who are vice-presidents of the Building Societies Association. It is not a financial interest, but merely an honorary job, and I would have mentioned it only in passing if the Minister had not tried to cover up one of the weakest cases that I have ever heard presented to the House by making an aggressive attack on my hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) and the Labour party.

The building societies movement, started largely in the north of England, came from the pennies of the poor. It was a working-class movement of people who tried to buy their own houses to save themselves from being ground down by landlords. The Tory party tried to hijack the owner-occupier from the building societies. The Government's proposals show the House, the owner-occupier and the public just how thin is their real love of the owner-occupier.

This takes me back to my childhood. My father bought his house, but my father-in-law, who worked in the same factory, steadfastly refused to buy his house. He could have afforded it, because he had more money than my father. He was a plumber, whereas my father was a labourer and a chargehand. My father-in-law would not buy his house because of the fear that if he lost his job he would be unable to keep up the mortgage repayments. Because of his fear, he lived instead in a council house. The Government are bringing back that fear.

I am appalled by how little the Minister understands the psychology of somebody who suddenly finds that he is out of work. These proposals will attack, not the long-term unemployed, but those who are out of work for the first six months. The hon. Member for Delyn (Mr. Raffan) clearly understands this point. He told his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services that when a man becomes unemployed he does not know whether he will ever find work again. If he is lucky, he will be in work again within three or six months. However, he does not know that. He may be out of work for ever. In a constituency such as mine, or the consituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer), the likelihood is that if a person loses his job he will be out of work for ever.

Mr. Raffan: Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that this measure discriminates most against those parts of the country that are hardest hit by unemployment? In my constituency a quarter of the labour force have lost their jobs in the last 15 years. These are the people who will be hit the hardest. They know that they will be out of work for at least six months. This measure will break their backs. They are desperately looking for jobs, but there are no jobs for them.

Mr. Oakes: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for what he has said. He is another Member with sense on that side of the House. I hope that he and the hon. Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Mr. Beaumont-Dark) will prevail upon the Government to drop these stupid proposals.

The reasons for the proposals have varied. The Green Paper "Reform of Social Security", volume 2, Cmnd. 9518, argued in paragraph 2.92:

> "The government wish to introduce changes in the system to reduce the discouragement for owner-occupiers to return to work that can apply under the present interest payment commitment."

The Minister did not say that today. The spokesman for the Department of Health and Social Security did not say that either. The reasons that the Department gave were to

> "reduce the inequity in treatment between home owners on benefit and those in work; share responsibility for helping those on benefit with mortgage liabilities between the state and the borrowers, and lending organisations; reduce the burden on the taxpayer; not affect long-term pensioners".

The Minister does not dare to say that the proposals will discourage owner-occupiers from returning to work, but that is precisely what they will do. If a home owner becomes unemployed because of the Government's policies, after six months the Government's darling is no longer loved. The home owner becomes a feckless individual who will not go back to work because he wants the state to pay his mortgage. That is precisely what the Government are saying in these proposals.

The Minister referred to the inequity between a person in work who is paying a mortgage and a person who, through no fault of his own, loses his job and is on the dole. I repeat that the most vulnerable time when he is on the dole is the first few weeks. His whole world collapses and he finds that he may also lose his home. The Building Societies Association and individual building societies say —the hon. Member for Delyn will appreciate this point — that when people become unemployed the vast majority of them will starve rather than reduce their mortgage commitments. They pay their mortgages up to the hilt and hope that their building societies never find out that they have lost their jobs. They are ashamed to be out of work. Above all else, they will try to keep a roof over their heads. The same is true of council tenants. Above all other expenses, they will pay their rent. That is an ordinary, working-class concept which the Minister probably does not appreciate.

I have already mentioned that the Minister referred to inequity. Let me therefore consider two semi-detached houses on a council estate. In one of the semi-detached houses there is an owner-occupier. He has been led—or misled—by the Government into buying his house. Next door, there is a local authority tenant. If the Minister is looking for inequity, he can find it there. The owner-occupier finds that, for the first six months, half his mortgage interest cover disappears at a stroke. However, the council house tenant next door does not find that half of the rent is taken away from his supplementary benefit.

I hesitate to push the anomaly too far. Knowing this Government, their next step will be to cut by half their payment of rent to council tenants who are on supplementary benefit. That is a glaring inequity. The owner-occupier will say to the Government — a Government who are proud of the fact that they introduced the right of ownership — "The chap next

door was right. He is better off than I am. I was a fool to buy this house and to listen to you. Where do I stand now?"

The inequity goes much further than the full payment of rent. I understand that the amount that the DHSS allows a person who is on supplementary benefit for the maintenance of the insurance premiums on his home is £1·85 a week. The average cost, taking into account both maintenance and insurance, is at least £6 a week. Therefore, he is worse off even without this measure, which will reduce the amount of money that he receives.

I speak, not on the behalf of the association, but as a vice-president of the Building Societies Association. I deplore the cynical way in which the Government intend to halve mortgage interest cover for the first six months. They know perfectly well that building societies are mutual institutions and that they are also caring institutions. They care about their borrowers. If payments are missed for a few months because somebody is ill or out of work, all he needs to do is to tell his building society, and in 99 per cent. of cases the building society will look after him and say that it is a temporary lapse.

If the borrowers cannot meet their interest payments during the first six months, the Government hope that the building societies will carry them. They hope that the building societies will pick up the tab for the Department of Health and Social Security. I think that the building societies will do just that. However, it is both unjust and inequitable. It is inequitable because building societies are not companies. They are mutual institutions. Having picked up the tab, the building societies will pass it on to other borrowers and to investors. However, it gets the DHSS off the hook.

I thought that the Minister was going to say that people should insure against redundancy. I am glad that he did not do so. It is possible to insure against redundancy, but the problem is that those who insure against redundancy feel almost certain that they will never become redundant. The vast majority of borrowers do not take out that kind of cover. If a section of the community were to insure against redundancy, and they were almost certain to benefit from it, the premiums would be impossibly high and the ordinary borrower would be unable to afford to take out insurance against redundancy.

Mrs. Edwina Currie (Derbyshire, South): Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that at least one of the policies of that kind that I have seen offers insurance against redundancy for up for two years? It costs only £39, irrespective of the size of the mortgage, and covers the whole of that two-year period.

Mr. Oakes: As the hon. Lady says, that is for a two-year period. A person who is taking on a mortgage and who takes out insurance usually takes out health and redundancy insurance. The insurance companies encourage people to take out health insurance as well. The hon. Lady said it costs £39 for two-year cover, but the vast majority of people do not take out such insurance and are unlikely to do it unless they feel that they are likely to become victims of unemployment.

The country at large believes that the Government have introduced this measure largely out of spite because of the way in which building societies behaved during the miners' strike. Miners are good customers of building societies. They are respected by the societies, and when the building societies knew that the miners were in a temporary difficulty they looked after them during the difficult period of the strike. I think that because of that the societies incurred the wrath of the Government. Many miners are owner-occupiers, especially in the north of England.

If the Government really believe that their darling owner-occupiers on whom they have prided themselves in the past are the feckless people that this measure suggests, and that they will not work because the Government are paying their mortgages, a simple remedy is available—treat mortgage interest payments for a person on supplementary benefit in the same way as rent payments are treated. That means direct payment of the interest to the building society by the agreement of the borrower and his building society.

Mr. Newton: I almost sought to intervene a moment ago, but restrained myself. The right hon. Gentleman missed the point in what he said about the expectations of the building societies in relation to those on benefits. Large numbers of people who may have similar difficulties with their mortgages may not be on supplementary benefit, and the building societies and mutual associations will readily and rightly help such people for the sort of time that we are talking about.

The right hon. Gentleman went further and praised the building societies for the help that they gave to the miners who were on strike for a long time. Is he saying that it is right for the building societies to be expected to assist people on strike, thereby depriving themselves of income, but entirely wrong to expect them to adopt a similar approach to those who are in difficulty for any other reason?

Mr. Oakes: The Minister has misunderstood what I said, perhaps maliciously. Building societies are mutual institutions that are owned by their members, and the borrower is just as much a member as the investor. A different relationship exists between a building society borrower and any other sort of debtor. That is because he joined the building society when he became a borrower and is a member of that society.

If the Minister thinks that people who are unemployed are feckless and likely not to return to work, he could introduce a system of direct payment of interest to building societies in the same way as there is direct payment of rent to local authorities. Many building society borrowers would welcome that. They worry about their mortgages being paid and would voluntarily enter into such an agreement with the DHSS. Many of my constituents ask me whether they should write to the DHSS office about the direct payment of rent. They want to do that so that they can be sure that they will not fall into temptation and get into difficulties with their rent.

This is a miserable measure, which attacks people when they are most vulnerable. The Government hope that because they are caring associations the building societies will carry the cost. I hope that the Minister will not go ahead with his proposals and that he will listen not only to the Opposition but to the wise words uttered in interventions by his own hon. Friends.

4.55 pm

Mr. Gwilym Jones (Cardiff, North): I welcome the new proposals that my hon. Friend the Minister has described — the proposals that cover further advances and

[Mr. Gwilym Jones]

mortgage protection policies. If it is necessary, I declare my interest as a director of an insurance broking company. The disregard for mortgage protection policies will be most useful. I have been kind so far, but I am afraid that I may not be so kind hereafter.

I should like to make three points about the Government's proposals. First, if the motive behind these proposals is simply the achievement of an economy I am totally opposed to them, because that reason alone would not be justification for the proposals. The figure that has been suggested is £30 million, but that theoretical projection is unlikely to be achieved, for reasons I shall give in a moment. I am just as anxious about what I would describe as the psychological effect of these proposals as about their practical effects—in exactly the way that my hon. Friend the Member for Delyn (Mr. Raffan) described the matter in his first intervention, when he spoke about the anxiety of unemployment.

My hon. Friend the Minister is right to be apprehensive about any disincentive to return to work in the existing arrangements. He pointed to the relatively favourable position of people on benefit when they were compared especially to low-income families that were in work. My own apprehensions are about exactly that effect being achieved by the proposals. It is possible for the scope of these proposed changes easily to be exaggerated usually for political reasons, as happened during the speech by the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher).

The proposals provide for a 50 per cent. reduction in the first six months; thereafter, interest payments will be met in full. I see that change during and after six months providing a positive incentive for exactly what my hon. Friend the Minister must not want to see. I anticipate that some of those who find themselves in this position will recognise the loss that they are incurring in the first six months on supplementary benefit and will be encouraged to prolong unemployment beyond the six months in an attempt to recoup what they initially lost. I am sure that the Minister does not want to see that, any more than any hon. Member would want to see it.

Worse still, that disincentive to return to employment might become a permanent feeling. I am sure that all hon. Members agree that we ought to offer every encouragement to the spirit of enterprise in people who, through no fault of their own, find themselves out of work.

I do not want to make any exemptions here, but of all the cases that would be covered, the ones that come most easily to mind are the cases of executive and middle management people and those making their way in careers that have been interrupted too early. In a positive manner we ought to offer them every encouragement for a return to work. We should not do that in a negative fashion but should seek to end the position of such people being a cost to the taxpayer. That is a desirable objective, but equally important is their own contribution to wealth production and the continued regeneration of the economy.

Mr. Neil Thorne (Ilford, South): I accept my hon. Friend's perfectly reasonable concern for those who are unemployed and for the difficulties that they face. I am sure he would also wish to be fair to taxpayers. It would be wrong for the taxpayer to allow an unemployed person to benefit from a capital gain at the taxpayers' expense. Does my hon. Friend feel that a fairer way to deal with the matter would be for the person who needs to go to the DHSS for help with payments to agree to an entry being made against his land registry title to the effect that any capital gain acquired should be recouped by the taxpayer when the property is sold?

Mr. Jones: I am grateful for that intervention. I am aware of the need to be fair to the taxpayer. Nor should we ignore the comparison with people in low-paid work. We should do everything possible to encourage people back into work and to stop them being a cost to the taxpayer, but my hon. Friend's proposition of a notation in the land registry about any capital gain made for the relevant period would be difficult to achieve in theory, let alone in practice. People might try to sell their house in an area in which unemployment is felt heavily, but there may be no sale and no capital gain because others in the area are in the same boat.

The theoretical savings of £30 million will not necessarily be achieved. The right hon. Member for Halton (Mr. Oakes) spoke about transferring the burden from taxpayers to building societies. The saving will not necessarily be made, because most building societies will try to be as reasonable and helpful as possible to borrowers. It is likely that building societies will accept 50 per cent. of interest payments for the first six months as a matter of course, rolling up the rest of the payment until after that time, when the 50 per cent. saved would have to be picked up by supplementary benefit. The burden on building societies would be thus relieved, with no saving for the taxpayer.

There might be room for abuse in the present arrangements for supplementary benefit mortgage interest payments. That is less likely to happen when a person is unemployed and has no immediate prospect of employment than when a person is unemployed but has a reasonable certainty of employment before too long. Such a person might take advantage of the supplementary benefit payments to bear mortgage interest payments. Such cases are not likely to be many and the proposal of a six-month period to cover them is excessive. We are taking a sledgehammer to crack a nut.

I listened to what my hon. Friend the Minister said and I shall listen to the rest of the debate. I cannot promise that I shall be able to support him when the House divides, but we are talking only about proposals in draft. They have not yet received the formal consideration of the Social Security Advisory Committee. If they return to the House in anything like their present form, I would not be able to support them. It would be far better if they did not come back, and never saw the light of day.

5.4 pm

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): I agree with much of what the hon. Member for Cardiff, North (Mr. Jones) said. He advanced a potent argument about the psychological, as opposed to the practical, effect of these proposals. He also mentioned the disincentives that they might lead to. He rightly observed that building societies might mitigate the cost of mortgage interest by accepting only 50 per cent. of it for the first six months. His arguments led me to my original conclusion, that, as he said, we are taking a heavy sledgehammer to crack a nut.

The Minister started by belabouring the official Opposition Front Bench about their attitude to the sale of

council houses. He rightly observed that the Government are intent on increasing home ownership. That being so, an increase under this Budget heading must have been inevitable. Between 1975 and 1983 expenditure on mortgage interest relief has increased more than seven times and expenditure on supplementary benefit has increased more than four times. What level of expenditure would the Minister countenance as reasonable? There must be an acceptable increase. The Government have to make a judgment about that.

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman will have noticed that I did not refer to the level of expenditure at all in my speech. I put the weight of the argument on fairness, equity and incentives, which are the real points at issue.

Mr. Kirkwood: If the Minister tells me that, I accept it, but I suspect that the Treasury saw the increase and obliged DHSS Ministers to make a change.

The Minister also said that there has been no mystery about how the proposals have been introduced. That is true for the proposal concerning mortgage interest repayments. I might have missed something, but I did not think that, when the proposals were first mooted in the Green Paper and then followed through to the White Paper, they would affect the disabled and single parents. The Minister referred, almost in passing, to the other two changes concerning home loans for business purposes and restrictions on unnecessarily high costs in relation to other housing in the area. I may have missed something, but I believe that neither of those changes saw the light of day until a few days ago. There is therefore an element of mystery.

The Minister's case was minimalist. The more I listened to it, the more I agreed with the hon. Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Mr. Beaumont-Dark), who said that the game was not worth the candle in terms of the anxiety caused. In an intervention a moment ago, the Minister said that he is interested in equity. What representations has he had from low-paid workers that this is a monstrous inequity which they want put right? He said that this issue must be addressed. It sounds as though he as been forced, lobbied and pressed heavily by a group of people who consider themselves to be at a disadvantage. Has the Minister had any representations to that effect? I doubt whether he has. If he is interested in the equity argument, the answer is clear and is lying in his hand for him to use if he wishes. As was suggested to the housing benefit review team, he should apply standard housing benefit and extend it to mortgage interest payments to redress positively, not negatively, the question of equity.

The Minister said that the issue must be addressed. However, as I understand it, the concept of the welfare state is to make provision for unaccountable misfortune and circumstances that cannot be foreseen. A classic example would be people who suddenly and unaccountably lose their jobs. In such circumstances, for the welfare state to withdraw an element of support, as the Government seek to do, would run counter to the provision, thrust and principles of the welfare state.

This is a sneaky move in so far as the Minister is taking £30 million out of the budget of people who do not know that this may happen to them. It is a soft target, because who knows when he may lose his job or be caught by this provision? It is an easy cut to make because no organised lobby will protest against it, apart from Government Back-Bench Members, such as the hon. Members for Delyn (Mr. Raffan), for Selly Oak and for Cardiff, North, who are acutely on the ball in this regard.

This is a false economy. Have the Government taken into account the increase in housing benefit that will accrue as a result of the changes if arrangements are not entered into with building societies simply to roll over the payments, so that the supplementary benefit system will pick them up after six months? Surely people will be made homeless as a result. If they are made homeless, they will be priority cases for local authority housing, and that would lead straight to housing benefit applications and claims. Does the £30 million that the Government hope to save take into account the increased cost of housing benefit? If not, the Government have got their sums wrong.

The Minister and the Government generally have made great play of their consultations with the building societies and local authority associations. That was as far as we got in Standing Committee in terms of a positive response from the Government at any stage when the issue was raised. I have yet to see — again, I may have missed them — any results from the consultations that the Government had with the local authority associations or the building societies. I should be interested to read any exchanges, correspondence or minutes of meetings that suggest that any of the organisations were enthusiastic about or warmly endorsed this proposal.

The Government are making some play of the fact that mortgage protection policies are available to mitigate some of the worst effects of the change. As a practising solicitor before I became a Member of Parliament, I was involved with mortgage protection policies, so I know that they have extremely restricted provisions. Only the larger building societies offer them, and then only in restricted circumstances. The Government should not adduce them as a measure of protection available to people who would otherwise be hit by the proposals.

I have in the past seen the Minister persuade his Back-Bench Members with an almost impossible brief, but having listened carefully to him today, I think that he has signally, for the first time, failed to a greater extent than at any time during the two years in which I have been watching him.

5.14 pm

Mrs. Edwina Currie (Derbyshire, South): I have listened with interest to the comments made by the Opposition. I wonder whether hon. Members realise that it has never been automatic to pay 100 per cent. of mortgage interest. I have examined several Supplementary Benefits Commission reports, and I was interested to find that one of its annual reports drew our attention to the increasing cost of mortgage interest repayments. It stated:

"Our policy is to regard these outgoings . . .as reasonable for supplementary benefit purposes if they were reasonable at the time they were entered into. If they were not, the claimant is given at least six months to move."

That was from the 1979 report, Cmnd. 8033.

Even the Labour Government were being rotten to mortgage interest claimants on supplementary benefit. Any suggestion that is started to happen, or was proposed, under this Government is nonsense. Those rules have been in operation for a long time.

Mr. Raynsford: Does the hon. Lady accept that there is a difference between that provision, which remains part of the supplementary benefit scheme ensuring that excessive payments are not made to people who have over-extended themselves, and which is a necessary safeguard, and a completely arbitrary cut, irrespective of whether outgoings are reasonable, which is what the Government propose?

Mrs. Currie: Provided that the hon. Gentleman will accept—I am sure that he made a lot of fuss about it in those days—that the Labour Government did it, too.

Mrs. Margaret Beckett (Derby, South): That was the Supplementary Benefits Commission——

Mrs. Currie: I am sure that the hon. Lady will get an opportunity to make her own speech later.

It is well to remind ourselves, if we may, of the genesis of these proposals. During the year-long miners' strike, striking miners did not qualify for full benefits. They managed very well on the supplementary benefit paid over for their mortgages. The building societies actively co-operated and colluded with them during that time. As a result, the DHSS, not the National Union of Mineworkers, was the main source of finance and support for the families of striking miners, and as a result extensively prolonged the strike.

My local pitmen were different from those who received such assistance in two ways: first, they had a ballot; and secondly, they voted to work and did just that. As a result, they had no extra help with their mortgages during those 12 months. They felt exceedingly badly about that. The strike should have come to a conclusion far sooner than it did, and had the building societies not acted as they did, I am sure that Mr. Scargill would have got his come-uppance much sooner.

It is also worth pointing out that this is the main form of assistance for housing that is still paid to the householder. Under housing benefit, council rents and rates are paid direct, and only private rental property allowance, which represents a tiny percentage of the total paid in housing benefit, is paid to the householder.

Mr. Raynsford: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Mrs. Currie: No, not again.

Mr. Raynsford: On a point of information.

Mrs. Currie: No. The hon. Gentleman, who is extremely talented and knowledgeable, will no doubt make his contribution in a few moments.

As the right hon. Member for Halton (Mr. Oakes) rightly said, we could tackle the problem differently. It might be better to change the rules and make them closer to those for other housing benefit claimants, so that supplementary benefit would be paid straight to the building society and could be used only against mortgage interest payments. That would achieve the objective of protecting a man's home without giving assistance and encouragement to industrial disputes. I commend that suggestion to the Minister. I understand from a written reply that it is already done for mortgage defaulters or others if it is

"in the overriding interests of the claimant or his family to do so."—[*Official Report*, 12 February 1985; Vol. 73, c. 158.]

We have that right and that power and, if we were being really hard-nosed, tough and aggressive during an industrial dispute, we might use that power once again.

We are a long way from the miners' strike, and it is unlikely that, at least as long as we have a Conservative Government led by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, there will be another miners' strike or another similar industrial dispute. I noticed that the teachers made sure that their pockets were not hit in any way during their strike and that they did not make any claims on the social security system.

The Government have three objectives, and they are all laudable: first, to reduce spending, which is something that we were twice elected to do. We have not been terribly good at it, but we intended to do it. The second objective is to encourage people to take responsibility for themselves and for their welfare. That is a necessary objective in a free society. The third objective is to avoid the disincentive of returning to work if the payment for that work is not sufficient to pay the mortgage. Some of those objectives have been welcomed by responsible bodies. In paragraph 337 of its fourth report of 1985, in which it responded to the Green Paper, the Social Security Advisory Committee said:

"We accept that for some claimants the present arrangements may operate as a disincentive"—

it gives an illustration of this—

"and that it is also questionable whether public funds should be used to help individuals acquire an appreciating capital asset whilst they are dependent on means-tested benefit."

A Building Societies Association report, published in January 1985, also recognised the supplementary benefit scheme as

"almost certainly the most generous in the world."

Therefore, we should recognise that some of the Government's proposals have had their supporters.

I am a little sceptical about the claim to save money. My hon. Friend the Minister will know that I always want to know what social security proposals will cost, whether we shall save anything, or whether they will—as is usually the case—end up costing much more. The first thing that I found was that the DHSS does not know how much it spends on this sort of benefit. In a written answer on 23 May 1986, which was addressed to the hon. Member for Shelter, the hon. Member for Fulham (Mr. Raynsford), it was announced that the DHSS knew the cost in 1983—£150 million—and thought that it knew how many people had claimed in 1984—277,000—but that it did not know the cost for 1984 or for 1985. I could lay odds that it does not know the cost now, yet mortgage interest information has been collected as a separate item since 1983. Somebody must know.

It is a little alarming that we should be asked to swallow whole the claim that a lot of money will be saved when the Government do not know the cost in the first place. I am also slightly sceptical about the suggestion that we will save £35 million. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister can answer this point. He spoke about 90,000 people and a cost of £200 each. That works out at not £35 million but £18 million. In that case, it looks as though we are taking a substantial sledgehammer to crack a nut.

If it is only 90,000 people at any one time, it would be interesting to know how the DHSS reached a figure of £35 million, whether it has any idea of how many people will be affected, and if so, who. It works out that the figure is about £8 a week, but I am slightly sceptical, because the social security policy inspectorate, which did some research on this issue, found that the average payment for the entire mortgage was £16·64 a week in 1984. Of that, th amount for interest was only £12·11 a week. That

suggests that we would be saving about £6 a week, not £8. However, I look forward to the comments of my hon. Friend the Minister.

My hon. Friend the Minister knows that I support almost anything that saves money on the social security bill. I just want to be sure that we do save money, and that the savings are not a chimera that will vanish if the essential administrative costs, such as finding out how much the darned thing costs in the first place, are added up.

The Government's proposals may well achieve other objectives that are less desirable, particularly to Conservatives. They may well discourage home ownership in some parts of the United Kingdom. I do not think that they would do so in my part of the United Kingdom, where unemployment is low, but they may well have an effect on some families who, until this Government came to power, had no choice but to be council tenants. I refer, for example, to single-parent families.

The social security inspectorate inquiry found that on the whole claimants had managed to negotiate and were able to maintain their payments. Thus, the proposals may not affect existing borrowers, but they may well affect potential owner-occupiers. We do not want to put people off from owning their own homes. In particular, we do not want to treat those living on council estates differently. But it just does not wash to argue that the proposals will make people homeless. We are talking about £6 a week, when somebody may be obtaining benefit of £100 or more. Thus, the proposals may well be neither here nor there in that respect, but the myth will have its effect, and that may well discourage the few people whom we most want to care for.

I support another suggestion that has been made. My hon. Friend the Minister will remember that I wrote to him at the time of the Green Paper to ask whether he was serious about the proposals. He told me that he was pursuing discussions with the insurance companies. I believe that we should chase up the possibility of getting proper insurance cover. This would probably save nearly all the £150 million which, back in 1983 at least, we thought the scheme cost. It would encourage more home ownership, because people would have some security. It would help to make people more responsible and would prevent funds being used during industrial disputes. The insurance companies would be exceedingly loth to pay out to a claimant who had himself been responsible for his circumstances.

I believe that we should make private redundancy and sickness insurance compulsory for all mortgage holders. There are already redundancy policies. The best ones seem to come from Yorkshire, where there seems to be some true grit. The Skipton building society is offering loans with a rate guaranteed to stay at 9·9 per cent. as long as people take redundancy insurance through General Accident and Life Assurance Corporation plc. The Scarborough building society is offering a mortgage care insurance scheme, providing cover against redundancy, sickness, or any other event that may prevent a borrower from working. That costs only £5 a month for every £100 of mortgage payment and works out at roughly £5 for every £10,000 borrowed, which is peanuts.

Mr. Kirkwood: I have listened to the hon. Lady carefully, and she is making an important point. Does she accept that people do not make much use of such policies at present? If so, and the hon. Lady's suggestion is taken up, more people will have such policies and the premiums will go sky high.

Mrs. Currie: On the contrary. I am not an expert on insurance, but, as the right hon. Member for Halton said, most of those who take out policies are those who face the risk of redundancy. If such policies are compulsory, the risks will be spread much more widely, so there will be no reason for premiums to rise.

The National Association of Estate Agents has a scheme entitled the redundancy mortgage protection scheme, which helps the borrower to pay his mortgage instalments for a period of up to two years. It covers endowment mortgages as well. It costs just £39 for the initial two-year period. Again, that is peanuts. If the cost of such schemes to the insurance companies is so low now, I cannot imagine that it would rise if all of us, even including hon. Members were protected similarly. I believe that the cost would fall and that it would be very good business. It is worth pointing out that all those schemes are much more generous than any scheme that the Government could afford.

I tried to find out how much business the insurance companies were doing, but that turned out to be difficult, because they cross-subsidise. However, according to figures published by the Association of British Insurers, premiums for permanent health and other long-term insurances in the United Kingdom, which would include this type of insurance, increased from £129 million in 1984 to £142 million in 1985. I bet that those firms would not accept that sort of business unless they found it extremely worth while.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): Will the hon. Lady give way?

Mrs. Currie: Just briefly.

Dr. Godman: I promise to be brief, and I am grateful to the hon. Lady. Are there any geographical differences in the insurance premiums that she has advocated at such length? If there are, I rather think that my constituents would have to pay higher premiums, because the current male unemployment rate in my constituency — unlike that in hers — is fully 26 per cent.

Mrs. Currie: I take the hon. Gentleman's point. I cited the National Association of Estate Agents and its scheme. However, in many parts of the country, including the hon. Gentleman's constituency, housing is much cheaper, and mortgages are consequently much smaller. There may well, therefore, be some balancing out.

If we take the view that we do not allow someone on the road without compulsory insurance, perhaps we should not allow anyone to take out a mortgage without some compulsory insurance that has an element of protection against falling earnings. The Government could then leave the supplementary benefit rules intact, and could protect their caring image, which we are all keen they should do. The state would not be needed. We could save, not £18 million or £35 million, but perhaps more than £100 million of good public money. We could then put it to better use by making, for example, tax cuts, and by returning that money to the taxpayers' pockets.

Whenever an attempt is made to cut the take from the taxpayer by altering social security provison, Opposition Members react like a flock of radioactive sheep. They bleat

[Mrs. Currie]

loudly and disagreeably and glow gently from their exertions. They recognise neither the problem nor the worthwhile objectives of the Government. They do not propose any solutions, and intend only to keep on spending. That is why I am happy to support the Government in the Lobby, but I hope that they will rethink parts of the proposal and in so doing look after the interests of the home owner and the taxpayer alike.

5.29 pm

Mr. Nick Raynsford (Fulham): This has been an extraordinary debate, because, with the exception of the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie), the Minister has clearly had the greatest difficulty in ensuring any support from his Back Benchers, and has had considerable difficulty in sustaining his argument. It is clear that the measure that we are debating is not just wrong in principle but damaging to a large number of people. It is untimely. It flies in the face of public opinion and the informed opinion of those who have commented on the Government's social security Green Paper, and in the face of the opinion on the Government's Back Benches.

What is all this for? We are talking about a possible saving of £30 million—hardly a significant sum. There are even doubts as to whether the full amount of that will be saved. We are not talking about large numbers of people but about approximately 90,000 out of the 277,000 who, at the last count, were recorded as receiving assistance towards their mortgage interest payments from the DHSS. I hasten to add, as a correction to what the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South said, that this is not the largest group of people receiving direct assistance towards household costs. I tried to intervene earlier to put her right. Approximately 1 million households in the private sector are receiving rent allowance. I am sure that she would not have wanted to mislead the House on that.

The background of the measure is the extension of owner-occupation, a continuous trend for many years and one that has been supported by the Government, but which has inevitably involved an increase in the number of home owners on low incomes. Therefore, there are more home owners at risk of getting into difficulty over repayments. The increase in mortgage arrears was referred to by my hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher), and I reiterate the scale of the figures. At the time of the 1979 general election, when the Government came to office, there were 8,420 households with building society mortgages more than six months in arrears. By 1983, the figure had risen to 32,000 and by 1985 to 60,390. A further 14,000 were similarly in arrears over local authority mortgages.

That considerable increase has been accelerating, and is paralleled by a serious increase in the number of repossessions by building societies, from just 2,500 houses in 1979 to 7,000 in 1983 and to no fewer than 16,590 last year. That is a huge surge in the number of people who lose their homes because the building society repossesses, generally because of mortgage default. A further 1,000 homes were repossessed by local authorities in 1985. That gives a measure of the scale and increase of the problem. It is hardly surprising, given the increasing trend——

Dr. Godman: My hon. Friend has referred to the scale of the problem, which is truly staggering. I ask him a question similar to that which I asked the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) earlier. Has he any information concerning the geographical distribution of these scandalously high statistics of repossessions?

Mr. Raynsford: Unfortunately, I do not have any information immediately available, but information on which I can touch later will concern the incidence of homelessness relating to mortgage difficulties, and shows that the problem is particularly acute in the north, but not much of a worry in London and the south-east. There is a regional bias to the north in terms of homelessness and that may be reflected in the mortgage difficulties, although I do not have the precise figures.

It is not surprising, given the background of those figures and the increasing number of people in difficulty, that DHSS expenditure on mortgage support has gone up. It would be amazing if it had not. One of the few points on which I agree with the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South is that it is somewhat unfortunate that the DHSS is not able to give figures of the cost for later than 1983. That seems a rather poor basis for policy making. In 1983, it cost £150 million.

Such a figure is small in proportion to total social security expenditure and to the other form of assistance for mortgages — the mortgage interest tax relief arrangements. To cut this assistance now, against the background of an escalating problem, and growing need, and a larger number of people at risk of having their homes repossessed, is remarkably irresponsible, even by the Government's standards.

Let us look at the argument advanced in favour of this change. The Minister has already conceded that the cost argument is not fundamental, but he nevertheless advanced it. The cost is hardly enormous when compared to mortgage interest tax relief, which has gone up from £1 billion in 1979 to £4·75 billion—an enormous escalation. Of that, some £250 million or more is paid out in higher rate tax relief. In other words, it is going solely to people with substantial incomes. If it were necessary for the Government to seek savings from home owners, and if they wished to do so without hurting them, they would target it on those best able to take the cut. Those paying at the higher rate would be the obvious target. The Government would be taking away benefit from people who would not be hurt and a much better saving would be yielded—£250 million as against £30 million—were they to make savings at the expense of home owners who could well afford to pay a little more towards housing costs. It is interesting that this group has not been targeted, and that says a great deal about the Government's social priorities and values.

Those figures also show much about the Government's second argument, that of equity. The Minister argued that the present arrangements were unfair on low-income home owners and I agree that that is a case. The present arrangements do not ensure adequate assistance for low-income home owners at work, who may be having difficulties meeting their repayment costs with the relatively small amount of assistance that they get from the mortgage interest tax relief. They may have even greater difficulty in meeting unexpected additional costs — for example, repairs.

The inadequacy of the mortgage interest tax relief for low-income home owners is clear. The average value of mortgage interest tax relief for those on low incomes—

of, say, between £4,000 and £5,000—worked out at the last count at some £250 a year. For those with an income of over £30,000 a years, whom it might be assumed could afford to do with a little less assistance, the average value of mortgage interest tax relief is some £1,400 a year—almost six times as much. This is a measure of how inequitable the current system is. It gives the greatest assistance to those who could perfectly well cope with less but it does not give adequate assistance to those on low incomes who need more towards their mortgage repayment costs.

Low-income home owners get assistance towards their rates, under the housing benefit scheme. Here we come to the nub of the matter. Is there not an acute anomaly if low-income home owners can get assistance towards their rates under the housing benefit scheme but not towards their mortgage repayments? That anomaly was identified by the housing benefit review team appointed by the Government to look into the issue. It reported with a recommendation that the anomaly could be covered by making mortgage interest payments eligible for assistance under the housing benefit scheme. That is an equitable proposal.

The Government did not accept that proposal. I suspect that they did not, simply because the estimated cost was £100 million, but this returns us to the argument about how such costs could be met. If the Government were serious in their view, which was much talked about in the social security review, of the need to target assistance more effectively on those most in need, withdrawing assistance from those who could probably do without it would ensure that there was real value for money. If those paying tax at the higher rate and getting £250 million of mortgage interest tax relief, lost that help, the Government could afford to fund the housing benefit scheme covering mortgage interest payments and make a saving. That is the answer if the Government are serious about equity. Unfortunately, I do not believe that they are serious.

The Government's proposals are not as damaging or severe as originally foreshadowed in the White Paper. Those proposals were universally condemned. In response to that condemnation the Government, rather than doing the sensible and obvious, and accepting that they had blundered, decided to be weak. They watered down the proposals to make them less severe and hoped that they would get away with it. How often have we observed that response to criticism from the present Government, particularly from the Social Security Advisory Committee and others?

The Government have gone a bit too far. They have trimmed the proposals in the hope that they would get away with it, so now we have a watered-down fag-end of a proposal which is less extreme than the original because it does not affect all those who are assisted with mortgage repayments and does not cover all the payments during the first six months. The proposal is no less damaging for that. It will have dire effects on some groups.

The hon. Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak, (Mr. Beaumont-Dark) made a telling point when he asked why the Government should penalise people when they were at their most vulnerable, in the first six months of unemployment and find it most difficult to cope with repayments.

What about the disincentive effect, on which the Government have not provided an answer? If assistance is to be available only for 50 per cent. of the mortgage interest in the first six months, anyone who has gone through those first six months will then qualify for the full amount. They will find it difficult to consider taking an insecure job because if they lose the job they will, once again, have to cope with 50 per cent. of the mortgage interest repayments for six months. The disincentive is clear for those who have been unemployed for six months and resume work because subsequently they might risk having to pay the 50 per cent. mortgage interest repayments.

What happens if a building society decides not to reschedule the debt? That might happen if little equity is outstanding on the property. That would create homelessness. The figures are telling. In 1979, a total of 4 per cent. of those accepted as being homeless by local authorities were homeless as a result of mortgage arrears. Last year that figure had risen to 10 per cent. — the highest on record. Does it make sense to risk increasing the numbers at risk of homelessness by withdrawing assistance?

What about others at risk, such as single parents? According to the latest figures, about 35,000 people are in that position. In my experience, that group most often face the most acute problems early in their claim for supplementary benefit, usually after the breakdown of the marriage or the relationship and when there is a sudden loss of family income. This means risking losing the family home and becoming homeless.

Many advice agencies concentrating their help on such people know how important it is to get in at the earliest possible moment and to discuss with the building society the possibility of a remortgage if it is necessary to buy up the other party's equity to keep the wife and children in the matrimonial home. The loss of 50 per cent. of the mortgage interest in the first six months could be a critical factor which prejudices the prospects of a successful negotiation. Finances in such cases are often finely balanced. People in that position are most likely to be penalised by the proposal. Homelessness might be intensified specifically by the Government's proposal.

The Minister's response is threadbare. I hope that it was not intentional, but the Minister misled the House in saying that the taxpayer was meeting the full cost of people acquiring an appreciating asset. The truth is that supplementary benefit meets only interest payments. A safeguard is not very expensive, but it meets an important social need.

If the Government are looking for equity, they have a clear alternative which will ensure that proper help goes to home owners. Will the Minister accept that his case is threadbare? Instead of trying to push this fag-end of a proposal, which has been watered down in the face of enormous criticism, will he recognise that there is no support for it? The proposal is widely condemned and ill-considered and will cause hardship. Will the Minister accept that and withdraw gracefully, instead of stubbornly trying to push through a proposal which is so widely condemned?

5.46 pm

Mr. Keith Raffan (Delyn): I do not share the expertise on these matters of the hon. Member for Fulham (Mr. Raynsford), but I know how the measure will affect large numbers of people in my constituency. As I said in an intervention, unemployment in Delyn is high.

I have considerable respect for the Minister. I say that although I will be critical of the measure and of his speech.

[Mr. Keith Raffan]

Hon. Members on all sides share that respect. Few Ministers have to write more letters or have to answer for more. The same can be said of his colleague on the Front Bench, my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security.

I did not find my hon. Friend's speech convincing. It was a south of England speech. I do not mean to be rude by that. The Minister put emphasis on the short-term unemployed and said that most of the unemployed would find jobs within six months. How do we know that a person will find a job within a certain period? The Minister's constituency is in Essex, and the Under-Secretary's constituency is also in south-east England. The unemployed there have a much better chance of finding a job within six months than my constituents who live in the north, in the industrial and economic front line. I am not digressing. That is crucial to my criticism of the measure.

My constituency has suffered massive structural unemployment for the last 15 years because of its over-dependence on two industries — steel and textiles. Courtaulds employed 7,500 men and women in my constituency 15 years ago. Now it employs only 150 and their jobs are hanging by a thread. The Courtaulds plants were concentrated round Flint and Holywell so male unemployment there is 41 per cent. My constituency therefore has a higher proportion of long-term unemployed.

My constituents cannot sell their houses because so many are trying to sell their houses. The housing market is non-existent. My constituents who are out of work are desperately trying to find jobs. At my surgery in the last month I heard from a man who managed to find a job in Weston-super-Mare. He travels from there to his home in my constituency every weekend. He has to leave his wife and family in Holywell because he cannot sell his house. Another man has to travel equally far to Dumfries and he is in exactly the same position.

Last year Courtaulds' biggest remaining factory, at Greenfield, closed with the loss of 600 jobs, 200 jobs having been lost at the same factory six months earlier. The borough council, which is by no means Labour-dominated, stated to the Select Committee on Welsh Affairs, which held an inquiry into the closure at Flint —and it was no exaggeration—that any man who was out of work and over 35 years of age at the time in my constituency was unlikely ever to work again.

We are working hard in my constituency to prove that statement pessimistic. The Welsh Office, the Welsh Development Agency and Delyn borough council—we are all working together to create jobs. The Government could not have done more than they have by giving us the highest level of development area status, by designating Delyn an enterprise zone, and backing it with £8 million. That has created what the chief executive of the council has called

"the most attractive industrial location in Wales."

We are creating jobs, but in our area, as in many other areas, they are mostly female jobs. In the presence of the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) and my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie), I hasten to say that I am not against creating female jobs. However, the most economically active women tend to be the wives of employed men, so we are not spreading incomes into unemployed households but doubling incomes in households where one person already has work.

No Government could have done more for north-east Wales than this Government. They have done far more than the last Labour Government, whose response was a worthless wringing of hands while factories closed. Unemployment in my constituency did not start on that day in 1979 that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister crossed the threshold of No. 10 Downing street. Indeed, the massive Courtaulds redundancies and the first of the Shotton redundancies occurred under the last Labour Government, who did nothing. Yet all the good this Government have done is, at least in part, being undone by this measure.

Mr. hon. Friend the Minister said that part of the reasoning behind the measure was to reduce the inequity in the treatment between home owners on supplementary benefit and those in work but on low incomes. The low earners in my constituency have no ill feeling towards the unemployed who are receiving help; indeed, there is a great deal of sympathy. All those people that I have mentioned in my constituency, especially in Flint and Hollywell, are on low incomes, and most of them say of the unemployed, "There but for the grace of God go I."

I do not understand how we can talk of equity and inequity when we are not comparing like with like. Those who are out of work through no fault of their own cannot be compared with those who are fortunate enough to have jobs. I as a taxpayer, and the vast majority of taxpayers in my constituency who see at first hand the ravages of unemployment—not only financial, but psychological—would gladly contribute to help those who have the misfortune to be out of work. We do not want to deal them another blow at the very time when they are trying to find new work.

It has been said that, as the measure applies only to the first six months, the unemployed can use their redundancy payments to see them through that difficult period. Redundancy payments for low earners are minimal, especially for those who worked for Courtaulds. Even those who had been employed for 30 or 35 years received negligible payments—between £5,000 and £6,000. I have been very critical of that. We should not eat into those redundancy payments for living costs when they could be used to help somebody set himself up in his own business.

Mr. Newton: Anyone with a redundancy payment of £5,000 or £6,000 would be ruled out of supplementary benefit by the capital rule, so would receive no help.

Mr. Raffan: I know that is so, but how long does such a small redundancy payment last? It can only be a short time for many of my constituents, because they have overdrafts and considerable costs. I can assure my hon. Friend that the vast majority of my constituents will not be outside supplementary benefit, but very much dependent on it.

This measure discriminates against the hardest hit areas of the country where many of those out of work are long-term unemployed. It is not simply a financial blow; it is a psychological blow just at the crucial time when somebody is first experiencing the bitter shock of being out of work. It can only increase their anxiety and make it more difficult for them to adapt to the reality of being out of work. People in that position come to my surgery week

after week. We simply cannot do this to them. Just when they are at their most vulnerable, they are to be dealt another blow that can only increase their anxiety.

The measure perpetuates an impression — a wholly wrong and unfair impression — that the Government are creating two nations, the north and the south. We want to destroy that impression; indeed, we must destroy it in the coming months, not only because it is morally right to do so but because I and many of my hon. Friends will not be here after the next election if it is not destroyed. My hon. Friend the Minister will not be a Minister, but will find himself sitting on the Opposition Benches.

We are beginning to get across to the country a great deal of the good that we are doing. I know how much good the Government are doing in my constituency. My constituents have seen three of our four community hospitals visibly transformed during the past seven years, so they know that a great deal of money has been spent on them. The Government care, and my constituents realise that we have put that caring into practice through resources, albeit carefully allocated and spent.

We must destroy the unfair impression that the Government are creating two nations. No Government have done more in Delyn to create jobs since it first began to suffer massive structural unemployment 15 years ago. However, much of that good will be undone by this measure. In Lord Woolton's famous words, we must show that we not only cope, we care. Of course we must be careful, efficient, cost-effective administrators of not the Government, but the taxpayers', money. But we must also be compassionate, caring spenders of that money.

I implore my hon. Friend the Minister to think well and wisely about this measure. The money it would save would be a minute fraction of what we would lose in credibility as a Government and as a party. We are a Government who genuinely care, and I beg my hon. Friend not to throw away all the good that he and his colleagues have done. I hope that he will pick up this banana skin before we slip on it. He would be one of the first Ministers to do that, and it would be to his great credit. I hope that he will withdraw this measure as soon as possible.

5.57 pm

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): I shall speak briefly, even though I represent a constituency with scandalously high unemployment. Currently, male unemployment in the Greenock travel-to-work area is 26 per cent. That is an official figure, not one that I have fiddled or concocted. It was given to me yesterday by the assistant manager of the jobcentre in Greenock.

Like the hon. Member for Delyn (Mr. Raffan), I am deeply concerned about the way in which this paltry measure will affect my constituents. My hon. Friend the Member for Fulham (Mr. Raynsford) said that it was less than extreme, but I think it will exacerbate the problems faced by people at the dreadful moment when they are pút out of work. It will especially affect those who do not receive large redundancy or severance payments.

Like the hon. Member for Delyn, I, too, can give a litany of companies that are in decline in my constituency. People are being dismissed each month. During the time that I have represented Greenock and Port Glasgow, the work force of Scott Lithgow has shrunk from 5,000-plus to about 1,400. That company is building one rig for Britoil, which is to be launched in about one month. When the fitting out is completed at the tail end of the year, the 1,400 work force faces dismissal. That is the sort of problem that one has to face in representing constituents in these worrying circumstances.

Many of the 1,400 are managers, designers and naval architects. I am talking not only about the low-paid shipyard worker. If such a man is 40 years or older, he will have experienced varying periods of unemployment, especially on the lower Clyde. Regrettably, that is a way of life for him. I am talking also about people who have purchased homes outwith my community, in places such as Kilmacolm, Wemyss Bay and Inverkip, and who are facing the threat of unemployment within the next few months. My plea to the Minister is to withdraw his horrible proposal.

Other industrial organisations in my constituency are facing bleak times. The last remaining marine engineering plant on the Clyde is situated in my constituency. If orders are not obtained within the next few months, employees of Clark Kincaid will be put out of work. Managers, design engineers and the men who build such first-class products will lose their jobs.

The cane sugar refining industry is in remorseless decline. There were 13 refineries, and now there is only one. The remaining refinery, owned by Tate and Lyle, is within my constituency.

Other industries are also experiencing remorseless decline. The result is that, in the space of a few years, there is male unemployment of 26 per cent. In my constituency, over 8,000 are unemployed. When Ministers recite the national unemployment statistics, they frequently fail to reinforce them by referring to their geographical distribution. I suspect that few Conservative Members — regrettably, only a few hon. Members are in the Chamber to discuss this important issue — have in their constituencies the level of unemployment that is to be found in mine.

Many of my constituents have been unemployed for over a year. Even when they obtain fresh employment, they face a short-term engagement. That is a growing phenomenon in Britain and the rest of the European Community. In the yard in my constituency which has only one rig to complete, hundreds of workers are on 13-week contracts. The contracts are extended only at the diktat of the employer — Trafalgar House. The employees do not have the power to extend their period of employment. Many men who have been taken on for 13 weeks — I accept that some have worked for much longer than that — are told that once that period has come to an end they can be dismissed following a week's notice with the usual severance pay agreements.

Those are some of the problems faced by those who live in the west of Scotland with its scandalously high unemployment. Scottish unemployment figures are higher than those for the rest of Great Britain. I think I am right in saying that the current unemployment rate for Great Britain as a whole is about 13·3 per cent., but it is 15·6 per cent. for Scotland and 18·5 per cent. in the Strathclyde regional area. As I have said, it is 26 per cent. or more in my constituency. These are the official figures.

The west of Scotland is experiencing a remorselessly continuing decline in its manufacturing base. The decline did not begin in 1979 and it would be stupid of me to suggest that it did. It could be argued that Scotland's manufacturing decline began in the 1920s. It was halted, perhaps, by the second world war, when manufacturing

[Dr. Norman A. Godman]

activity remained on a plateau, and the break continued for a few years after the war. Despite the introduction into Scotland of new industries — what some call sunrise industries — the decline of the manufacturing base continues. It is not only my constituency with its traditional industries that is suffering a decline. I suspect that we shall never see the complete revival of the shipbuilding industry on the Clyde, or the marine engineering sector, no matter what Government come into office in two years' time. Naturally, I hope that the next Government will be a Labour Government, and that soon after that we shall have a Scottish Parliament. I would happily quit this place for such an assembly.

Whatever Administrations we have over the next decade, we shall not see a dramatic and radical revival of the shipbuilding and marine engineering industries. The epicentre for employment in those activities is in south-east Asia, and it will remain there for many decades to come, with perhaps some input by Brazil, China and elsewhere.

My hon. Friend the Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) can corroborate everything that I have said. His constituency has experienced the loss of Gartcosh with the decline of the steelmaking industry. The decline continues and people are worried about their prospects and those of their children.

The one Scottish solution that seems to have worked in the past — it has been used cynically by different Administrations — is emigration. That is one way in which Scotland has dealt with its unemployment. The little measure that we are discussing — as my hon. Friend the Member for Fulham has said, it is less than extreme — will worsen the problems facing my constituents and people in the west of Scotland and elsewhere.

Clydeside is not the only area that is suffering, and the traditional industries are not suffering alone. Even the new industries in Scotland have experienced unemployment. Last year, National Semiconductor in my constituency dismissed 400 employees. Not all of them received more than £3,000 in redundancy payments. Many of them are owner-occupiers. Some live in my constituency and others live in the constituency of the hon. Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde (Mrs. McCurley). The electronics industry is not the only sector to have suffered during the hiatus. However, I am pleased to say that National Semiconductor is experiencing some form of recovery, and the management is honouring its promise to me that it would re-hire those who had been dismissed. Some were out of work for six or nine months and others are still out of work. As I have said, the problem exists in other industries.

The hon. Member for Delyn made a dramatic speech. Britoil recently announced that 400 employees would have to go. Again, they are not low-paid employees—manual workers living in council houses. Some are designers and senior managers. Forty of those employees, who worked at the head office in St. Vincent street, Glasgow, were given one hour's notice to clear their desks. That was no doubt because of the confidential nature of documents in their desks and, presumably, on their computers. Some people say that they received a reasonable pay-off by that massive oil company. However, they were given one hour's notice that they would be out of work. Some of those employees had moved to Scotland to work for Britoil.

The Grampion region benefits enormously from jobs created by the offshore oil industry. However, people in that area face the threat of unemployment. One employers' association which represents British interests in the offshore oil industry, BRIT — I hate acronyms and initials because I can never remember what they mean— said a few days ago that about 15,000 jobs within its member firms disappeared from the Scottish oil industry between February and June this year. That figure represents people with all kinds of occupational skills and knowledge, and with all kinds of mortgage obligations.

The hon. Member for Delyn warned the Government against creating two nations. I suggest that those two nations exist. Looking beyond national statistics, we see a pronounced geographical shape to unemployment in Britain. Despite the easy opportunity that is offered to every Back Bencher to produce solutions to the problems which appear to bedevil Ministers, I do not have the answers to these massive problems. I leave that to hon. Members representing the Scottish National party — on the occasions when they choose to visit the Chamber. Similarly, the Social Democrats are often noticeable by their absence when the House debates such issues.

On behalf of the people I represent, in these bleak economic times and the problems that they face, I ask the Minister to think again about this paltry measure. Its one effect will be to create added burdens and greater distress to people who are put out of work because of circumstances utterly outwith their control.

6.13 pm

Mr. Peter Viggers (Gosport): I listened with care to the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman), as I always do. I know the area of his constituency very well. I do not demur at all from his general comments about the difficulties in that area. I listened with care also to the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Delyn (Mr. Raffan). Both my hon. Friend and the hon. Gentleman sketched the problems of those who are unemployed for long periods and the problems of those who live in areas where there is high unemployment. If there is such difficulty in those areas, it is important that Government aid is focused most accurately on where it is most needed.

As the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher), in his rather extreme and emotional speech, opened the debate, it is clear that the Opposition thought they were hitting at a soft target. There is no doubt that the measures have had a bad press, based on a rather simplistic and inadequate reading, in some cases, of the Government's proposals. If I were uncertain about the Government's proposals at the beginning of the debate, I am not uncertain about them now.

It is clear that there are differing views about the way in which the building societies in particular will cope with the proposals. Some hon. Members think that the building societies will allow the interest to be rolled up and accumulated as part of the capital sum of the outstanding debt. I suspect that that will be the case. If that is so, there is a strong argument in favour of the measures, because they would provide equity between the various parties involved in the mortgage and the outstanding loan. I shall return to this point later.

My first point is that there is no doubt that some families are better off out of work than in work. I have never criticised the shirkers and scroungers—those who

take advantage of unemployment benefit. I believe that the number of genuine scroungers and shirkers is small. They become known quite quickly to their neighbours. I believe that the overwhelming majority of people who are out of work desperately want to find a job. I reserve my anger for Members of Parliament who allow a system to continue which allows people to be better off out of work than in work.

I invite my colleagues to consider the position of the head of a family who must face the problem and decide whether to take a job and a cut in income, which will damage his family, or to stay out of work. This is a dilemma in which the House of Commons should not have put anyone. It is wrong that hon. Members should have legislated so that some people are better off out of work than they are in work. It is interesting to note that the Opposition have not commented on the specific points made by my hon. Friend the Minister. I think that they owe us their comments and views on a system which allows some people to be better off out of work than they are in work.

Secondly, my hon. Friend the Minister gave an example of a household with an average mortgage of £16,000, whose income out of work was appreciably higher than that of a family in work with an income of £80 to £120 a week. Examples have been given of the more deprived areas of the United Kingdom. I shall give an example of the position at the other end of the scale. A married man with three children, and the maximum mortgage allowable for tax relief of £30,000, is better off unemployed unless he earns about £180 a week. When the inevitable costs of travelling to work, clothing, lunches, and so on, are taken into account, he is better off unemployed unless he earns about £200 a week — £10,000 a year. That is a scandal with which any Government should cope.

My third point — I echo those made by the Minister — is that there should be a fair balance between the employed and the unemployed, home owners and tenants, and Government and lending organisations. In maintaining a fair balance, there is a limit to which adjustment can be made by improving benefits. Sometimes there is a point at which existing benefits, when they have grown out of balance, need to be reviewed and perhaps reduced. If help is to be focused on those most in need, we should review financial aid where it is not best spent.

My fourth point is that house ownership has been and continues to be an excellent investment. This year house prices are expected to increase in value by about 10 per cent., compared with inflation of about 3 per cent.

Mr. Raffan: Investment in housing may be a good investment in my hon. Friend's constituency, but I assure him that it is not in mine. In my constituency, the house market is at best static and at worst declining. As I said earlier — this is true of all areas where there is a high level of long-term unemployment — everyone wants to sell his house so that he can try to find a job in another part of the country. Therefore, housing is not a good investment in places such as my constituency which are the hardest hit.

Mr. Viggers: My hon. Friend has made a fair point, but it is fair to say also that in most parts of the United Kingdom housing has been a good investment. Of course there are exceptions, but the general rule, which applies more in the south-east than in most parts of the United Kingdom, is that housing is a good investment. People receiving assistance with their interest payments should bear in mind that, normally, investment in housing is a good investment.

Fifthly, the Government propose that half the mortgage interest payments will be met for the first six months for claimants under 60. It is important to stress that there will be full protection after the six months for the long-term unemployed, that there will be full protection for those over 60 and that there will be considerable protection for the 90,000 people who will be affected by the proposals. The case has been made for consultation by the Social Security Advisory Committee on the Government's points. I therefore support the Government's view.

6.21 pm

Mr. Ken Weetch (Ipswich): Make no mistake, this measure is bitterly resented throughout Britain. I want to refer to information from my constituency. I remind the Minister of his comments in a press release issued by his Department:

> "Our aim is to strike a fair and reasonable balance between the borrower, the lender and the taxpayer. We do not think this is achieved by the present arrangements which will enable all mortgage interest payments to be met immediately, however short the period of benefit."

In certain circumstances, that is not accurate. This is a confidence trick played on the person who is not sharp enough to reschedule his debt with the building society. The press release states:

> "In future, one half rather than the whole of mortgage interest should be met for claimants under 60 who are in receipt of benefit for only a short time or during the first six months of a longer period on benefit. After this period the interest would, as now, be met in full."

If a man who is suddenly out of work immediately sees the building society and has his interest payments rescheduled until a later period so that the Government pick up the arrears, he will not be out of pocket. If the debt is rescheduled, it is a disincentive for him to go back to work because, if he does, his arrears will not be refunded. The Government have spent a long time talking about disincentives. With the stroke of a pen, this scheme has created another disincentive, through mortgage interest payments.

There are other strange aspects to the measure. The Minister said that he was thinking of people on low incomes and aiming for a fairer distribution of the burden. The hon. Gentleman should not have distinguished betwen one low income and another. If he was looking for money, he should have considered mortgage interest tax relief, which is paid willy-nilly to those paying higher taxes. Mortgage interest tax relief is structured so that the more expensive the house one buys and the higher one's income, the higher the mortgage interest tax relief. In 1986, that is nearly £5 billion. If the Minister were looking for a section of the community to bear the brunt of this measure, he should have looked to those who were a little more fortunate than people who have been flung into unemployment.

This measure is bitterly resented, and I am surprised that it is associated with the Minister for Social Security. Many Labour Members regard him as one of the most knowledgeable and compassionate of Members on the Government Benches. But the fact is that this is the Treasury talking, not the Department of Health and Social Security.

[Mr. Ken Weetch]

The Government have incurred political unpopularity over this measure. I am in the political business to argue against them, but I never wanted to do it in this way. Unemployment is a financial and psychological blow. It is a great shame that when a man becomes unemployed, he learns that he will face penalties with his mortgage interest repayments. That is difficult to bear.

The Building Societies Association, among others, has pointed to the increasing length of the list of people in mortgage arrears. This is becoming a serious problem. The Government are seeking also to extend owner-occupation. I am in full agreement with that. At present, 65 per cent. of people own their own houses. If the Government wish to pursue that policy, why on earth do they penalise the least fortunate owner-occupiers who happen to fall out of work? This is an inequitable policy, especially as the money could have been taken from elsewhere.

We all know that the Minister has to be hard-headed with a limited amount of money. He has a scale of priorities; he has to judge between this and that. But this decision is wrong. It is resented and, politically, it will cost the Government. It penalises the person who becomes unemployed and does not know enough to go to the building society to get his debt rescheduled so that, if he remains unemployed, the bill can be picked up later by the Treasury. The measure penalises not only the unemployed but the least knowledgeable. It is a bitter blow for some people. It means kicking someone in the teeth when he is already on the floor. The Minister's explanations on the radio and elsewhere are not credible—not because the hon. Gentleman cannot argue the case well enough but because he has a deplorable case to argue. He should take it away and think again.

6.29 pm

Mrs. Margaret Beckett (Derby, South): We listened with great interest for the Minister's defence of these proposals. I say "for" rather than "to" because, as my hon. Friend the Member for Ipswich (Mr. Weetch) has just said, the defence was somewhat lacking. The hon. Gentleman complained that the Government have been attacked for secrecy. I know that the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) expressed concern at some of the details of the proposals. However, on the whole, the Opposition are not complaining about secrecy, although we know that the Prime Minister made a spirited attempt to run away from the timing of the proposals, if not from the proposals themselves. We object to the proposals as such because they are unjust, immoral, short-sighted and utterly nasty.

The proposals are being introduced against a background in which homelessness is already increasing sharply because of unemployment, especially in the past year. Hon. Members have given various statistics in the debate, and I want to remind the House of only two.

Homelessness through mortgage default is now five times greater than it was when the Government came to power in 1979; and in the last year alone mortgage defaults rose by 50 per cent. and repossessions, according to figures from the National Consumer Council, went up from 3,000 a year to 11,000. That is nearly a 300 per cent. increase in repossession. Therefore, it is extraordinary that, against that background of already increasing homelessness, the Government have decided that they are giving too much help with mortgage interest payments to the most vulnerable in our society.

Many hon. Members have already expressed their awareness—I was pleased to see it happening on both sides—that there is already desperate anxiety among many unemployed. There is substantial evidence from the United States of America and here of the destructive effects to health of stress due to unemployment and of the increase in suicides that follows when unemployment levels rise substantially. If that is true and can be demonstrated now while greater help is available, the problems are bound to be exacerbated by these proposals. Indeed, it is hard to imagine proposals more destructive of people's security or more inclined to make them suffer substantial increases in stress than the justified fear of losing their homes.

Even now, when the Government's payments meet interest, although not the capital repayments, as a number of hon. Members have already pointed out, losing their home is the greatest anxiety for many home owners. The Government's policy inspectorate, which, as the Minister will know, has done a survey of a number of owner-occupiers, found that although many of the people it interviewed were good money managers—we are not talking about the feckless or incompetent—they all expressed the fear now of being unable to keep up their mortgage repayments and often went without other essentials, including replacement clothing, to do so. That point was made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Halton (Mr. Oakes) in his admirable speech, and it has come through strongly from the study. I repeat that that is the position now, before the Government make this further attack on the unemployed.

The Building Societies Association, in its 1985 report, referring to the existing payment, said:

> "If this benefit had not existed the rise in unemployment would have led to a much greater increase in arrears and possessions."

That is against a background in which, as we have already heard, the increase has already been substantial.

The Government, in their amendment, claim that this proposal has been introduced not just to make savings—which, as the hon. Member for Cardiff, North (Mr. Jones) rightly said, would be wholly inadequate justification for such a proposal—but because there is a need for balance and fairness between the treatment of one group and another in society, especially between the treatment of the low paid and the unemployed. The Government imply in what they have said that these proposals are part of the way to encourage people out of unemployment, as well as indicating, as I have said, that there is unfair treatment of home owners in low paid work compared with those on supplementary benefit.

As several hon. Members have pointed out, the Government are creating a new disincentive for people to go back to work. The Minister said that at present most unemployment is short term. It will not be in future—at least certainly not when people catch on to the implications in these proposals. Whether people are looking at short-term, part-time or low-paid jobs, it will not be in their interests to go back to work before they have been unemployed for six months. It certainly will not be in their interest to take short-term or insecure jobs because, if they become unemployed again, they will have to start building up that period of qualification all over

again if the work they took was for anything longer than eight weeks. It will not be in their interest to take part-time work because they may deprive themselves of entitlement to benefit and of building up their six months.

It certainly will not be in their interest to take low-paid work at or near the end of their six months because, as my hon. Friend the Member for Ipswich pointed out with admirable clarity, it is only if they stay unemployed for longer than six months that the interest that they might have succeeded in getting deferred will be paid. Therefore, as I have said, it creates a disincentive for people to take any kind of part-time employment which might put them beyond the income level of their entitlement to supplementary benefit. In a sense, it creates a disincentive for home ownership as such because there are bound to be people who, simply through the loss of this mortgage interest entitlement, will be put outside the income range in which they might be entitled to supplementary benefit.

It is an extraordinary position, and it is even more extraordinary that the Minister should choose this debate to boast about what the Government have done to promote the sale of council houses. It is extraordinary that the Government, who have promoted such sales, should now be putting people who may have bought their council houses and may even now be struggling to meet the mortgage repayments — a widespread phenomenon, as Opposition Members are well aware — and who become unemployed, in a position where, under these proposals, they could become homeless because they listened to a Government who told them that the best way to secure the future for their family was to buy their own home. A threat will now be hanging over them that they would not have faced if they had failed to listen to the Government and had remained tenants.

Only the other day the Minister for Housing, Urban Affairs and Construction said that the Government were not anxious — perhaps I should say "any more", although I do not think that he did — to encourage the low-paid to buy their own homes. It is a pity that they did not mention it earlier. It is certainly not the impression that many people in the country have had.

Those who, for whatever reason — perhaps because one of the family has a part-time job or because they lose their entitlement to the mortgage interest payment — lose all entitlement to supplementary benefit as such are bound to find that they will never, even after six months, qualify for this payment. They are almost bound to end up either giving up any part-time job, if they have one, or be in greater danger of becoming homeless.

The Minister did not mention the possibility of people insuring against the loss of employment. I was a little surprised because that has featured quite strongly in the other defences that the Government have made of this proposal. I listened with great care to what the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) said about the availability of such schemes, the cost, and so on. I would not question the information that she has gathered. However, I also have information from people who, rather than going to the societies to ask what is offered, have tried as a family unit to obtain such insurance in the recent past.

I must tell the hon. Lady that all those who have spoken to me and some who have written have said that in practice it is not only much more difficult than she suggested but more costly. A simple but, I would have thought, obvious point is that those for whom the threat is greatest and those who need the insurance most are those who are least likely to be able to get it, or afford it, because they are bad risks. Insurance companies do not like taking on people who are a bad risk.

My hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) asked a pertinent question. I do not blame the hon. Lady for not having the answer to it. It may be that the insurance companies could not answer it. He asked whether there were differential payments in different parts of the country. I am sure that all hon. Members will recognise that where unemployment is high such insurance is likely to be unobtainable or, in effect, unobtainable because it is so expensive.

I recognise that the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South had a different proposal. She proposed that everyone should have compulsory insurance for health, redundancy, and so on, as a package. I was under the impression that we already had such a system. We call it national insurance. I can see no reason to compel people to take out further private insurance for something that they are already paying the Government to provide.

The Minister said that the Government would consider the outcome of the consultations being undertaken with the Social Security Advisory Committee. Of course, he did not remind the House that we have had two sets of consultations already. The Government consulted the building societies and a whole range of other institutions on the proposals as drafted in the Green Paper and on the proposals as drafted in the White Paper. To the best of my recollection, they got no support from any quarter, not even from the Institute of Directors, which has been known to support one or two of the Government's wilder proposals.

Apart from consultations on those specific measures, which do not seem to us to have brought the Government any comfort, earlier they consulted several eminent persons, all of the Government's own choice and of their own political persuasion, about the pattern of housing support, as my hon. Friend the Member for Fulham (Mr. Raynsford) and other hon. Members mentioned. In the housing benefit review, the Government's hand-picked advisers addressed their minds to precisely the matter that so troubles the Government, to which they refer in the amendment — the balance between support for those who are in low-paid work and those who are unemployed. The housing benefit review team proposed that the right way to deal with the problem was to make home owners eligible for standard housing benefit. Therefore, we have had two processes of consultation in the past year, both of which, so far, the Government have chosen to ignore.

As has been amply demonstrated by hon. Members on both sides of the House, the proposals are made against a background in which homelessness, due to inability to pay mortgages, is already rising sharply. They are also made against the more general background, which is perhaps less easily understood by the public, of an attack on the income and an increase in the problems of the unemployed. This matter may soon be debated in the House. A reduction is being made in the single payments available to the unemployed. Ultimately they will be replaced by the social fund. That will mean a reduction in income available to the unemployed. The costs that they are to meet from their reduced income are to rise, particularly because of the Government's proposal in the Social Security Bill to make everyone on supplementary benefit meet 20 per cent. of their rates and water rates.

[Mrs. Margaret Beckett]

That proposal was rejected only this week by another place, but we hear that the Prime Minister is determined to reinstate it.

The penalties of unemployment are also due to be increased. In the final days of consideration of the Social Security Bill in Committee, the Government introduced a proposal that if someone might have made himself voluntarily unemployed, or might not be seeking work with sufficient enthusiasm, his benefit could be reduced not for six weeks, as now, but for a full 13 weeks. The Government clearly said that they proposed measures with increased questioning so that they could find out what action people were taking to find work, even in areas where unemployment is sky-high.

Before the proposals came forward in this form, we were already concerned that the package, particularly the last elements to which I referred, might mean that people were pursued and attempts made to force them to take jobs, even low-paid jobs, and even there the money coming in would not be adequate to support their families. If the family is carrying a further burden of debt, incurred because the benefit paid under the proposals is reduced, there is a great danger that those people may be leant on and pushed by Government officials to take action which might increase the danger of them losing their home because of the growing burden of debt compared with a potentially inadequate income.

Despite growing evidence that the Government are dominated by those whose views would not have been out of place in the Tory Governments of the 1930s, I have noticed that Ministers become upset when we in the Labour party draw on the experience and history of our families and, in particular, of the Labour movement. But it is still important and relevant to say to the Government at the conclusion of this debate that part of what made the proposal that is usually described as the means test so hated was that it took away from people the few assets that they had managed to accrue, often after struggling throughout their working life, and that they knew perfectly well they could never replace. It made families feel that all their work, all their endeavour, had gone for nothing, because the few achievements that had been gained were gone for ever.

The way in which the memory of the means test has lingered on is testimony to the bitterness of that experience. I know that hon. Members, particularly Opposition Members, can testify to that strongly from the experience of their families. It is extraordinary that this Government want to revive that memory and bitterness. A famous quotation tells us that those whom the gods would destroy they first send mad. Clearly the gods, like the country, have turned against the Government.

6.44 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mr. John Major): I shall endeavour to bring some sanity to the debate. We have had an excellent debate of some heat and passion. I have no objections to that. The hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett), in summing up the Opposition's case, did so crisply and aptly, as she so frequently does. One or two of the speeches have been outstanding. I shall endeavour to respond to as many of the points made as possible.

I know that the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) must leave, for understandable reasons, which he has explained to me, so let me say a word or so about his opening speech. I listened to it with an unanticipated admiration. My fascination was not so much with the content of the hon. Gentleman's argument or, indeed, with the motion, to which I shall refer; nor was it with his delivery, lucid and impassioned as it was, and as it so frequently is. My fascination was born out of sheer admiration for the absolute brass-necked effrontery of the motion on this subject from that source. It is effrontery because, as my hon. Friend the Minister of State set out at the commencement of the debate, our proposals are still at the consultation stage. The Social Security Advisory Committee is still considering them. No report has yet been received. No consultation has yet been considered. No final decisions have yet been taken. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) occasionally engages his mouth before his thought processes. He would be wise to wait a second or two.

On a former occasion, when the hon. Member for Oldham, West issued his Green Paper on mortgage interest, he was concerned that he was criticised for what were consultation proposals, and said so loudly and frequently to the press. I say that the hon. Gentleman's effrontery is brass-necked because I put it kindly the hon. Gentleman has a chequered history on the subject of mortgage interest, and the concept of him, with his record, as the saviour of home owners is as absurd a proposition as the House can swallow, even towards the end of a long Session. However, I shall not be cruel to the hon. Gentleman and dwell on that, not least because I wish to refer specifically to some of the important points that were made in the debate by him and others.

The right hon. Member for Halton (Mr. Oakes) spoke early in the debate with all the experience of a vice-president of the Building Societies Association. I was particularly grateful to him for the acknowledgment that the building societies deal sensitively with borrowers facing short-term difficulties. I am happy to acknowledge that that is traditionally the case, and I hope and expect that the building societies will continue to do so in future. the underlying concern of the right hon. Gentleman — I hope that I do not misstate it — and of other hon. Members, including the hon. Member for Oldham, West, my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, North (Mr. Jones) and the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood), was the danger of foreclosure as a result of arrears. I entirely accept — it is impossible to deny it — that foreclosure inevitably causes great distress where it occurs.

The right hon. Gentleman, better perhaps than anyone else in the House, will know that foreclosure is the last option that the lenders wish to pursue. It is not an early instinct, but the last option. There are many criteria to be considered before that sad decision is reached — how much, if any, equity the individual possesses in the property, whether the difficulty is likely to be long-term, and whether there are other debt problems. All those are relevant points that would need to be seriously considered by the lender before there was any suggestion of foreclosure. I suggest that the same principle would apply where the lender is not a building society, but perhaps some of the later arrivals on the lending scene — the local authorities, which would lend to people who had purchased local authority property, and banks.

I do not accept, in the fashion that it has been advanced from time to time this afternoon, the suggestion that the proposed change sent to the Social Security Advisory Committee, would, of its own volition given its nature and scale, materially accelerate foreclosure. Although we may quibble about the figures on the fringes, there is little doubt that, broadly, the average interest lost for a supplementary claimant unemployed for the full six months would be about £200. That addition to the capital debt, when it is known that after a six-month period the interest would again be met in full, seems unlikely to trigger foreclosure of its own volition. The observation made by the right hon. Member for Halton about the building societies lends some force to that argument.

Mr. Raynsford: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Major: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will forgive me if I do not give way. He contributed to the debate and there are many points that I should like to cover. Some of the comments that I should like to cover are his.

That argument is also strengthened in the light of the specific comments by the Building Societies Association to the effect that it would handle any change in arrangements sympathetically and would continue with the basic aim of keeping as many people in home ownership as possible.

The right hon. Member for Halton also mentioned another important matter. He referred to the £1·85 weekly addition to supplementary benefit for repairs and insurance. I can reassure the right hon. Gentleman by saying that that sum may be increased where the cost of repairs and insurance exceeds that figure, provided that it is reasonable in all the circumstances to do that. We would expect that frequently to be the case.

My hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, North expressed his concerns trenchantly. I shall study with care the reservations that he expressed. They were echoed by other hon. Members. In the meantime, as his speech was unique in this respect, perhaps I may welcome his acknowledgement of the minor improvements proposed, and specifically his acknowledgement of the proposed special disregard of income from mortgage protection policies to meet the balance of mortgage payments. It was refreshing to hear that minor change acknowledged, for it was in danger of being swamped in the criticism that emerged elsewhere in the debate.

My hon. Friend the Member for Delyn (Mr. Raffan), in an excellent speech, spoke with passion and clarity about his concerns. He referred to some of the observations made by my hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security, who was trying to make the point that the measure was directed at the first six months on benefit. Everyone whose unemployment turns out to be long term, will, of course, have all the interest met after the six months, including the extra interest in arrears arising from the 50 per cent. limitation, which will have capitalised and added to the outstanding loan. Those whose unemployment is longer term will come, and will know that they will come, into full benefit and qualify for extra help with additional interest on the higher loan.

Therefore, I hope that people out of work will appreciate that and understand that 100 per cent. will become available if, sadly, they remain out of work after the full six months and that that will include the extra help with the interest, which may have been capitalised and which was not met during the first six months. I should also like to assure my hon. Friend the Member for Delyn that, when the measure comes into operation it will affect new cases only, and not existing cases.

The hon. Member for Fulham (Mr. Raynsford), in a wide-ranging speech, referred to repossessions and arrears. I shall not bandy statistics with him, for we have done that before and I am wary of creating a tradition. However, we are in no sense complacent about arrears. I accept that for those in difficulties the problems can, self-evidently, be severe. The proportion of those in difficulties is very small and ought not to be over-exaggerated.

Mr. Raynsford *rose*

Mr. Major: Well over 99 per cent. of mortgages are not in arrears. It does not help the hon. Gentleman's argument or rational debate to paint an exaggerated picture of many people in severe difficulties. On the information available to me, that is not statistically the case.

Mr. Raynsford: I should like to correct the Minister. At the beginning of my speech I made the point that we were not talking about large numbers of people. The point that I tried to make — the statistics that I quoted illustrate this — is that there has been a serious increase in the proportion of arrears during the lifetime of the Government. In fact, there has been a sixfold increase. Although the numbers are not large in absolute terms, the trend is very worrying. The likely implication of the proposals is to make that trend worse. That is the main principle of the Opposition's criticism.

Mr. Major: I understand the hon. Gentleman's point. In no sense was I trying to misrepresent him. I was trying to place his point in the context of the facts as I understand them.

The hon. Gentleman also referred rather tantalisingly to the proposition of extending mortgage interest cover to housing benefit. He will know that that occurs in France, Germany, New Zealand and Switzerland. He will also know that none of those countries offer 100 per cent. cover, nor, I think — I shall have to check to be completely sure — do they provide the degree of protection that would be provided under the supplementary benefit proposals even were we to implement the proposals referred to the SSAC in their present form.

My hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie), with an arithmetical precision that is admirable, asked how the Government's figures added up. They did not seem to add up to my hon. Friend. I understand her confusion, but I can assure her that the calculations are correct. However, in the interests of brevity perhaps she will permit me to write to her with the detailed calculations, rather than deal with them at great length now.

Another matter which is relevant and which has run as a strand throughout the debate is the anxiety that lenders will be discouraged from pursuing low-cost home ownership initiatives. We hope that that will not be the case. The Government have welcomed the building societies' efforts in that area, and we recognise that they are helping people into home ownership who might otherwise have been unable to afford such ownership.

There is always an element of risk in operating at the lower end of the market. Any addition to that risk from our proposals will, in our judgment, be short-term and apply to only a minority of cases. I must emphasise again

[Mr. Major]

that when a borrower becomes unemployed and is in receipt of unemployment benefit, mortgage interest and interest on arrears will be fully covered after the six-month period. When unemployment is for less than six months, we believe that it will normally be possible to make arrangements for the recovery of arrears in the normal way. In the meantime, help will continue to be given with half the interest payments.

In order to put the matter into the proper context at the end of an emotional debate, I stress that we are considering an amount equal to three months' interest at most. There is, of course, also the problem of the mortgage interest trap, about which the Shelter Housing Aid Centre has made comments recently. I can assure the House that we will carefully examine this problem, which, to some extent, may appear to be inherent in any scheme to introduce a six-month qualifying period.

It is our preliminary judgment that the number of people who might be caught in the mortgage interest trap is minute. Throughout the country we believe that no more than 1,000 people will be affected. We will therefore need to balance carefully our desire to help with the legal and operational problems involved in dealing with changes of circumstances in the six-month period.

The thrust of the Opposition's charge has been that the Government are unfairly beastly to people whom we sought to encourage into home ownership. I do not accept that charge. It is inaccurate, and that has not been our intention. I must also say, even in the absence of the principal protagonist, the hon. Member for Oldham, West, that it is a colossal cheek for the Opposition to make that charge. They opposed the right to buy, and many of the people about whom they now claim to be concerned would never have become home owners without the right to buy.

The hon. Member for Oldham, West appeared to be keen to abolish either all or — as I do not wish to misrepresent him — part of mortgage interest tax relief, without which far fewer people would have become home owners. As recently as last evening, speaking from the Opposition Front Bench, the hon. Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts) repeated yet again that it was wrong for taxpayers to receive income tax relief on mortgages up to £30,000. That is in flat contradiction to what has been said elsewhere as the official Opposition policy. The sooner the Opposition make their position utterly clear on that, the better.

Mr. Raynsford: We intend to limit it to the standard rate.

Mr. Major: The hon. Member for Fulham says that the Opposition will limit it to the standard rate. The hon. Member for Oldham, West had a different proposition, and the hon. Member for Bootle had yet a further proposition to make yesterday. There are more propositions from the Opposition on mortgage interest than there are defence policies from the alliance. The sooner we have an accurate assessment of the Opposition's stance, the better. We need no lectures from the Labour party on that.

The propositions that we referred to the advisory committee were not novel. They were well understood, they were trailed in the Green Paper and in the White Paper and they were spoken about often. Nor are they final, for we await with interest the advisory committee's report on the draft regulations.

Moreover, I re-emphasise that our proposals apply only to the short term, with full benefit entitlement being restored after six months. They are modest proposals; they are certainly worth considering; they will bring equity of treatment between home owner and taxpayer and between those on low incomes, whether in or out of work.

Even under our proposals, we would have a better and more generous system than the Labour Government in New Zealand

Mr. Derek Foster (Bishop Auckland) *rose in his place, and claimed to move*, That the Question be now put.

Question, That the Question be now put, *put and agreed to.*

Question put accordingly, That the original words stand part of the Question:

The House divided: Ayes 198, Noes 259.

Division No. 233] **[7 pm**

AYES

Abse, Leo
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Alton, David
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Anthony
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'mline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Rt Hon J.
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell, Ian
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Carter-Jones, Lewis
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clelland, David Gordon
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Conlan, Bernard
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cox, Thomas *(Tooting)*
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Dover, Den
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Edwards, Bob *(W'h'mpt'n SE)*
Ellis, Raymond
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Freud, Clement
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman
Gould, Bryan
Gourlay, Harry
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*
Hancock, Michael
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hume, John
Janner, Hon Greville
Jenkins, Rt Hon Roy *(Hillh'd)*
John, Brynmor
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald

Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Edward
McCartney, Hugh
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKelvey, William
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Robert
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meadowcroft, Michael
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Park, George
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Penhaligon, David
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rogers, Allan
Ross, Ernest *(Dundee W)*
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ryman, John
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shields, Mrs Elizabeth
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Short, Mrs R. *(W'hampt'n NE)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Torney, Tom
Wallace, James
Wareing, Robert
Weetch, Ken
Welsh, Michael
White, James
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Wilson, Gordon
Winnick, David
Woodall, Alec
Wrigglesworth, Ian
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Ron Davies and
Mr. Lawrence Cunliffe.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Arnold, Tom
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Benyon, William
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Bryan, Sir Paul
Budgen, Nick
Bulmer, Esmond
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Rt Hon Sir Adam
Carlisle, John *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, W. S.
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clegg, Sir Walter
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Corrie, John
Couchman, James
Cranborne, Viscount
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dykes, Hugh
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Fletcher, Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Galley, Roy
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony
Greenway, Harry
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harvey, Robert
Havers, Rt Hon Sir Michael
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Hickmet, Richard
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hirst, Michael
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jackson, Robert
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Nicholas
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
Madel, David
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Maples, John
Marlow, Antony
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mills, Sir Peter *(West Devon)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M. *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Murphy, Christopher
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Oppenheim, Rt Hon Mrs S.
Osborn, Sir John
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abgdn)*
Pattie, Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Price, Sir David
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rees, Rt Hon Peter *(Dover)*
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Rippon, Rt Hon Geoffrey
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter

Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Silvester, Fred
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speed, Keith
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stokes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Waller, Gary
Warren, Kenneth
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wheeler, John
Wiggin, Jerry
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy

Tellers for the Noes
Mr. Tony Durant and
Mr. Michael Neubert.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 33 (Questions on amendments), and agreed to.*

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *forthwith declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.*

Resolved,

That this House congratulates the Government on the success of its policies to encourage home ownership; recognises the need to achieve a proper balance between the responsibilities of the borrower, the lender and the tax payer, and greater fairness as between those on Supplementary Benefit for short periods and those in low paid employment; and notes the proposals to this end that the Government has put forward for consultation to the Social Security Advisory Committee.

Higher and Continuing Education

7.12 pm

Mr. Giles Radice (Durham, North): I beg to move,

That this House notes the importance of higher education for the future of the country; deplores the cutbacks in the recurrent grant to universities; condemns the failure to provide adequate resources for the public sector for continuing education and for research, and calls upon Her Majesty's Government to open up higher education to a much wider group than ever before, including mature and part-time students.

I begin by making what I hope are relatively non-controversial statements about higher education. I think that all right hon. and hon. Members agree that higher education is important for individual men and women because it builds up their information and knowledge; it develops their critical faculties and thinking powers; it encourages their interest and involvement in society and politics; and it enables them to obtain better paid and more interesting jobs.

However, higher education is important not just for individuals but for the community as a whole. Not only does it help to provide society with the pool of knowledge and scholarship that is so vital to our culture but also, as the CBI recently reminded the Government, it supplies industry with the skilled graduates and the scientific and technological research that it so desperately needs if it is to survive and prosper. Higher education trains the teachers for our schools, including those who teach the vital subjects of science and mathematics; so what happens to higher education must be a matter of national concern.

I stress also the importance of continuing education. Increasingly, as both the University Grants Committee and the National Advisory Body for Public Sector Higher Education recognised in their advice to the previous Secretary of State for Education and Science, education will need to be something that does not stop at age 16, 18 or 21. It will need to be a continuous process. Therefore we should be looking to higher education to provide the refresher and new skill courses for both industry and the professions and also an increasing number of second opportunities for adults.

Although I welcome the Government's recognition in their amendment of the importance of higher education, there is little sign in the Government's record so far that they have given priority to higher education. In fact we are now spending a lower proportion of our gross national product on higher education than we were in the mid-1970s. So far, there is no sign of a Government strategy that will help to meet the future needs of the nation.

The Government admit that, since 1980-81, the universities have suffered a sharp cut in their resources. As the Minister with responsibility for higher education accepted in his 9 June reply to a parliamentary question from my hon. Friend the Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett), who I am glad to see is here this evening, 13 universities suffered a cut in UGC funding of over 20 per cent. in real terms between 1980-81 and 1986-87. According to figures supplied by the Department of Education and Science, the aggregate cut over the same period for universities was 16·3 per cent.

The impact of cuts on this scale has been severe. The 1981-84 cuts fell most heavily on scientific and technological universities such as Aston, Salford and Bradford. In the current round of UGC cuts, science is still

ing hit. The UGC is planning for cuts in student numbers in the physical sciences, mathematics and statistics.

Overall, the vast majority of universities have had to live from hand to mouth — hardly the best atmosphere in which to encourage the long-term planning and effective management for which the Jarrett committee called and that the Government say they support.

However, it is not just a question of the impact on universities. One has to consider also the effect on both the supply of graduates and research. At least 12,000 well-qualified students a year, who would otherwise have been successful, have failed to obtain university places, while the overall cut in the recurrent grant to the universities means that there is less money for research.

In addition, we are now facing a very serious brain drain, caused by poor rewards and uncertain prospects. Doctor David Ingram, the vice-chancellor of the univeristy of Kent, recently returned from a visit to the United States, said:

"American universities made it clear that they expect to solve their difficulties in recruiting new staff by taking people from Britain's universities."

Figures provided by the British embassy in Washington show that more than 1,000 engineers and scientists are entering the United States from the United Kingdom each year. Britain cannot afford to lose its best talent in that way.

I pay tribute to the fact that in a remarkably courageous and honest speech to the council of the Association of University Teachers on 16 May, the Minister with responsibility for higher education referred to

"the growing chorus of voices that is telling us that enough is enough and that the restrictions on public funding and pay that the universities have experienced in recent years cannot continue without significant damage not only to the universities directly but also to their capacity to produce the graduates and the research that the country needs."

The Minister need not feel ashamed of what he said. He believed it and was right to say it when he did, and I respect him for it.

On the subject of research, the Government amendment refers to an 8 per cent. increase in the science budget, but it does not say that about half the expenditure on research comes through the University Grants Committee. As we have seen, the UGC funding to universities has been cut by at least 16 per cent. since 1980-81. In addition, as the Advisory Board for the Research Councils has warned the Secretary of State, the increasing sophistication of scientific equipment adds an average of 10 per cent. per annum above average inflation to research costs.

It is hardly surprising that the scientific community talks about a crisis and that a campaign to save British science was launched at the beginning of the year. The advisory board told the Minister's predecessor last year:

"Over the last five years the Government has reduced the level of investment in scientists and their research in real terms against the trend in other developed countries. The economic and social effects on the United Kingdom of this may not become obvious for a few more years. However, we should warn the Government that when they do they are likely to be grave and effectively irreversible."

I should now like to speak about what has happened in the public sector. Before the Minister alleges that I have no interest in the public sector, as he has done in a number of debates that he will remember outside the House, I should remind him that it was a Labour Government who created the polytechnics. There is no doubt that they have been highly successful and that they are providing effective and relative higher education for an increasing number of graduates, including one of my daughters. Without the polytechnics, the present problems in higher education would be considerably worse than they are.

The increase in the student population which the Government amendment mentions and which no doubt the Minister will speak about, has occurred in the public sector. Many of the students who might have gone to university if the number of places had not been cut have gone to the polytechnics. The increase is more the result of good luck than of good management by the Government. The Government have failed to provide the extra resources to match the extra students.

According to Government figures, the spend per student in the public sector has fallen by 22 per cent. in real terms since 1980-81. It is the local authorities, and especially the Labour authorities together with the NAB officials, who have until now insisted on giving priority to access, and rightly so. Both the NAB, the body responsible for planning and, more recently, the Council for National Academic Awards which is responsible for validation and review, have warned about the possible threat to quality if the spend per student continues to be cut. The CNAA has said:

"Present resourcing levels will not permit the quality of courses and output to be sustained in the long run."

That is the background to the crisis of funding facing the public sector in 1987-88. I accept that the Government planning figures for that year are not immutable — that is one reason for the debate — but based on those figures the NAB committee has warned that if spending per student is to be retained and quality preserved, and if access is to be maintained, there will be a shortfall of £24 million. Unless the Government produce the extra money, that will mean that 9,500 student places will have to be cut. That is not just the estimate of the secretariat but the estimate of the NAB committee.

There is a threat to a number of polytechnic departments, including engineering departments at Sunderland and Wolverhampton. The Minister may say that this is a lot of scaremongering. I hope that those departments will not have to close, because it would be mad if they did. There is no doubt that those departments are threatened, because they have received letters from the NAB secretariat. Remember that the NAB is not in the pay of the Labour party but is trying to serve the NAB committee and the NAB council. It is an independent body, but of course it is excellently chaired by the Minister responsible for higher education, to whom tribute is due.

If the cuts in student numbers go ahead we will be turning away students who would be able to benefit from higher education, and that would be a clear breach of the Robbins principle. The Opposition believe, and our belief is supported by considerable evidence, that far more people could benefit from higher education than currently enjoy it.

The Government amendments says that substantially increased opportunities are being provided for adult and continuing education. Last year's Green Paper spoke of the importance of continuing education, but there is little evidence that the Government were prepared to provide extra resources for it.

A closer investigation of the Government's record suggests that they have cut resources for adult and

[Mr. Giles Radice]

continuing education in a number of crucial areas. University extra-mural departments have been cut, the grant to the Workers Educational Association has been cut and local authority adult education services have been squeezed. I know that there is widespread support for the Open university and that hon. Members in all parts of the House are strong supporters of that university. It was forced to make a cut of £8 million in planned expenditure between 1984 and 1986 and sharply to increase its tuition fees. This means that the university has had to turn away 25,000 students, about half of whom wish to study science and technology. The vice-chancellor of the Open university has rightly called it a public scandal.

There is also the plight of Birkbeck college, which the Prime Minister recently praised for its achievements. She was right to do so, because Birkbeck is a unique institution that specialises in part-time education and performs a great service for the community. But, as a result of the latest round of cuts and the changed formula for part-time students, the existence of Birkbeck must now be in doubt. I hope that that is not true and that the Minister will say that he will provide resources for it. All this hardly suggests that the Government have yet given wholehearted support to adult and continuing education. They must do so because they ought to help those who want to help themselves and their country by getting a better education.

All of us who look to the decade ahead will agree that higher and continuing education is likely to grow in importance to Britain. I have already mentioned our national research needs. Industry requires a sustained supply of graduates; as the Engineering Council has reminded us, it also needs more opportunities for continuing education. On Monday, the Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services issued its latest report on graduate employment prospects. It shows that there is already a disturbing and growing shortage of graduates in a number of key areas, and that there is a worrying 5 per cent. reduction in the number of engineering and technology graduates. What is even more disturbing for the future is the fall in the number of graduates who want to be teachers, especially of mathematics, physics and chemistry. Without the teachers, where are the scientists, engineers and mathematicians of the future to come from?

As the number of 18-year-olds begins to decline at the end of the decade, the problems could intensify. It is hardly likely that industry will need fewer graduates after 1990. If anything, industry will need more.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): It is interesting to listen to the hon. Gentleman's catalogue of woe, but he has not explained what his party intends to do if it ever gets the opportunity to do something. Is he aware that vice-chancellors and principals across the country know that he is not committed to restoring any of the cuts that have been made?

Mr. Radice: If we were in power today, we would not be making cuts. When we come to office, we will immediately start to repair some of the damage that has been done to quality and research. We would provide new resources for access for mature and part-time students and for continuing education. I give the pledge that, in the mid-1990s, there will be more people in higher and continuing education under a Labour Government than is planned by the present Government.

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Radice: No. I am sorry, but I must get on.

I have so far dwelt on the problems, but there are also big opportunities. In spite of the cuts, much of higher education is of a good quality. We still have high quality research institutions and departments and we have the potential for a major expansion of higher and continuing education. The fall in the number of 18-yeaf-olds by 1990 which I mentioned earlier offers Britain a major opportunity to open up higher education to a much wider group than ever before.

I welcomed the new Secretary of State in our previous debate, but I welcome him again today if he feels like it. He has an opportunity to respond to the cries of, "Enough is enough," which were repeated by the Minister with responsibility for higher education and the chairman of the NAB board. He has an opportunity to make a fresh start. He should immediately stop the cuts in university grants for 1986-87 and 1987-88. He should give the public sector the £24 million for which it is asking. He should provide the extra resources for science and he should tell higher education that he will provide new money for access, part-time and mature students and continuing education. He must respond sympathetically to the new pay deal which has been agreed between the university lecturers and the vice-chancellors' committee.

Investment in higher education is vital for the country's future. The message which must come from this debate is that students and parents and industry and higher education are expecting the new Secretary of State to fight in the Cabinet for higher education. He will be judged not by his charm

Mr. Bryan Gould (Dagenham): His what?

Mr. Radice: His charm. Nor will he be judged by his good looks or by his undoubted eloquence, but by the level of success that he achieves.

7.34 pm

The Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Kenneth Baker): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question, and to add instead thereof:

"notes the importance of higher education for the future of the country; commends the Government on the increase of 17 per cent. in full time home student numbers since 1979, on the 8 per cent. increase in the science budget for the research councils as measured against average inflation, and on the substantially increased opportunities for adult and continuing education; and applauds the Government's intention to build on these successes, particularly through further increases in participation rates for both young and mature entrants.".

I was very surprised to hear last week that the Opposition had chosen higher education as the subject for one of their Supply day debates, because it means free advertising time for the Government.

Since 1979, we have witnessed an unprecedented increase in higher education. It is futile for the Opposition to talk of cuts when there are now 77,000 more full-time home students in higher education than there were in 1979 and when the number of part-time students is 60,000 higher.

The increases are due not solely to the fact that there are more 18 and 19-year-olds. About one quarter of the increase can be attributed to the demographic bulge. Most of the rest is due to the increase in the proportion of 18 and 19-year-olds who enter higher education, which has risen

from 12·4 per cent. in 1979 to 13·9 per cent. last autumn. There has also been a 15 per cent. increase in the number of mature entrants from 34,000 to 39,000. All these increases contrast with the falls in student numbers and participation rates between 1975 and 1979.

Our policy is that places should be available for all with the intellectual competence, maturity and motivation to benefit from higher education. We are therefore committed to a regular review of the projections of future student numbers prepared for planning purposes. In 1984-85, more young people entered higher education than had been forecast. My Department is currently preparing revised projections which take account of this encouraging trend, and I hope to publish these new higher projections in the next few months. It remains the Government's clear objective to increase the proportion of young people who enter higher education.

Much has been made of comparisons with other countries. It is difficult to establish a common basis of comparison. In Britain, we tend to focus on the number of 18 and 19-year-olds who enter full-time courses, but other countries' statistics usually include all students, including part-timers. Japan's statistics, for example, include people on correspondence courses, and I understand that the figures for America include all those who undertake professional training in law, accountancy, surveying, and the like. Nor must we forget that higher education courses in Britain are shorter and usually have lower wastage rates than those in other countries.

This is real statistical treacle and we must tread very warily. It is thick treacle and, treading as warily as I can, I must say that the best comparison is of the proportions who gain degrees and higher diplomas. On that basis, Britain is a little way behind Japan and America but on a par with achievements in France and West Germany and better than the rest of Europe.

Mr. Radice *rose*——

Mr. Baker: I therefore deplore the Opposition's continued use of statistics of doubtful validity to make improper comparisons and to knock the achievements of our higher education system. I am aware that the hon. Member for Durham, North (Mr. Radice) wants to intervene. I had to listen carefully when he was interrupted by my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) regarding the commitment about Labour's spending plans for higher education. The deputy leader of the Labour party——

Mr. Radice: A very good man.

Mr. Baker: Yes. I shall come to his opinion of the hon. Member in a moment.

The deputy leader of the Labour party made a speech a little while ago, about which *The Times Educational Supplement* of 20 June 1986 said:

"Hattersley rejects rapid university expansion."

The Guardian of 14 June 1986 said:

"Hattersley trims hopes on higher education."

The *Morning Star*, blunt as ever, on the same date said:

"Expansion not on, Hattersley tells dons."

The right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) said that the money for higher education "will not be all that you need, even less will it be all that you ask for. To be frank, reasonable though I know him to be, I doubt if it will be all for which Giles Radice asks."

What a volume of condescension there was in the phrase, "reasonable though I know him to be."

He is a reasonable man — we are all reasonable men — but I have never known the adjective "reasonable" to be used in such a dismissive, cutting and final way.

Mr. Radice: The quotation continues:

"We will replace the age of steep decline in higher education funding with an era of gradual expansion. If there is to be an argument between us it will be about the speed of improvement not the pace of deterioration or even the duration of stagnation. And I hope that my frankness in qualifying my promise of expansion will convince you of my sincerity in making the promise."

I have the shadow Chancellor on my side. Does the Secretary of State have the Chancellor of the Exchequer on his side? We shall have to see.

Mr. Baker: That was most moving. I have a quotation from the leader of the Labour party, not the deputy leader. The right hon. Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock), at a press conference — I expect the hon. Gentleman was present — was asked by Beverley Anderson, an Oxford polytechnic lecturer and a former Oxford city Labour councillor:

"You have to tell us how much money your education plans will cost and how much will go on our taxes and rates. If you do not, we will not take you seriously."

As the hon. Gentleman knows, there was no answer to that question.

The hon. Gentleman said a great deal about cuts in university funding. I acknowledge that the previous public expenditure White Paper envisaged that grants to universities would be reduced in real terms by 1988-89. We never disguised the fact that that would present universities with a difficult task, especially as, at the same time, we are asking them to improve and reshape their provision in the light of developing national needs.

Against that background, my predecessor announced five weeks ago that the Government are ready to increase financial provision for the universities, provided they demonstrate real progress in implementing and building on the changes that are needed. Those changes include better management, improved standards of teaching, selectivity in research funding and rationalisation of small departments. I shall be discussing the way forward with the University Grants Committee and the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals during the next few months before reaching decisions on public expenditure in the autumn.

To those hon. Members who persist in favouring press speculation to fact, I must reiterate that the UGC has made no recommendations to me about university closures. I can categorically state that the Government have no plans for closures. This emphatically does not mean that every faculty can expect to continue as it is. Professor Bernard Crick, who is not a subscribing member of the Conservative party, in *The Observer* last Sunday questioned whether every university should offer such a wide range of studies — what he described as a department store approach.

There must be scope for change and reform. Patterns of study and research cannot remain inviolate and unchanged for long periods.

A hundred years ago in Oxford, 93 per cent. of students — all men — studied arts subjects, mainly Greek, Latin and theology. Only 7 per cent. studied mathematics and the natural sciences. Today, the pattern is completely different. Though still a centre of excellence for the study of classics and theology, only 8 per cent. of Oxford

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students study such subjects, but about 40 per cent. are on science courses, and that picture is mirrored throughout the country.

My predecessor but one, my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Warrington, South (Mr. Carlisle), encouraged moves to change the balance between science and the humanities in higher education. In 1979, the proportion studying science was 45 per cent., with 55 per cent. on humanities courses. Today, it is almost 48 per cent. science. By 1989, it may be more than 50 per cent. science. This trend reflects the needs of our society today. For our society to be rich and prosperous, we must produce more technologists and engineers. From their talents, inventiveness, skills and energies will come the continuing wealth of our country.

The Government can take pride in the fact that they have stimulated a shift to science and engineering courses. Since 1979, the number of students on those courses has increased by 30 per cent. to 175,000, compared with an increase in total student numbers of 17 per cent. That was achieved largely through the efforts of individual universities and colleges, the UGC and the National Advisory Body, to which I pay tribute.

Contrary to what the hon. Gentleman said, the UGC is planning further increases in science student numbers. Moreover, we have given this change two boosts: first, through the information technology initiative, which created 5,000 extra places in universities, polytechnics and other colleges in electronic engineering and computer science at a cost of about £38 million over three years; and, secondly, by the engineering and technology programme announced in March last year, which will provide 5,000 additional places on high-quality first degree and masters couses in engineering, applied physics, materials science and computer science. This will cost £65 million in its first four years. In addition, industry will be contributing more than £24 million in support of the programme.

I do not for a moment undervalue the role of the study of the humanities in higher education. They are an essential ingredient in a civilised and well-balanced society and, rigorously taught, they develop analytical and critical skills much valued by employers. But we must turn out more proficient engineers and technologists at all levels in the education system.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): How does the Secretary of State reconcile what he has just said about the need for more engineers and technologists with the massive cuts that were made in the universities of Bradford, Salford and Aston in 1981, and the major cuts in those universities' budgets that were recently announced? It does not make sense. Can the Minister explain it to my constituents who are worried about the future of our universities?

Mr. Baker: I asked my officials to discover what will be the student intake this autumn. The best advice that I have—I cannot be categorical until the universities and polytechnics start again—is that there will be increases in the student intake this autumn.

Mr. Madden: Answer the question.

Mr. Baker: That is a good answer.

In technological education, as well as the massive increase in numbers starting courses of initial higher education, we have begun to make progress in the much-needed development of continuing education and professional updating. I saw something of this in a college in Southall which I visited this afternoon. My Department is playing its part through the £6 million PICKUP scheme. That is an acronym for the professional, industrial and commercial knowledge updating programme. That programme supports a range of innovative projects designed to keep people working in industry up to date through relevant courses in colleges.

The hon. Member for Durham, North mentioned Birkbeck. I, too, place great value on part-time courses of higher education; and, in view of the recent speculation, I take this opportunity to commend the important contribution which Birkbeck makes in this regard. As I have already told the House, it is for London university's court to decide how its block grant from the UGC is allocated among the university's constituent colleges. However, in the light of representations, the UGC has agreed to reconsider the weighting that it as given to part-time students at Birkbeck. We shall be watching the outcome of the committee's review with interest. Much will depend on the evidence which Birkbeck college produces and, as Sir Peter Swinnerton-Dyer, who is a highly regarded mathematician as well as the UGC chairman, has made clear, this evidence will need to add up rather better than some of the figures that have been bandied about.

I shall now deal with a matter that has been mentioned in higher education debates—the recently announced assessment of research by the UGC. I applaud the UGC's attempt to assess the research quality of faculties in our universities. Three of the factors that were taken into account were quantitative: the number of academic staff and the number of research students, income from research councils, from medical and other research charities, and research contract income from industry and from Government Departments. The fourth and perhaps most important factor was the UGC's evaluation of the quality of research in each department, having regard to the university's research statements and to the views of the research councils, other research bodies and eminent experts.

Those qualitative judgments were reached by the subject sub-committees of the UGC, so that more than 120 academics and others were involved, representing a wide cross-section of the academic community. Who else could have done this effectively? The Government could not have done it.

I appreciate that any list of this sort is uncomfortable, because there are winners and losers. But it must be right to make a differential assessment. Otherwise the whole of university research is treated like the caucus race in Alice in Wonderland—a race devised by a mathematics don in which everybody wins. It is not right for the mediocre and the inadequate to bask in the glory of the outstanding and the brilliant.

Mr. Radice: I am not raising a debating point, one of the problems for the departments affected was that they did not know the criteria for the judgments made. That is one of the difficulties of the whole UGC process, and that is why the NAB is rather superior. We have more knowledge of why the NAB has taken its decisions.

Mr. Baker: That is a fair point, which has also been put to me by certain dons. I shall certainly discuss that with

the UGC to see whether it is prepared to be more open about things. But having discussed the issue, I think that the work was done on as reasonable and as proper a basis as possible. It is, of course, easier to analyse the research qualities of a university than its teaching qualities. However, one is not attempting to analyse the teaching qualities of a university in this way.

The hon. Member for Durham, North mentioned research funding. The science budget—the funds that go to research councils—has grown by 8 per cent. since 1979. The science budget now stands at over £600 million. With the research funds channelled through the UGC which the hon. Gentleman recognised as an important source—spending on the science base now stands at over £1 billion per year. The Government also support research through the departmental research and development programmes of the major departments. Expenditure by civil Government Departments totalled a further £1 billion in 1984-85. Support for innovation in industry by the Department of Trade and Industry is a substantial part of the total. That is an important contribution to research. Its emphasis is now on collaborative pre-competitive ventures, bringing together industry with scientific researchers in the universities and research councils. A notable example of that is the Alvey programme, which I launched when I was at the Department of Trade and Industry.

I should like to be able to increase overall funding further. However, some important issues must be faced. Has Britain got the balance of effort right between different areas of research? Have we got too many centres and departments engaging in research in particular areas? Would we get better value for money if the money and people were concentrated in fewer larger centres? How can we do better at carrying our research through into commercially successful innovation in industry? That is one of the most important things. For years we have been a brilliantly inventive nation. Yet time and again hon. Members could cite examples of where that inventiveness has not gone through to product development and has not led to world-beating products being on sale.

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): It is all a question of money.

Mr. Baker: With respect, it is not just a question of money. A team with a brilliant inventor still needs someone to get the team's act together. When I was at the Department of Trade and Industry and was involved in a research programme directly related to industry, time and again I saw brilliant, outstanding and world-beating inventions in our universities, but I rarely saw a team that could take them to the stage of exploitation and development.

Dr. Jeremy Bray (Motherwell, South): I agree that it is not just a question of money. We need a total reversal of the Government's industrial policies. Is the right hon. Gentleman aware of the recent Advisory Council for Applied Research and Development report, which took up the theme of Martin and Irvine, whose book was subtitled, "Picking Winners"? The ACARD report said that the Government should pick winners and back them from the basic research stage through to applied research and development. Does the right hon. Gentleman espouse that philosophy?

Mr. Baker: When I was at the Department of Trade and Industry I found that one of the difficulties was that although one set out to pick winners, the losers often picked themselves. That is a problem. It does not mean to say that the Government do not need to promote and stimulate projects through their various agencies. From time to time we have had to take a big chance, but one must be prepared to do that, especially with the new technology.

Mr. Flannery: Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Baker: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will forgive me if I do not give way, as this is a short debate. If I do give way, others may not be able to speak.

The hon. Member for Durham, North mentioned university pay. It has been asserted that the pay of university dons has fallen 20 to 25 per cent. behind the retail prices index since 1979, and demands have been made that the Government should give an immediate undertaking to foot the bill for restructuring salaries, as proposed by the AUT and the CVCP.

The Government reject the idea that pay should be settled solely by comparison with other groups. That happened in the 1970s and resulted in the spiralling inflation from which the Government had to rescue the country. We regard the main determinant in settling public sector pay to be what the country can afford in order to recruit, pay and motivate staff of the right quality.

Mr. Radice: What about the brain drain?

Mr. Baker: I shall come to that in a moment.

I recognise the figures quoted by the hon. Member for Durham, North as being those that are constantly quoted to us by the AUT. They are derived by excluding the Clegg-equivalent award—worth 17 per cent.—from cumulative salary increases since 1979. But the Clegg-equivalent increase was paid in April and October 1980, and on that basis cumulative salary increases between October 1979 and April 1985—the time of the last salary increase—have almost kept up with inflation.

Nevertheless, there is some evidence to suggest that the present salary levels are not attractive to staff in those science and engineering disciplines where demand for skills is high. The proposals to which the hon. Member for Durham, North referred have indeed been put to the Government. I do not want to say anything about them now, except that, broadly speaking, we regard them as constructive, although there are some aspects that need to be developed further. Our willingness to consider making extra funds available will depend on the readiness of the universities and of the university lecturers to agree a new pay structure that provides greater flexibility and helps in the recruitment and retention of staff of an appropriate quality.

I turn to the polytechnics and to higher education outside the universities. That sector is crucially important and often attains a very high standard. I want to emphasise how vital it is. It now provides 55 per cent. of our higher education places, covering the polytechnics, which provide for some 30 per cent. of all higher education students, some 29 institutions that are grant-aided by my Department, providing 5 per cent. of all places, and a further 20 per cent. of all places are provided by 340 local authority colleges. There has been a dramatic and most welcome increase in the number of students in this sector

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since 1979. That growth in home and European Community students has amounted to 35 per cent. That striking success contrasts with what happened under the previous Labour Government when, between 1975 and 1979, there was a reduction of over 6 per cent. in the number of public sector students. I do not know what the hon. Member for Durham, North was doing when he trooped into the Lobby in support of those cuts.

Public sector higher education has made a major contribution to the significant switch towards science and technology. Enrolments in England in those subjects have increased by 62 per cent. — almost double the average for other subjects. I am also glad to be able to report that we have reversed another trend. In 1975, women represented 37 per cent. of public sector students. By 1979, under a Labour Government, the figure had fallen to 35 per cent. It has now recovered to 39 per cent., and is set to grow further.

I must pay tribute to the exemplary record of polytechnics in serving the needs of industry, commerce and the professions. Between 1979 and 1985 the polytechnics' income from research, consultancy and other services rose by no less than 85 per cent. in real terms. I am sure that hon. Members will have visited departments doing quite outstanding research. I remember seeing some very sophisticated chip technology using gallium arsenide in one polytechnic research department, and the standard was higher than that of much of the work carried out at universities.

I shall give three examples of the contributions being made by polytechnics. I believe that we should sing their praises rather more. North Staffordshire polytechnic, which I visited a couple of weeks ago, is doing splendid work in computer-aided design and engineering, and in computer studies generally. I was interested to note that it came top for computer studies in the recent employers' poll on polytechnics in *The Sunday Times*. More than 400 companies — which will ultimately provide the jobs — were asked, and that polytechnic came out top for the polytechnics and third in the overall list, after two university departments.

There is also the Hatfield polytechnic, which came top in mechanical engineering and has provided an invaluable service through its HERTIS scheme, based on its library, which provides local firms with instant access to a whole range of relevant commercial and industrial data.

Finally there is the Polytechnic of Central London. It has built up a very exciting research programme in sectors such as electronic engineering. It has attracted support from a variety of sources, including my old Department, the DTI. It is also seeking to develop a programme to allow former students with promising ideas to develop them on a commercial basis — what the hon. Member for Durham, North was getting at — using the polytechnic's facilities and with finance from the venture capital market.

The Government have a good record on higher education, but there is no cause for complacency. I should like to see more of our young people at 18 and 19 going on to some form of higher education. Over the next few years, the actual numbers of 18 and 19-year-olds will fall substantially, and this will lead to quite a lot of necessary adjustments in higher education. I hope also that it will be possible for us to attract into higher education a higher proportion of young people than enter it at present. We have done well, and we will do even better.

8 pm

Mr. Clement Freud (Cambridgeshire, North-East): We are grateful to the official Opposition for tabling this motion, even if we are bemused by their claims in a recent leaflet:

"Only one party has the right package of policies to do the job. That party is Labour."

One looks eagerly at what there is in the document, and all that one finds is a list of percentage changes in UGC funding. I doubt whether that will achieve all that the hon. Member for Durham, North (Mr. Radice) claims.

I am grateful to the Secretary of State for speaking in the debate, and I particularly welcome his constructive comments on young people, women and polytechnics. It is something for which we have been waiting a long time from a Secretary of State at Elizabeth house.

Twin crises face higher education. The first is funding, and academic pay plays a large part in it, threatening recruitment and retention; one welcomed what the Secretary of State promised — that he would look into this and constructively take heed of the AUT-CVCP discussions. The UGC overall funding by redistribution involves cuts in every institution except the London Graduate Business school. I hope that that will be noted.

There is a squeeze on the unit of resource in polytechnics, which threatens 9,500 places and threatens to bring about the same cycle of mistakes as we had in 1981 in the universities.

I welcome the fact that the Secretary of State has recognised that polytechnics are doing innovative work with new students. The staff have notably increased productivity and are teaching more students. Polytechnics have, until now, felt overlooked by the Government, even while meeting the Government's wishes on links to industry and the community.

The second crisis was touched on when the Secretary of State said that money cannot solve everything, because it is one of purpose. Those in higher education no longer feel that they are valued or respected by the Government. Many universities no longer feel a genuine involvement in the life of the communities, and there is a creeping feeling that higher education is marginal to the future of Britain, which is not helped by Governmentspeak about the sector being a drain on the economy. The danger is the creeping marginalisation of higher education.

When the Secretary of State took office he was widely welcomed in the press for his presentational skills. In his speech, he showed this on the subject of polytechnics; by acknowledging and rewarding the work that they do, he has laid a good foundation for better understanding in the maintained sector.

The twin crises are exemplified by the UGC letter, which concerns not only detailing of financial distribution, in which Scotland seemed peculiarly hard hit, but overall financial reductions. I hope that the Secretary of State will speak to the Secretary of State for Scotland to bring about the amelioration of that situation. The purpose of the reductions as expressed in the selectivity and criteria adopted by the UGC, has appeared on the scene with no explicit policy debate — it is a policy of repeat and default. The UGC has plumped for research as the guiding light, relegating teaching to a by-product or offshoot of

this, threatening the dual support system and putting on one side anything worthy but non-traditional, such as part-time work or more generous provision for non-standard entrants.

Neither the arm's length principle nor direct funding seems to be working as it should. I can give two examples, of which the first is Birkbeck, which is funded at arm's length. The Government are leaving the UGC to change its full to part-time ratios, leaving Birkbeck a potential deficit that can be made up only by increasing fees by 250 per cent. Birkbeck does not fit into the UGC straitjacket. Students are already paying their own fees, when students in other universities get fees and grants paid for them. The average pre-tax income of a Birkbeck student is £8,300, making them more ordinary, from more ordinary backgrounds, than standard entrants. Despite that, the UGC formula gives a standard undergraduate half as much money again as one at Birkbeck. A Birkbeck student gets four years at half funding, as against three one-year full funding.

The Minister may say that this is a domestic, London university court matter in which the Government should not interfere. However, his Department has interfered so much in that which it had no right to interfere that it ill behoves him to say nothing and do nothing, while Birkbeck suffers. I hope that he will look into this with compassion.

The second example is the Open university which enjoys direct funding, but does not enjoy it a lot. Last year, it turned away 24,000 students – these are not statistics of doubtful validity – which is a record rate of rejection. The Open university could educate many more students at a marginal extra cost, possibly £100 or £200 a year each, because of its peculiar funding system and because fixed costs are such a high proportion of its expenditure. I ask the Secretary of State to think about that. The Open university has its friends and allies on both sides of the House, and it is not a political matter. We have a great deal to be proud of in having an Open university, which is now suffering.

Despite the restriction on student numbers, the demands for graduates is high and increasing. The Government believe, and they have shown this in the YTS, that upping an individual's skill level not only increases the chances of that person getting a job, but raises the overall rate of employment. University careers officers report this week that employers are having difficulty finding enough graduates and vacancies are 20 per cent. above those in 1985. However, the overall "output", in Governmentspeak, is down, despite the polytechnic having taken surplus from universities.

The Government should abandon the projection of demand set out in the Green Paper and plan for a reasonably constant APR and fill in spare capacity with other types, such as part-time courses, mature and non-A-level entrants.

Why have the Government decided to take students out of the benefit system and close off a whole avenue of consideration by the review, and why are the 16 to 19-year-olds excluded from it? Two hopeful directions have thereby been immediately ruled out by the Government's terms of reference. We invite the Government to look at the possibility of integration rather than compartmentalisation, to recognise the value of taking people off the dole in order to study – with the same money – and to ensure some flexibility to meet different costs which housing benefit currently provides for students.

I ask the House to look with care at the amendment to the Leader of the Opposition's motion. It states that the Government "applauds" their

"intention to build on these successes, particularly through further increases in participation rates for both young and mature entrants."

I should like the Minister to tell the House specifically how much that will cost, how much the Government will pay towards that intention to "build on these successes" through "increases in participation."

My right hon. and hon. Friends have tabled an amendment about the 16 to 19-year-olds. The big gap in educational chances and access to higher education used to come at 11 years old, with the 11-plus. We are pleased that that no longer exists but the gap now comes, increasingly, at 16 years of age.

It is very expensive to keep a young person on at school, because not only does school cost money for the purchase of books which used to be provided, but the family loses potential money from the wage or the training allowance.

It is insane that of two options – school or dole – the dole should be financially more attractive. The fall in the number of young people staying on at school is surely a result of that. It might also be due to the attractions of YTS and its cash. There is a good case for saying that the financial disparity which attaches to each choice is adversely affecting educational participation.

The Government must set up the right structure to give young persons in education something for themselves to put into their hands. Initially it need be only a gesture. It could be child benefit paid direct to a student. Like public lending right, which the House introduced at minimal financial provision, paying young people at the age of 16, and putting such a Bill on the statute book, would pave the way to the further increases which must come.

I ask the Government to take a careful look at the options. I ask them to examine funding fees for part-timers, who are doubly disadvantaged against full-timers because they receive no grant and have to find their own fees. The Government should consider diversifying the entrance requirements to include two years of YTS. Some institutions already have special schemes. I mention in particular the black teacher trainees at the North-East London polytechnic. The Government should consider widening the requirements, which would not only increase the pool of ability, but reduce the tyranny of examinations in schools. The Government should guide the University Grants Committee towards a better ratio of money for full and part-timers.

As Christopher Ball, the chairman of the National Advisory Board and warden of Keble, has written:

"Our concern should not be that we might be putting at risk the quality of higher education by extending access to it . . . but rather that we are allowing to go to waste, undeveloped, too much inherent quality in our young people and in our adult population."

An alliance Government would embrace the "new Robbins" principle advocated by the UGC and the NAB in their advice to the Government before the Green Paper that

"courses of higher education should be available for all those who are able to benefit from them and who wish to do so."

[Mr. Clement Freud]

We would do that without the qualification imposed by this Government, which renders their formal acceptance totally meaningless.

We do not believe that we are yet at the limits of useful or rewarding participation in higher education. The House will be grateful to the Secretary of State for accepting that and for giving his promise to consider a rising participation rate in higher education.

8.14 pm

Mr. Michael Shersby (Uxbridge): I take the opportunity, as the first Government Back Bencher to speak, warmly to congratulate my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on his splendid speech, which will do much to raise morale amongst all those interested in higher education. He spoke about the splendid opportunity which the hon. Member for Durham, North (Mr. Radice) had given him to advertise Conservative policy on higher education. I am sure that I reflect the views of all my right hon. and hon. Friends when I say that the Secretary of State took every opportunity to put his message across.

As usual, the Opposition are critical of the level of resources available, without saying how, if they were in office, they would increase them. In my judgment, the Opposition have failed to applaud and accept the reality of the 17 per cent. increase in full-time home students in universities and polytechnics since 1979, or the increased opportunities for adult and continuing education. We have heard the same old gloomy mixture from the Opposition Front Bench and from the Liberal spokesman, the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East (Mr. Freud).

We are talking about facts which call not just for a further moan about the level of resources, but for new and imaginative, resource-generating ideas to ensure that the future of our universities is secure.

I must declare an interest. I am a member of the court of Brunel university in my constituency. I regard part of my job, as the hon. Member for Uxbridge, to speak up for Brunel, for the excellent academic staff there and for the students who, between them, contribute to its enviable reputation. I do not, of course, seek to deny that Brunel has some difficult financial problems to solve.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): An 18 per cent. cut.

Mr. Shersby: If the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) will contain himself, I shall give him the real figures and he will be able to listen to my proposals for resolving the difficulties.

Brunel university has to cope with a reduction of £600,000 in its annual grant, despite receiving £13·1 million from the University Grants Committee, plus some additional fees for computer board income, making a total of £15 million. That is causing understandable concern to members of the Association of University Teachers who lobbied me recently. I represent many of them and their future is of great importance to me. The hon. Member for Durham, North will know of my interest in the AUT. I told its members, as I now tell the House, that I shall make their views known, without pulling my punches.

They and I know that one way of cutting costs is to eliminate teaching posts. Naturally, that worries them greatly. But even that is not an easy option because of the present position on academic tenure. I hope that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State will say whether the Government have any plans to abolish tenure. If they do not have such plans, other ways must be found to provide the necessary resources and to generate additional income. It is that latter possibility that I wish to explore in the debate.

If I branch into areas which are a little unconventional in a debate on higher education, I hope that the House will bear with me, because only by being innovative and creative can we look forward to providing the science and technology that we need for the future.

There may be some scope for further industrial research grants, but that scope is patchy and limited. It could, for example, produce another £250,000 profit, but that would still leave Brunel short of about £350,000 in the coming year.

Let us consider what positive options could be open not only to Brunel but to other universities that have been mentioned in the debate. The Government could make a meaningful contribution if it were made easier for industrial firms to establish a presence on university campuses to collaborate with academic departments. My right hon. Friend, with his creative and innovative approach to education, should urgently discuss that proposition with our right hon. Friend the Chancellor. Although under certain circumstances a university can keep the full rent for such an arrangement, those circumstances are still limited and there are still Treasury blocks. It is part of the job of every Member of Parliament to try to remove Treasury blocks. I am positive that my right hon. Friend will be in an admirable position to do so before we next debate this matter.

We need to encourage industry, through positive measures, to move on to the campuses and allow the universities to keep the rent. If a university could demonstrate that a commercial presence occupying space on its campus was to the benefit of both the university and the company, and that it was not just a straightforward property deal, it should be allowed to retain the full financial benefit. That could generate considerable additional income.

The Government should do more to help establish departments of small firms in the universities. How would that work? If the House will forgive me, I shall take Brunel as my example because I know it well. The relationship that Brunel has with the Henley management college – one of the world's premier business schools – is well known. The strength of experience of Henley, together with Brunel's strength in applied science and technology, would provide a powerful base for the establishment of a chair of small firms. That chair could be concerned, first, with the technology transfer on which high-tech small firms are so dependent, and secondly, with the problems of management and finance.

Brunel and other similar universities, together with such colleges as Henley, have the expertise to provide a stronger base than most. I am sure that there are many other ways in which the whole concept of developing a chair of small firms could be progressed. What would it cost? It might be £30,000 a year, but that is only part of it. It would need at least two other academic posts and, perhaps, a research assistant.

I wonder what such an innovation would do for Britain. It would provide impetus to the development of short courses for those concentrating on the establishment of

small firms. It could also stimulate research into the creation of conditions that would provide the best opportunity for small firms to succeed. Is there any identification of the common thread that must exist between those small firms that succeed and those that do not? I doubt whether there has been any systematic analysis of that, but there should be.

Why is it that only one third of 1 per cent. of graduates other than in the professions start businesses of their own, while in America the figure is 2·5 per cent. and in Japan it is 3 per cent.? I did not hear anything in the remarks of the hon. Members for Durham, North and for Cambridgeshire, North-East about that very important aspect of university life. I am sure that it is not because they are not interested in it, but merely because they wanted to deal with other matters. No doubt they would agree with me that the development in our universities of an understanding of what is required from graduates to obtain their degrees and contribute to small firms is vital.

I shall repeat the figures only one third of 1 per cent. of graduates, other than the professions, start their own businesses, while in America it is 2·5 per cent. and in Japan it is 3 per cent. Why is that?

One reason, perhaps, is that a new approach is required towards putting over the technique necessary in determining markets for products and services. That should happen at undergraduate level for those taking a degree in areas with developing technology that could be exploited if only they knew how and had the enthusiasm and drive to have a go. Surely that is where a heavy orientation towards short courses should be available.

Our country desperately needs more small firms to widen and expand our industrial and commercial base and to create new jobs for the future. Is not that, perhaps, where a partnership between Government, industry and the universities could make a major contribution to encourage more of our best young people to have a go?

The Government, through the Department of Employment, have already made a commendable start in aiding graduates towards self-employment. The graduate enterprise programme is an excellent system for linking graduates with the world of enterprise and small business. It is, of course, an awareness programme providing information about what a career in small business enterprise is like and how graduates have successfully started their own businesses or become members of a small business management team.

It is good to see the scheme operating in cities and towns such as Durham, Salford, Sheffield and many others. It is also encouraging to note that graduates of any discipline are welcome and that allowances and research budgets are available up to £1,250. That scheme is complemented by the graduate extension scheme. It is encouraging to have sponsorship for the various programmes coming from many well-known industrial and commercial firms.

I invite hon. Members who have not studied those schemes to do so—they are very interesting. They are not generally thought of in terms of higher education because they come under the auspicies of the Department of Employment. They should be much more widely known and regarded as part of higher education. Is that not the basis of an idea that my right hon. Friend's Department could extend to provide more industrial sponsorship for postgraduate courses? Surely it is worth much closer examination.

There is a need to ensure that more students can benefit from higher and continuing education. I greatly welcome my right hon. Friend's announcement on 18 June of a review of the whole structure of student support. It has been widely welcomed by my constituents, be they parents or students. I am especially glad that my right hon. Friend has announced an increase of £36 in the maintenance grants to students living away from home from the beginning of the next academic year. It is a small but useful addition to the 2 per cent. announced last December. It is an overall increase of 4 per cent., which with falling inflation will be more welcome than it has ever been before *[Interruption.]* perhaps even to constituents of the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher), whose bad manners I have observed.

I hope that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary will have every success with his review. I am especially glad that he will consider sponsorship by employers as well as other ways of ensuring that our students can look forward to a more secure and widely based financial support structure.

8.30 pm

Mr. Stan Thorne (Preston): In view of the inordinately long speech to which we have just had to listen, I shall obviously have to cut the length of my speech radically if my hon. Friends are to have the opportunity of contributing to the debate. Perhaps that was the intention of the hon. Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby).

Like the hon. Member for Uxbridge, I am associated with universities. The two with which I am associated are close to my constituency but not in it. These are the universities of Lancaster and Liverpool, both of which have found it appropriate to write to me about the debate. I shall not develop their representations particularly, as I wish to deal specifically with the Open university. Liverpool university makes it clear, however, that it faces a reduction of resources for recurrent expenditure of over 5 per cent. It is obvious that this will create major problems for the university. Lancaster university has told me that its block grant will lead to a reduction in education provision on a scale not hitherto experienced.

I have had the pleasure of being a mature student. In 1966, at the age of 48, I returned to school and was there for four years. Some hon. Members may not be prepared to accept this, but I believe that I have gained considerably from that experience. I was able subsequently to take a part-time position with the OU. I lectured at an institute of technology full time and assisted the OU by dealing with students of social studies, economics and politics. I was extremely impressed with the development that took place among those students. I do not want to go into great detail, but I remember especially a railway shunter who resided at Southport, who told me, "It is hopeless. I shall never make the progress that I need to make if I am going to get anywhere." Five years later, my wife and I happened to see a television programme on the OU, during which it was stated that a shunter was receiving his BA. That man had kept to it and he had succeeded. I mention that story because there are probably several million in Britain who, if they had the same opportunity, could produce the same sort of result.

The OU is turning away 25,000 potential students each year, about half of whom wish to study science and technology. This is a national disgrace. For a premium of about £100 per head, the OU could expand its

[Mr. Stan Thorne]

undergraduate student body by about 10,000, and that could be done relatively quickly. To expand beyond that level would require significant additional resources. Discussions are taking place with the visiting committee appointed by the DES, under the chairmanship of Sir Austin Bide, which is to advise on the OU's expansion to 100,000 undergraduates from the present level of 65,000.

There has been a 15-year history of constant demand at the OU which it has not been able to satisfy. Reductions in funding have placed restrictions on student numbers. There were 56,000 applications in 1986, and 24,000 were not offered a place. The 1987 intake will be severely affected by the promises made to some 1986 applicants that they could be considered in 1987. The median age of OU undergraduates is 32. The size of the older age groups which make up the bulk of the student population, will increase by 3 million by the end of the century. The competition for scarce jobs brings us to the qualification escalation from O-level to A-level, from HNC to a degree and so on. Entry to many occupations requires higher qualification and the threat of selective redundancy pushes many to seek further qualifications.

A sizeable group were affected by the exclusion from teacher training in the 1970s, when a 70 per cent. reduction took place. The number of qualified school leavers with A-levels who did not proceed to higher education has increased to nearly 30,000 per year. It has been suggested by a former Minister that of those who qualified in 1985, over 40,000 failed to take up higher education. As I have said, the demand for places in the OU will continue. Indeed, the demand is such that the university will be unable to guarantee a place to anyone without requiring a wait of at least one year, and possibly two. Increased fees that have run ahead of inflation have led to an increase in the number refusing the offer of a place. Nevertheless, in 1985 the OU turned away more people than were offered places.

This is having an effect on the regional balance of the student population, and the OU's ability to remain open as a truly national institution may be jeopardised. The House may be aware that more students gain entry to universities from south of the line drawn from the Wash to Bristol than from north of that line. This may reflect unemployment and social conditions in various areas. The OU is anxious to maintain a balance between the number of entries from each of its 13 regions. Given the high and sustained demand for places at the OU, it has been suggested that there is a case for establishing a second OU to meet it. It is clear that the OU could expand its programme for undergraduates and for students continuing in education more cheaply than a new institution could be founded.

The Prime Minister and other Government Front Bench spokesmen have often referred to Britain's need to be more competitive in world markets and to improve its technological and scientific performance. They have stressed the need for more training in those subjects. The Government should find the resources to make this possible instead of merely paying lip service to the need to do so. The OU can play a major part, and if the resources are available there will be no shortage of demand. The average number of applications during 1971-79 was 41,000 a year. That increased to 46,000 during 1980-86. There have been 56,000 applicants during 1985-86.

I note that some of my hon. Friends are becoming agitated, and perhaps they are thinking that it is time that I brought my remarks to an end. I shall do so in deference to their need.

8.39 pm

Mr. Stephen Dorrell (Loughborough): I shall begin by declaring an interest, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am a member of both the court and council of Loughborough university. It was in that capacity, if in no other, that I was interested in the speech of the hon. Member for Durham, North (Mr. Radice).

I am bound to say that I am disappointed my disappointment is probably shared by my hon. Friends by the fact that we did not hear what the Labour party's policy is on higher education beyond an assurance, which I hardly regard as bankable, that a Labour Government would do more than the Tories. We need from the Opposition and, as I shall argue, from the Government, a clearer statement of their objectives and of what they regard the higher education system to be about.

I have read the document which the hon. Member for Durham, North is holding up, and it does not say so. The hon. Gentleman spoke about input cuts. There have been input cuts, and I think that some of them have been damaging. It was nonsense for the hon. Gentleman to talk only about resources and not about the objectives that he has for the different parts of the higher education system.

It is a great pleasure to welcome the Secretary of State for Education and Science to his new position. At least he does look down the right end of the telescope. He does talk about student numbers, student access and subject balance. Furthermore, he does talk a little—I hope that we shall be able to encourage him to talk a little more—about the assurance of quality that those involved in the higher education system want to see. The Government should apply more effort to making clear to the House, the country, and especially the higher education system, what their objectives are for the different institutions in the system. I think that the best illustration of the doubts that continue to exist relate to what my right hon. Friend's definition would be of the purpose of the binary line. What is the difference between a university, a polytechnic and colleges in the public sector?

My right hon. Friend referred to the number of undergraduates in the system. The increase in the number of undergraduates is welcomed. If we continue to maintain the distinction between a university and a polytechnic, presumably there is a reason for doing so. We cannot continue indefinitely to lump the two together when it suits us and not define what the difference is. If my right hon. Friend addresses that issue and states what he sees as the difference, he will illuminate not only his view of the polytechnics and the public sector but his view of the university sector.

The Government attempted to address the issues in the Green Paper published last year. The Green Paper was not terribly well received in the higher education world. I hope that my right hon. Friend will be able to improve upon that when he publishes the White Paper which the Government have promised. I shall quote from the Green Paper on the specific topic of the binary line to illustrate the weaknesses contained in it. The paragraph on polytechnics takes up one half of one side of the Green Paper. The most positive comment made about the polytechnics in the Green Paper was:

"There is however concern amongst them at the lack of public perception of their role in higher education. The Government shares this concern and has encouraged them to take steps to enhance their image."

I am sure that that is important, but I do not think that it tackles the substance of the issue. I hope that when my right hon. Friend writes his White Paper as a result of the consultation process which the Green Paper initiated, which was undoubtedly necessary, he will deal rather more substantially with those issues. I hope that he will define his objectives in terms of the quality and the service which both the public sector and the universities should be expected to offer. I hope that he will define his objectives in terms of the number of students we can expect to see having access not simply to higher education as a whole but to the different component parts, and the reasons why.

I think that if we are given a definition of his objectives in terms of numbers, we shall have a more powerful weapon with which to defeat the NAB in the entirely specious argument going on with the NAB over the provision of places in 1987-88. I know that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary for Education and Science — the hon. Member for Buckingham (Mr. Walden) — will know that the NAB proposes to close the Loughborough college of art and design. I know that my hon. Friend is aware, although the House is not, that Loughborough college of art and design is the second largest college of art and design in the country. It has six to seven applicants per place for its higher education courses. Ninety per cent. of its graduates go straight into full-time employment. It shares a campus with Loughborough university and, therefore, benefits from all the ambience of a wider higher education clientele. It serves the specific needs of trained designers in an industry which any visitor to British industry and most British shops will see is necessary from the most superficial examination of British manufactured goods. The institution performs a vital role in our economy. Despite the specific advice to the contrary when the issue was last raised 18 months ago by the subject committee in the NAB organisation, the House will be amazed to hear that the NAB secretariat proposed the closure of Loughborough college of art and design.

I believe that that proposal amounts to an act of extraordinary vandalism. I believe that it was isolated because it would be an act of extraordinary vandalism. I understand that the NAB is involved in an exercise in brinkmanship with my hon. Friend. It is nothing more nor less than that. Regarding the need for a definition of objectives, especially in terms of student numbers, I say to my right hon. and hon. Friends that they have an opportunity to deny the NAB the pleasure of that brinkmanship if they commit themselves to clear objectives in terms of student numbers.

In my view, the White Paper should set out the objectives in terms of student numbers and state what those students will do when they enter the higher education system. I shall conclude by making a few remarks about what I see as the objectives of the university system as a distinct group from polytechnics. I hope that my right hon. Friend will define those objectives when he writes his White Paper.

Research is absolutely fundamental to my concept of a university. The purpose of a university is to allow the ablest students to mix with people who operate on the frontiers of scientific knowledge and with new and exciting ideas in the cultural disciplines. To talk about a teaching-only university or a teaching-only department in a university is to misunderstand the concept of what a university is all about.

My right hon. Friend said that we cannot expect the structure of departments in universities, or the structure of universities themselves, to be set in stone and to be sacrosanct. I accept that. If there are to be changes in the balance between departments which might, in the first instance, lead to the idea of a teaching-only department, that raises the question of whether the department is a proper university department and should continue to exist as a university department. It is because of the central role of research in my understanding of what a university is about that I hope that my right hon. Friend will feel able to make a commitment, which I know his predecessor found difficult, that we shall not go down the road of teaching-only universities — that is a contradiction in terms — that we shall resist that and regard as a regrettable compromise any suggestion that there should be teaching-only departments.

In order to have good research in universities, we must also have the facilities for research. Obviously, we must have the people to undertake research. I welcome the fact that my right hon. Friend has made clear his commitment to provide sufficient resources to ensure that there is infrastructure in research. It is not enough to say, "We are providing money to the research councils and, therefore, projects are going into the universities." The infrastructure must be there as well to ensure that the research capability of our system matches what is available on the continent and in North America. We must offer pay levels and job opportunities to academics which make it realistic for us to recruit the best into what should be the jewels of our academic system — our university research departments.

I said at the beginning that we must define our objectives by outputs, not inputs. No one can deny that higher education as a whole is an expensive commitment. We cannot make commitments — in terms of research, student grants and academic salaries — by writing cheques on an endless bank account. We should stick to the commitment that we gave in 1983-84 to level funding of the university system. I welcome the statement by the previous Secretary of State that he hoped to provide more money to the university system in 1987-88 and beyond. I hope that that will materialise and that the target to which my right hon. Friend the present Secretary of State is working is the target of level funding against a 1983-84 base.

8.50 pm

Mr. Ernie Ross (Dundee, West): The severe cuts in funding to the Scottish universities announced on 20 May are just the latest in a series of blows to reduce the opportunities in education at every level. The effect of that cumulative reduction in funding is to reduce further the level of educational opportunities commonly available to Scottish students. It is an extension of a series of lost opportunities which have affected schools, colleges and universities since the Conservative party came to power.

Falling school rolls in Scotland should have been seen as an opportunity to improve pupil-teacher ratios and to increase the real level of funding per head. In fact, the opportunity has been wasted and used only as another excuse for wasteful cuts in Government funding. The Convention of Scottish Local Authorities has pointed out

[Mr. Ernie Ross]

the inadequacy of the Government support for Scottish schools. In 1985, not one educational authority in Scotland was able to contain educational expenditure within the relative needs assessment offered by Government. In every authority funds had to be diverted from other areas just to cover the most basic educational requirements.

The Scottish Tertiary Education Advisory Council's report took the view that declining numbers of school leavers in Scotland presented

"an opportunity for a renewed commitment to the principle of maximum access"

to further and higher education. In fact, the opposite has happened. An ever-increasing number of pupils are leaving Scottish schools with qualifications suitable for university entrance, yet the proportion of those 17-plus leavers gaining university places is not increasing. The number of new graduates at Scottish universities in each year since 1979 has remained roughly constant in the 11,500 to 11,900 range — yet the proportion of well-qualified school leavers has increased from 8·6 per cent. to 10·5 per cent.

STEAC felt also that there were strong grounds to argue that the increases in the required parental contribution to the student grant and the cuts in real value of grant were having a noticeable effect in discouraging pupils from working homes from attempting to go into higher or further education. That is what has concerned the Opposition, but we did not hear from the Secretary of State about it.

There is clear evidence that the Robbins principle of providing university places for

"all those qualified by ability and attainment"

is being further eroded by the Government's attitude to student support. University intakes are increasingly reflecting a bias in favour of upper and middle-class families. The erosion of grants—the shifting of support from Government to students and their families—can only benefit the better-off and further inhibit the people from low income and unemployed households.

Donald McCallum, the chairman of the Scottish Tertiary Education Advisory Council, said that one of the most depressing things he had found during his recent review was the social difference in entry to higher education. More than 60 per cent. of children whose parents are in the professions took higher education, but that figure dropped to 5 per cent. for those whose parents were unskilled manual workers.

The National Union of Students in Scotland has attacked a Government philosophy on student support which is clearly intended

"to encourage people to go out and do part-time jobs to supplement what is recognised as an inadequate grant"

and added

"that studying for a degree after working all night in a bar is hardly the way to improve educational standards."

We have been making noises and speeches for the past 20-odd years about opening up higher education to those disadvantaged groups within society. But, as Donald McCallum confirmed, the figures remain firmly the same. The STEAC report concluded that financial support was "crucial" to encouraging mature students and those from working-class backgrounds to take some form of higher education.

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton (Fife, Central): My hon. Friend is making a justified attack on the Government's educational policies. Does he recognise that there are three education Departments in the United Kingdom for England, Wales and Scotland and that the only Department which has not been represented during the debate on the Government Front Bench is the Scottish Education Department? That is the greatest insult to Scottish people and Scottish Members of Parliament who are interested in the whole ambit of education.

Mr. Ross: My hon. Friend is correct. Almost everyone has accepted that Scottish universities have suffered disproportionately compared with other universities in the United Kingdom. Not only the Government Front Bench but the Conservative Back Benches have been empty of Scottish Members. Not one Scottish Conservative Back Bencher has been present during the whole debate. My hon. Friend is right to draw the attention of Scottish people to that important fact.

In an increasingly complex world, both in social and technological terms, the role of the nursery, primary and secondary schools as the sources of knowledge and understanding has never been greater. The skills exhibited by the modern teacher would not be recognised by a teacher who had left the teaching profession 20 years ago and would have outstripped even the skills of a teacher of only a decade ago. Those in the schools throughout this past decade and those entering the profession of teaching have faced the greatest changes and challenges. This has happened during a decade of falling investment in education's capital resources and in day-to-day expenditure on education.

The management side of the Scottish Joint Negotiating Committee recognised in its working party report on teachers' workloads published in August 1985 that the teachers' workloads had "significantly increased" as they responded and adapted to the new working methods and conditions. If we are to ensure that more young people go on to higher and further education, it is essential that the Government take account of the various inquiries into teachers' pay. Only today it was reported that the chairman of the Scottish Examination Board, Dr. Macintosh, said, in introducing the board's submission to the main inquiry on teachers' pay and conditions, that the "key message was that while teachers' duties on exams needed to be specified 'this by itself will not be sufficient: we also need the goodwill only a professional salary will generate and release.'"

The Labour Party is firmly of the view that the greatest asset to the education service in the "professional" approach of teachers. It is that professional approach which developed the substantial role of pastoral care for which the Scottish education system was properly noted. Similarly, the extra-curricular activities of teachers were born of that same "professional" approach. The will and the wish are clearly identified in the teaching profession to re-establish that flexible approach to extra-curricular activities which previously enriched the school experience. That is why the Government must ensure that, whatever the recommendations of the main inquiry on teachers' professional standards and financial rewards, they must provide the finance to ensure that they do not seriously affect the responsibility of the various regional authorities for other aspects of education.

During my Adjournment debate on Wednesday 18 June, the Under-Secretary of State, said that I did not refer

to some of the areas in Dundee university. The following morning I received a letter from Professor Spear saying that the Dundee group, which is a leading British and European group on the subject of amorphous semiconductors, is presently underpaid because of the decision of the University Grants Committee. In spite of the fact that it has been given prestigious scientific awards such as the Max Born medal, the Europhysics prize, the Duddell medal and the Maxwell premium, physics at Dundee was assessed by the UGC as being below average. That further supports the point I was making and I intend to pursue it with the Under-Secretary at a later date.

We have made our policy quite clear and we have outlined it in our document "Education Throughout Life". In spite of what Tory Members may say, the people of Britain have more confidence in that document and it is that document which will do much more for higher education in this country than anything said from the Government Dispatch Box tonight.

8.59 pm

Mr. Mark Wolfson (Sevenoaks): I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on his robust, encouraging and factual speech.

I want to spend a few minutes dealing with the content of higher educaton as well as expenditure. Value for money is directly relevant to my point. I want to highlight the importance of educating people at any age and stage to be as capable as possible of utilising all their knowledge, skills and abilities in work and leisure.

I shall describe what I understand to be education for capability, which is presently being promoted under the auspices of the Royal Society of Arts. That concept is already well developed in schools, and it is now appropriate to encourage similar developments in higher education. In Britain, there is an imbalance in the process described by the two words "education" and "training". The idea of the educated person is still often that of a scholarly individual who has not necessarily been educated or trained to exercise useful skills; who may be able to understand but not necessarily to act.

There have already been references in the debate to the problem of Britain often being able to develop new ideas in research and development but not being able effectively to put those ideas into productive operation. Young people in higher education increasingly specialise, and often in ways which mean that they are taught to practise only the skills of scholarship and science. They acquire knowledge of particular subjects, but they may not be equipped to use that knowledge in ways that are relevant to the world outside the education system. An example of that is language teaching, which has recently been given a high priority by education Ministers. It has been lamentably ineffective in providing students with the ability to converse and communicate in a foreign language, even at the end of O and A-level courses.

Higher education entry requirements through the examination boards still place too much emphasis on teaching grammar and literature in language curricula at the expense of oral skills. As a result, British students, who spend as many hours learning a foreign language as their counterparts in Europe, complete their courses still inarticulate, although probably well versed in the literature and history of that language and its culture. Surely it is of far higher priority to produce students first with oral skills and later with those other skills in foreign languages. Education for capability would give oral ability that first priority.

What is the fastest way to change the emphasis in language teaching? It is for university departments to require a far higher level of fluency in language than at present as a fundamental entry requirement. If that change were made — for example, if 60 per cent. of marks were given for oral skills — curricula and teaching methods would rapidly follow. They would have to. In that example I hope that I have made it clear that education for capability means the provision of knowledge and skills relevant to and useful in the outside world.

I have two other examples from engineering and medicine.

At Heriot-Watt university, the civil engineering dept has developed a radical new approach to its own teaching process — an approach designed to take greater account of the students' needs as assessed by themselves — to help the students to know better how to learn and to establish methods by which they can assess their own progress. The details of how that is done are not for the debate. Suffice to say, the development is already proving successful.

In medicine, too, the capability required after full-time university education in some medical schools is now being more fully researched and analysed, and lessons are being drawn for changes in the structure of the curriculum.

Finally, at the North-East London polytechnic, a degree by independent study has been established, with considerable success. It allows students to achieve a degree based on the acquiring of knowledge and skills that they themselves have identified as necessary to them in their work and social setting.

My point is that effective higher and further education is crucial to the economic health and well-being of this country. That is a point on which the whole House is agreed. In bringing to the attention of the House those brief examples of initiatives taken within the concept of education for capability in higher education, I hope that my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Front Bench will give them and other similar initiatives a fair wind and consider how, through the direct funding within their own control, as well as through the University Grants Committee itself, such pilot schemes may be spread elsewhere. Indeed, the UGC may need to be restructured to become more user-friendly — as I would describe it — from the point of view of the user after rather than during education.

If student loans become part of the financial structure supporting higher and further education, they would have a direct effect by encouraging students to be more selective in their choice of both their university and course, paying particular attention to how effective a chosen course would be in providing a capability in the world after education as well as providing knowledge that is valued for itself.

9.7 pm

Mr. Kevin McNamara (Kingston upon Hull, North): I denounce what the hon. Member for Sevenoaks (Mr. Wolfson) has just said about student loans. Nothing worse could happen to students than that they should be subject to bank managers' whims, that they should have to do without food, and that they should have to have poor books and live in lousy accommodation to try to make

[Mr. Kevin McNamara]

ends meet. I hope that one of the first things that the next Labour Government do is establish a proper rate of student grant and work towards abolishing the parental contribution. That contribution is evil in the way in which it affects students. It is rotten, particularly in the treatment of women students, because regrettably many parents are not prepared to give women students the proper support that they should get in university, if they have to make a contribution from their income.

The Secretary of State welcomed the debate as a splendid advertisement for the Government's policies. I want to look at the Government's policies, particularly as they affect Humberside and Hull. I want to examine the two enormous blows that we have suffered in the past month of May, in our university institution and college of higher education.

I do not say that in the recent rounds Hull has been treated that much worse than most universities. They have all been treated lousily. Events since 1981 show the bad picture of what has happened under a Conservative Government to Hull university. Hull's problems have been exacerbated by a historical basis of underfunding of about £500,000 a year. There were 20 per cent. cuts in 1981, and there has been an accumulation of additional cuts since then. After the most rigorous examination of their accounts, the university authorities are trying to raise funds from all sorts of different sources. Nevertheless they project a deficit of £500,000 at the end of this year. That deficit has caused the loss of more than 120 academic posts. In May of this year, the Government announced that there would be a 5·55 per cent. underfunding in real terms to the university. That means that the projected deficit on account to the end of 1986-87 is £1,600,000. That is a lot of money, and represents a lot of teaching jobs and places going vacant. That is a despicable thing to happen to the university.

However, the Department has failed to take on board the fact that that level of underfunding will have a serious effect on the local economy and the region as a whole. A study carried out in 1981 by the Leeds school of economics stated that Yorkshire and Humberside have to depend on higher education activity to maintain economic activity in their regions.

Hull university, with its 2,000 staff, academic and others, is the biggest employer in north Humberside, apart from British Aerospace. Cuts in the university funding effect the whole region. The university has an important role to play as an institution in a depressed area. I would like to give an example of how depressed the area is. B and Q advertised for 53 jobs in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, West (Mr. Randall). The Hull *Daily Mail* reported that there were more than 800 applications for those jobs. That illustrates the degree of unemployment in the area. Such a high level of applications for jobs, which would not have been regarded as terribly important or desirable 10 years ago, is indicative of the importance of public funding in the area.

Some 75 per cent. of university expenditure is allocated to salaries and students are expected to spend £2,000 per annum in an area. It is clear that universities bring fresh resources into the areas. These resources are not being provided in any other way and these resources mean jobs.

The Leeds school calculated that for every academic post lost, another five jobs are lost in the local economy. We are not talking about ivory towers or about preserving jobs in a separate and distinct world separate from ordinary people. We are concerned about ordinary people, the cleaners on the north Hull estate, technicians, clerks, and secretaries. All manner of jobs are being lost as a result of the Government's cuts. In the face of all that, the Secretary of State wanted to talk about advertisements.

The vice-chancellor of Hull university told me that, as a result of the 120 academic posts lost between 1981-84, together with the concurrent cut in student numbers of some 17 per cent., there was probably a net loss in the local community of 1,000 jobs. Many of those jobs were lost in my constituency.

An examination of the estimate made by the NUT of the effects of the clawback shows that if another 84 jobs are lost at the university as a result of the projected deficit of £1,600,000, that will mean another 420 jobs lost in the local community. The AUT calculates that some £2 million of fresh resources are being lost to the local communities. That is a direct cut in our standard of living.

In the face of such cuts, the university is asked to develop in other ways. It has tried to do that and has been successful in high technology of one sort or another, and I pay tribute to it for that. However, there have been cuts in courses. Highly popular joint degree courses have been lost. An employer's survey of universities showed that Hull university was the tenth university from which employers wanted to take students for jobs. Yet that university's resources are to be cut.

At a more mundane level, the university has to worry about problems of routine maintenance and check to see how tatty its buildings are becoming. At one time, those buildings were a pride to society which kept them going. The Government's policy is also badly affecting staff morale.

Yesterday I took a delegation to the Secretary of State to discuss the effects of cuts in the public sector, and especially the possible loss of initial primary teacher training on Humberside. On the basis of the Leeds school model, we may lose about 400 local jobs as well as nearly 500 teacher training places.

The Government are taking away the opportunities of our local students, and, by gosh, we do not have enough local students going on to higher and further education in the north. By their cuts the Government show that they do not think that we are worth it. That is why I asked the former Secretary of State what we had done to deserve constant cuts over the decade that the Government have been power. The cuts in educational opportunities for people in my area have been savage. We have witnessed intellectual, academic and economic vandalism by the Government.

I promised to speak for only 10 minutes if I was lucky enough to catch your eye, Mr. Speaker. I have taken nine minutes.

9.16 pm

Mr. Robert Rhodes James (Cambridge): It is a great pleasure for me to follow the hon. Member for Kingston-upon-Hull, North (Mr. McNamara), first, because of my respect for him, secondly, because my wife was born in his constituency, and, thirdly, because my favourite and our greatest librarian, my friend Philip Larkin, was the hon.

Gentleman's constituent. I do not disagree wholly with the strength and fervour with which the hon. Gentleman put his case.

I warmly welcome the important steps taken by the new Secretary of State and his Parliamentary Under-Secretary to reverse certain deeply unfortunate trends in higher education that compelled me to resign from my position in December.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer's new proposals on charities, the revised student grant review, the withdrawal of certain proposals on benefits for students and the 4 per cent. increase in the grant mark a crucial turning point, though I should tell my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State that we still have some way to go.

I do not wish anything that I say to be critical of the previous Secretary of State

Mr. William W. Hamilton: Why not?

Mr. Rhodes James: I have always had a high regard for my right hon. Friend the previous Secretary of State. The fact that our perceptions differed has not affected our personal friendship or that regard.

As I have emphasised to the House previously, when one looks back at what has gone wrong and one has to look back over quite a period one sees that the excessive euphoria of the 1960s was followed by excessive disillusionment. It is now time for new thinking. It is not just a question of new resources. Tragically, most of the assumptions under which Robbins operated have proved to be false.

I ask Ministers and others involved in the review to ask themselves, "What is higher education for? What is a university for? What is a polytechnic for?" My answer is that a university is a place where the love of learning for its own sake is honoured. The subject being studied does not affect that view. People who study engineering do not always become engineers; people who study history do not all become historians. The idea that if people are put into a specialty at the beginning they will emerge with that specialty is false. One needs flexibility and the burning faith of Lionel Robbins, for all his faults and for all the faults of his committee. He wanted young people to have a sniff of what higher education is all about.

I refer briefly to my right hon. Friend's remarks about academic salaries, which I most strongly welcome. They are hopelessly uncompetitive both in this country and abroad. The brain drain is a melancholy and strong reality. It is extraordinary that my 21-year-old daughter, who did not go to university, should be earning considerably more than a plasma physicist with a PhD at Cambridge university. With competition from the United States, Australia and West Germany, the position becomes unbearable. A Government who are supposed to be interested in market forces should bear this point very much in mind.

We shall await the results of the review of student loans. However, there is a substantial difference between first and second degrees. I am not opposed to a mixture of grants and loans, but very different considerations apply to the first and to the second degree.

I agree with what was said by the hon. Member for Durham, North (Mr. Radice) about the polytechnics. It is quite extraordinary that the Cambridge college of arts and technology proposes to abolish the study of geography. This is not just a constituency point. When Prince Albert was vice-chancellor of Cambridge university, he introduced not only the natural sciences tripos but the humanities tripos. The two go together. Last year's Green Paper got it wrong. This time I ask my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science and the House to get it right.

9.21 pm

Mrs. Renée Short (Wolverhampton, North-East): I have been told, Mr. Speaker, that I have three minutes, which is not very long. I thought that the Secretary of State was very complacent when he opened the debate. He referred to the problems faced by the polytechnics. Two polytechnics are under threat in the west Midlands. One is Coventry, where planning courses have been told to close. The other is Wolverhampton, where the engineering department has been told to close. That has been denied. We do not know where we are. Perhaps the Minister who is to reply will say exactly what the position is.

One of the highest levels of unemployment is to be found in the west Midlands. An enormous number of engineering firms have gone to the wall because of this Government's policies. When the Labour party takes office, we shall need as many engineers and technologists as we can get. In this appalling period of unemployment, technology is advancing with great difficulty. The Government remain complacent, boringly unadventurous and incapable of understanding the technological revolution that has hit industry throughout the world. If the present policies are allowed to continue, Britain will be incapable of standing up to the competition from the more industrially advanced countries.

The Secretary of State referred to Japan. I shall use just a minute to refer to a valuable lecture by Professor Jost of Manchester on technology versus unemployment. He said that Japan, with twice the population of the United Kingdom, produces 60,000 more qualified engineers than the United Kingdom, of whom about 6,000 are engineers with higher degrees. In 1984, Japan produced nearly 19,000 graduates in electrical and electronic engineering, while we produced a mere 2,400. In addition, Japan produced over 2,000 graduates with higher degrees—the equivalent of MScs and doctorates—in these disciplines, yet Japanese industry complains of a shortage of electronics and software engineers. It is time that the United Kingdom produced more scientists than Japan.

Unemployment in this country is appalling. We are short of industrial investment and we are not producing the technologists and the engineers that we shall need. After the next general election when a Labour Government take office they will carry out massive investment in the deprived areas of this country, such as the west Midlands and Hull. We shall ensure that jobs are provided and that the standard of living of our people is raised.

9.24 pm

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): There are more students in higher education today than ever before and that is to the credit of a Conservative Government and their policies. We must given credit to the academics on the Robbins committee whose foresight for the development of our higher education system has ensured that many of us in the House are here because of Robbins. Many hon. Members are Robbins' children.

[Mr. Kenneth Hind]

The Green Paper was mentioned. I hope that the Secretary of State will bear in mind some of the criticisms that have been levelled at the drop in the number of students by 1995-96 to 450,000. Many of us feel that the numbers are underestimated because we look at the number of children from middle class families who consistently seek higher education and see little or no change in that demand. If that demand prevails, there will continue to be a shortfall. I urge Education Ministers to look carefully at the statistics comparing Britain to our economic competitors. If they do that, they will see that the number of people entering higher education is unfortunately below the level of some of our competitors. We must work toward increasing that number.

The Government should work to the Green Paper. In some respects it has a great role to play, but it must be kept constantly under review and we must work on a day-to-day basis, because in some of its assumptions the Green Paper may prove to be wrong. I hope that the Minister will continue the drive that was started by his predecessor about increasing resources for research. I speak on behalf of the academics of Liverpool university because I am pleased to say that I liaise between them and this House. They would like to see an increase in the facilities and the amount of money available.

Many hon. Members have spoken better than I could about the importance of research in universities in relation to our industrial output. Can we have an increase in the number of teachers of mathematics, physics and statistics? The only way to bring about that increase is to ensure that teachers in higher institutes of learning are paid proper salaries. Those are my criticisms. The Government are on the right lines, but they ought to look at the failings and try to put them right. We should use some of the money that I hope the Secretary of State knows could be negotiated in the new future to improve the standard of higher education, because that is the seed corn of Britain for the foreseeable future.

9.28 pm

Dr. Oonagh McDonald (Thurrock): I listened carefully to the speech by the Secretary of State. I noted his fancy footwork and the fact that he said nothing about the bids that he will put to the Chief Secretary for 1987-88 or what he expects to get. More important and significant than that, he had nothing to say about the response that he will make to the plea by the universities for £15 million reimbursement for unexpectedly high rates or about the £100 million that is desperately needed this year.

The Secretary of State's speech was far too complacent about the ability of the universities to meet the needs of our society, given the resources that are made available to them. He had nothing to say about the growing evidence of skill shortages in high technology subjects, or about the shortage of well over 1,000 physics teachers in our schools. He did not say that mathematics and science in our schools are all too often taught by teachers who have no proper qualifications in those subjects.

The right hon. Gentleman was far too complacent about the impact of the lack of resources on the universities' ability to teach and continue their research. The lack of resources might lead to cuts in books and periodicals, for example. There is growing and serious evidence of attacks on funds for such purposes and for equipment. These are the tools of the trade. University teachers cannot work properly without adequate books and periodicals for them and their students, and it is nonsense to suppose that they can.

I should like to put in a special plea for Birkbeck college and to enter a personal note. Although I was a postgraduate student at Kings college in London, I attended postgraduate seminars at Birkbeck college when I was doing my masters degree while a full-time school teacher and again while I was researching full time for my PhD. It is one of the most valuable and important institutions in the country. It sets a pattern which, when I was a university teacher, I felt more universities should follow. It provides part-time education leading to first and higher degrees.

It is disgraceful that that institution now faces the possibility of a £2 million cut in grant. It is disingenuous of the Secretary of State to pretend that that is a decision for the University Grants Committee and that it has nothing whetever to do with the squeeze that his decisions and those of his predecessor have put on the university of London.

The right hon. Gentleman's predecessor used to come to the Dispatch Box, look agonised and cut funds to universities. The present Secretary of State comes to the Dispatch Box, smiles and still cuts funds to universities. It reminds me all too clearly of Hamlet's words:

"one may smile, and smile, and be a villain".

9.31 pm

Mr. Barry Jones (Alyn and Deeside):

"The equipment and the fabric of our universities needs urgent repair or replacement and acedemic staff morale is low and declining. The system is in crisis yet employers are demanding more graduates and more research."

So says the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals.

My hon. Friend the Member for Preston (Mr. Thorne) spoke passionately for the Open university, for which he has been a tutor. He has been a champion of continuing education and what he has said must be listened to and acted upon. My hon. Friend the Member for Thurrock (Dr. McDonald) emphasised the skills shortages and pleaded urgently, briefly but eloquently for Birkbeck. My hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, North-East (Mrs. Short) put her speech in the context of the appalling unemployment which is to be found in and around her constituency. My hon. Friend the Member for Dundee, West (Mr. Ross) described in detail the problems of the Scottish universities and called, effectively, I thought, for more working-class entrants to the university system.

My hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) denounced student loans and depicted with his usual fervour a serious situation in the university of Hull. It is clear that the Hull deficit is mountainous. The Government should assist in that area, as in others.

I listened to the hon. Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby) who, as a member of the court of Brunel university, knows that it has real problems of finance which stem from the policies of the Government that he supports.

Likewise, I heard the sharp speech made by the hon. Member for Loughborough (Mr. Dorrell). He made a telling statement regarding extraordinary vandalism. He spoke against a closure of a college of art and design. I heard the hon. Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind)

speak as a Robbins child and for Liverpool. He made substantial criticisms. I also heard a very cogent speech from the hon. Member for Cambridge (Mr. Rhodes James), who said that the brain drain was a reality.

The Secretary of State made some welcome remarks. I refer, for example, to the need for the UGC to be more open about its assessment procedure, and to the increase in the number of women students entering the public sector of education. But ultimately he stood by the cuts. He told us nothing about the 1987-88 funding plans and he gave no hope to universities and institutions of higher education despite the predicament in which they have been placed by the Government and the previous Secretary of State.

I turn briefly to the difficulties experienced in Wales. The university has been hard hit by constant underfunding on the part of the Government. Between 1980-81 and 1986-87 the individual colleges of Aberystwyth, Bangor, Cardiff and Swansea, as well as the institute of science and technology, have suffered major cuts in real terms. At the last general election the Prime Minister promised to hold funding steady in real terms after 1984-85. She did not keep that promise. It is in that context that we must judge the recently announced recurrent grant for the Welsh colleges.

The figures for this year in Wales are portrayed as minimal. That is misleading. They are very serious indeed. The UGC has calculated that the true rate of inflation in universities is about 5·25 per cent. It is with sadness that I say that the universities of Bangor and Swansea have suffered the severest blows. The average cut in Wales is even greater than the average for Scotland and is much higher than that for England. There appears to be a bias towards the comfortable south, and against Scotland, Wales and parts of the north of England. University staff in Wales, as well as the general public, are bitter about that, because Wales has had a raw deal.

The UGC did not publish its research criteria, but well-informed leaks suggest that an important factor in the assessment of research was the amount of money received from research councils and charitable bodies. The departments in the Welsh colleges are generally small, and the emphasis on quantity inevitably militates against the university of Wales. The university lecturers whom I have met say that research council funding seems to be biased towards the south-east of England.

The other major factor in the assessment is the unit cost. It was a deliberate policy of the university to evolve in a number of separate colleges, in order to provide higher education throughout Wales. That is an essential feature of our university. The university is large in terms of numbers, but the constituent colleges are small. They provide close-knit academic and cultural communities. The geographical spread of the university of Wales is a response, in part, to the very difficult geographic factors in Wales. We do not believe that they have been sufficiently taken into account by the UGC. We believe that the Government have neglected to consider the very special factors applying to the colleges of the university.

One specific factor that seems not to have been fully considered is the university's commitment to the Welsh language and culture. Given the extent of the cuts, the provision must have been minimal. I do not think that the Government realise the severity of the cuts imposed, or the consequences in Wales at a time of high unemployment.

The university is a major employer, and is arguably the largest employer in Wales after local government and the Health Service. Some 6,000 people are on the payroll, and there are probably 30,000 other dependent jobs. In Aberystwyth, 30 per cent. of the town depends on the university for its livelihood. In Bangor, 23 per cent. do so. In 1985-86, Swansea university paid over £1 million in rates. These universities create wealth, but the Government are dragging them down, and our communities will suffer.

The universities are striking out promisingly to create a new economy for Wales, because we have a good record of collaboration with industry. Aberystwyth has opened a science park in collaboration with Mid-Wales Development. The university college of Bangor has formed a company whose principal function is the production of high technology products. The university of Cardiff has set up an industry liaison unit and has recently created 60 new real jobs. Lampeter co-ordinates closely on housing, public transport and water quality with Mid-Wales Development.

The medical school is pre-eminent in renal medicine and next month at Swansea, the innovation centre, which is already active in microprocessing, will be opened. In the institute of science and technology, the staff liaise with a series of suitable entrepreneurs. It is folly for the Government to subject these university colleges to annual cuts, to threaten the creation of jobs, to slow down high-tech development, stifle initiative and bring about redundancies. These colleges deserve praise, not harassment. They need encouragement and their record is worthy of that. They have been subject to severe cuts. I have to put into context those cuts and the difficult future that the universities face.

The Government have already cut regional aid and withdrawn hundreds of millions of pounds of rate support grant. The HMI has published a disturbing report on unsatisfactory conditions in primary and secondary schools. Our Health Service is desperately underfunded. Our unemployment has increased since 1979 by some 130 per cent., and we have lost 110,000 manufacturing jobs since the Government took office. Our universities are trying to create a new economy, trying to prepare the economy for the next century against a background of harrowing unemployment, but the Government still cut funding for our universities, which deserve a special consideration that they have not had.

In Wales, the universities represent hope to our people and a better future. The people of Wales see the Government working against that future and attacking it. I urge Ministers, even at this late stage, to think about the consequences of what they are proposing in the Principality. We want the Government to halt the cuts, and introduce level funding. The damage to the system must be repaired, and the quality of research must be enhanced. Extra resources should be channelled into the system for improved access to higher education and for part-time and continued education.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Preston said, millions of people are waiting for their opportunity, and that opportunity goes if the Government continue with cuts. I hope that the Under-Secretary will say that small institutions deserve special consideration because of the cuts. I want him to ensure that the commitment to the Welsh language and culture is taken fully into account by

[Mr. Barry Jones]

the UGC. The feeling is abroad in Wales that the Secretary of State has not sufficiently defended the interests of Welsh universities in the face of the cuts.

In its early years, the university of Wales was founded upon the pennies of the Welsh poor. Before 1883, 100,000 people — quarrymen, steel workers, coal miners, farm labourers, shepherds, foresters and housewives — gave less than half-a-crown each to help establish the university of Wales. When the university of Bangor was opened, 3,000 quarrymen marched in lines of four to celebrate the opening of their university. The great W. E. Gladstone said that the Welsh people were "deeply enamoured of knowledge". That was certainly true in the last century.

The people of Wales fought hard to create a university in Wales. Their descendants will fight hard to protect it from this Government's wanton destruction.

9.45 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Wyn Roberts): We have had an interesting debate and some interesting comments and suggestions have been made. If I am unable to answer all of them, I am sure that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science, who has special responsibility for higher education, will have noted them and may contact hon. Members.

I must reiterate some of the main points made by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State at the beginning of the debate because it is clear that some Opposition Members appear not to have heard them.

First, there are record numbers of students in higher education and participation rates for both young and mature entrants are at an all time high. I can tell my hon. Friend the Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind) that new projections for future student numbers will be published in the next few months, and that we shall be aiming at a further increase in the proportion of young people entering higher education.

Secondly, there has been a significant shift in the balance of higher education towards science and technology. Our policies should ensure that that continues so that industry's needs for qualified manpower can be more fully met; but we have no intention of underrating the importance of rigorously taught arts and humanities courses.

Thirdly, my right hon. Friend reiterated the Government's willingness to increase financial provision for universities if they demonstrate a commitment to the pursuit of better management, improved standards of teaching, selectivity in research funding and the rationalisation of small departments.

Fourthly, we applaud the major contribution now being made by the public sector to higher education. From my experience in the Principality, I know just how vital that is.

Fifthly, we acknowledge the outstanding issues on pay. From the Government's view, progress depends crucially on the introduction of new pay structures which are flexible and responsive to current and prospective needs.

The hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) mentioned the university of Wales and its colleges. I thought that he would. They have not come out of the University Grants Committee exercise as well as they had hoped. The same might be said of many of the universities mentioned in the debate. The criteria applied by the UGC to the university of Wales were no different from those applied to universities and colleges elsewhere. I am glad that the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) acknowledged that. The same criteria were applied to Scotland.

The reduction in the allocation for Wales should not be exaggerated. The safety net arrangements have ensured that no college's allocation is more than 0·5 per cent. lower than it was this year. Some of the university's colleges will receive more grant than this year — for example, the institute of science and technicology, St. David's, Lampeter, the college of medicine and the university registry. We did not hear about those from the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside. There is no justification for the eschatological view that he expressed.

The hon. Gentleman pressed the case of funds for the Welsh language. The UGC has made a special allocation for that, recognising the special needs of the university in that respect. Unlike the hon. Gentleman, I do not think that the grant allocations for next year are a threat to the future of the university's colleges. On the contrary, they represent a signal for the university and its constituent colleges that urgent action is needed to find ways to rationalise the present pattern of provision.

The new approach should be seen as an incentive to build on existing strengths and to improve the management of the resources available to the colleges. If that is done, I do not doubt that the colleges will be in a stronger position to attract higher levels of funding from the UGC in future—*[Interruption.]* If the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside is interested in having answers to his questions, he should listen. The UGC and I welcome the decision of the university of Wales to set up a rationalisation committee. I very much hope that the constituent colleges will participate actively in its work.

The hon. Gentleman knows only too well that direct responsibility for the university lies with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science. Therefore, it would not be appropriate for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales to have discussions with the university or its colleges about the grant allocations. However, that does not imply a lack of concern. On the contrary, we both take a close interest in the affairs of the university——

Mr. Hind *rose*——

Mr. Roberts: We keep in close touch with the UGC to ensure that Welsh needs are fully taken into account——

Mr. Hind: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Roberts: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and I met the chairman of the UGC recently to discuss next year's allocation——

Mr. Hind: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Roberts: We have taken every opportunity to emphasise the importance——

Mr. Hind *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. If the Minister does not wish to give way, the hon. Gentleman must not persist. This has been a good-natured debate and hon. Members have been given a fair hearing.

Mr. Roberts: We have taken every opportunity to emphasise the importance that we attach to the role of the

university in assisting industry in Wales and in attracting new high technology firms to the Principality. The hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside may rest assured that we will continue to take a close interest in the university's programme and support the university in any way that we can.

The Opposition have entirely overlooked the spectacular growth in public sector higher education in Wales. Between 1979 and 1984, the number of students grew by 46·3 per cent.

Mr. Barry Jones *rose*——

Mr. Roberts: There has been a massive increase since 1979——

Mr. Barry Jones *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. One hon. Member at a time, please.

Mr. Roberts: I know that Opposition Members do not like to hear these figures. Between 1979-80 and 1984-85, expenditure by local authorities on advanced and further education in Wales increased by 25 per cent. in real terms while student numbers increased by 46 per cent. There has been a tremendous shift towards science and technology, which we all welcome. Engineering and technology enrolments have increased by 49 per cent. over the same period. Science enrolments have increased by 67 per cent. over the same period.

Mr. Barry Jones *rose*——

Mr. Roberts: No, I shall not give way. I must answer the questions that have been raised during the debate. A number of issues have been raised and I am seeking to respond to them.

My hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby) made a series of valuable suggestions about the involvement of industry and small businesses on campuses. He referred also to academic staff tenure. There can be no doubt that tenure in the form in which it is enjoyed by many academics is a major barrier to management flexibility and efficiency in the university system. The Government intend to go ahead, as soon as the parliamentary timetable allows, with legislation to limit the nature of the tenure which can be granted in future.

A number of hon. Members have referred to the Open university, including the hon. Member for Preston (Mr. Thorne). The OU is a large enterprise already, with over 60,000 undergraduates and a further 55,000 students using its continuing education PICKUP type courses and materials. It has more students now than ever before. Its achievements are especially impressive in subjects that are regarded by many as difficult to teach, such as mathematics, science and technology. It responded last year to the Government's programme for more high technology students with proposals that earned it substantial extra funding. I know that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State believes that the OU has not reached its full potential to expand provision in these areas.

The hon. Member for Durham, North (Mr. Radice)——

Mr. Barry Jones *rose*——

Mr. Roberts: —has a certain hectoring——

Mr. Barry Jones: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Roberts: No. I will not give way to the hon. Gentleman.

I must repeat the undoubted fact that the Government's record on higher education is good. We are grateful to the Opposition for giving us the opportunity to advertise this. Indeed, we are doubly grateful because their record of falling student numbers and participation rates between 1975 and 1979 provides a telling contrast with the substantial increases——

Mr. Ray Powell (Ogmore): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Is it not customary for a Minister who is replying to a debate to allow an Opposition spokesman to intervene to ask a question? The Minister knows that my hon. Friend the Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) wishes to ask him some questions about Bangor university. The Minister has no answers to the questions that my hon. Friend is likely to put to him, and that is why he will not allow him to intervene.

Mr. Speaker: The more that points of order are raised, the less chance the Minister will have of responding to the debate.

Mr. Roberts: The hon. Member for Ogmore (Mr. Powell) has not been present for the debate.

The country is benefiting already from the increased output of graduates, and especially from the 30 per cent. increase in science and technology places. However, we are not complacent. The switch towards science needs to go a little further yet. Above all, we need continuing increases in participation rates for both 18 to 19-year-olds and mature entrants to higher education. The quantity and quality of research in our higher education institutions, especially our universities, has long been recognised as a national asset. Since 1979 research councils' funding has been increased by 8 per cent. in real terms as my right hon. Friend said earlier.

Our record shows the effective use of resources and a massive increase in opportunities. That is our record in higher education. We are proud of it. Our policies will continue to build on those successes well into the 1990s. I ask my right hon. and hon. Friends to reject the Opposition's motion and to support the amendment in the name of the Prime Minister.

Mr. Ray Powell: The Minister, in replying to the debate, would not allow——

Mr. Mark Fisher (Stoke-on-Trent, Central) *rose in his place and claimed to move*, That the Question be now put.

Question, That the Question be now put, put and agreed to.

Question put accordingly, That the original words stand part of the Question:—

The House divided: Ayes 196, Noes 267.

Division No. 234] **[10 pm**

AYES

Abse, Leo	Bell, Stuart
Alton, David	Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Archer, Rt Hon Peter	Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Ashdown, Paddy	Bermingham, Gerald
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack	Bidwell, Sydney
Ashton, Joe	Blair, Anthony
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*	Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Bagier, Gordon A. T.	Boyes, Roland
Barnett, Guy	Bray, Dr Jeremy
Barron, Kevin	Brown, Gordon *(D'f'rmline E)*
Beckett, Mrs Margaret	Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Beith, A. J.	Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*

Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Rt Hon J.
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell, Ian
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Carter-Jones, Lewis
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clelland, David Gordon
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Conlan, Bernard
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cox, Thomas *(Tooting)*
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Edwards, Bob *(W'h'mpt'n SE)*
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Freud, Clement
Garrett, W. E.
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman
Gould, Bryan
Gourlay, Harry
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*
Hancock, Michael
Hardy, Peter
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hume, John
Janner, Hon Greville
Jenkins, Rt Hon Roy *(Hillh'd)*
John, Brynmor
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kirkwood, Archy
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Edward
McCartney, Hugh
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McGuire, Michael
McKelvey, William
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Robert
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Meadowcroft, Michael
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Nellist, David
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Park, George
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Penhaligon, David
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rogers, Allan
Ross, Ernest *(Dundee W)*
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ryman, John
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shields, Mrs Elizabeth
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Short, Mrs R.*(W'hampt'n NE)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C.*(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Torney, Tom
Wallace, James
Wareing, Robert
Welsh, Michael
White, James
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Wilson, Gordon
Winnick, David
Woodall, Alec
Wrigglesworth, Ian
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Derek Fatchett and
Mr. Allen Adams.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Benyon, William
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Bruinvels, Peter
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nick
Bulmer, Esmond
'Burt, Alistair
Butler, Rt Hon Sir Adam
Carlisle, John *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, W. S.
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clegg, Sir Walter
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Corrie, John
Couchman, James
Cranborne, Viscount
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Anthony
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fletcher, Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Fry, Peter
Galley, Roy
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harvey, Robert
Havers, Rt Hon Sir Michael
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hickmet, Richard
Hicks, Robert
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hirst, Michael
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*

Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jackson, Robert
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Key, Robert
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lang, Ian
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Nicholas
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
Madel, David
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Antony
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M. *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Murphy, Christopher
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Oppenheim, Rt Hon Mrs S.
Osborn, Sir John
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abgdn)*
Pattie, Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Price, Sir David
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rees, Rt Hon Peter *(Dover)*
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Rippon, Rt Hon Geoffrey
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shersby, Michael
Silvester, Fred
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Speed, Keith
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stokes, John
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Watts, John
Wheeler, John
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Tim Sainsbury and
Mr. Peter Lloyd.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 33 (Questions on amendments), and agreed to.*

MR. SPEAKER *forthwith declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.*

Resolved,

That this House notes the importance of higher education for the future of the country; commends the Government on the increase of 17 per cent. in full time home student numbers since 1979, on the 8 per cent. increase in the science budget for the research councils as measured against average inflation, and on the substantially increased opportunities for adult and continuing education; and applauds the Government's intention to build on these successes, particularly through further increases in participation rates for both young and mature entrants.

Firearms (Fees)

10.16 pm

Mr. Clive Soley (Hammersmith): I beg to move,

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that the Firearms (Variation of Fees) Order 1986 (S.I. 1986, No. 986), dated 9th June 1986, a copy of which was laid before this House on 16th June, be annulled.

The debate, which is on firearms certificates, is one in which we want some clarification from the Government on what their intentions are. At one level, the order looks innocuous enough. The fees are being increased for certain categories of firearms and for certain purposes —*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Will hon. Members who are not remaining in the Chamber leave quietly?

Mr. Soley: But we are not sure whether the Government's intention is simply to raise the fees to pay for a service, or to raise the fees to restrict ownership of guns. That is not clear from the order.

I suspect that the Government are trying to have it both ways—they are trying to get more money for providing a service to the public but at the same time they are worried about the rising crime rate and rising armed crime, so they are concerned to restrict the availability of firearms in society. As I have said several times to the Minister in letters and conversations, and in questions at the Dispatch Box, there is a case for a sensible firearms policy that restricts the availability of firearms, but there is not a case for trying to control access to firearms simply by increasing the price. If one does that, one squeezes the low-income groups that use firearms. They are used for work —gamekeepers are an obvious example—and for sport, not just shooting animals and birds but for target practice, clay-pigeon shooting and so on.

We have not had from the Government a justification for the increase and, much more important, a proper, rational policy on the availability of firearms in society. In 1979, the Labour Government proposed certain increases. They fell, and then the present Government increased the fees by quite a large amount 1980. They proposed increasing them again in 1982.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): The hon. Gentleman is not doing justice to the events that he is describing. Surely he recalls that the same hon. Members who voted down his Government's attempt to increase the charges then went through the Division Lobby in support of vastly greater increases after the election.

Mr. Soley: The hon. Gentleman has pre-empted me slightly, and also has the advantage of having been there at the time, which I was not. Without checking the names of all those who voted in the Lobbies at that time, I was under the impression that Conservative Members voted down an increase but then increased the charge dramatically. The present increases are well over 50 per cent. in several cases. For example, the charge for renewal of a firearms certificate goes up from £13 to £35, a dramatic increase, which is greater than the rate of inflation. As the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) has just said, the increase is far greater than that proposed in 1979 when inflation was higher than it is today.

I am anxious not simply to question the Government as to whether they are trying to raise the fees to pay for a service or whether they are trying to restrict firearms; simply to bring forward such an order is not the answer to this serious problem. We must base our firearms policy on the premise that we do not use financial limits to restrict access to firearms. That would be one of the worst ways to achieve restriction. As I have said, that would hit the low income user who is a perfectly legitimate gun user. He should not be penalised simply because he does not earn a great deal or is unemployed. Using firearms for target practice or clay pigeon shooting is a very popular sport among many sections of society including low income groups.

The other criterion which we must consider—and I will address some points later to the shooting sports groups—is the recognition that we need to control the number of weapons available to society and the security under which they are kept in society. If our society had a low crime rate and there were no tensions in our inner cities and elsewhere, I would be less worried than I am today. In some countries it is fairly common for families and individuals to own guns and there is no evidence of a dramatic increase in crime as a result of that. However, we do not live in such a society. This is not Switzerland or a country where weapons are fairly common and at the same time the level of crime is low.

The crime rate in our country has been escalating dramatically. Under this Government, violent crime has been increasing rapidly, for reasons which I have eleborated upon previously. No doubt you would rightly rule me out or order, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if I went into great detail about this now. However, if we create a situation in our inner cities as a result of general economic and social policies that splinters the fabric of society, which undermines community links which prevent crime—

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. The hon. Gentleman was quite right to anticipate me. I must remind him to return to the order before the House.

Mr. Soley: I will return to the order, but I ask you to bear with me on this point, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The increase in crime as a result of social policies has a link with violent crime. If we try to control the availability of weapons by putting up the price, that will simply hit the low income groups. That will not deal with the problems in the inner cities.

It is probably true to say—although the figures may be interpreted in other ways—that legitimate users do not, in any real sense, cause violent crime. However, if we allow the number of weapons to increase considerably in society, that will introduce a gun lobby into the United Kingdom. We have avoided that so far but it has not been avoided in the United States.

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith (Wealden) *rose*—

Mr. Soley: Increasing the number of guns available to society would increase the difficulties faced by the police in tracking down weapons. There is considerable evidence that weapons illicitly used in our society either come from imports—which is probably their main source—or from people who have legitimate firearm certificates but who are prepared illegitimately to make weapons available, either by sale or other methods, to people who are not entitled to own them.

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith: I sympathise with one or two of the points which the hon. Gentleman made at the beginning of his speech. However, I believe that he is entering dangerous territory. I speak as the president of a rifle club and I do not represent a gun lobby. I am not aware that the increase in violent crime, or the use of firearms in this country to carry out crimes, is any way attributable to arms possessed by bona fide rifle clubs. Would the hon. Gentleman agree that there is no evidence of theft from such clubs to account for the increase in violent crime?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. We should not go too far down that road. The order deals with the variation of fees and it would be out of order if the debate turned into a discussion of the incidence and causes of crime.

Mr. Soley: I agree with your sentiments, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but the argument is specifically about the purpose of the fees increases. If the Government are increasing fees to pay for a service, that is one thing, but there are suggestions that the Government are increasing the fees to keep down the supply of weapons. So there is a link.

I agree with you Mr. Deputy Speaker, that it would be wrong to have a debate on crime prevention, but I must tell the hon. Member for Wealden (Sir G. Johnson Smith) that I did not mention rifle shooting. I talked about guns generally and I am particularly worried about handguns and shotguns. Also, I did not talk much about theft. I said that it seemed to me that the main problems arose from imports and from people who legitimately held weapons, having a firearms certificate, being prepared to make those firearms available to others who were not entitled to own them.

There are no figures to support my case, but if the hon. Member for Wealden goes round certain inner city areas he will not have difficulty in buying weapons from various people, many of whom have firearms certificates. I cannot give the hon. Gentleman the figures.

Mr. Jerry Wiggin (Weston-super-Mare): Outrageous.

Mr. Soley: It is not outrageous. It is common sense and common evidence from those who live in inner city areas and from many of the things that the police say. I advise the hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare (Mr. Wiggin) to talk to the police. They will give him the sort of evidence that I am talking about.

Mr. Douglas Hogg (Grantham): The hon. Gentleman has expressed his worry about the unlawful possession of shotguns. Will he tell us whether it is the policy of the Labour party to extend the firearms certificate system to shotguns—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I hope that the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) will not respond to that invitation. He would be out of order if he did so.

Mr. Soley: You are right, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I should be straying outside the rules of order if I answered that question, but if the hon. Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg) will listen to my remarks he will learn the answer to his question.

Mr. Wiggin: Will the hon. Gentleman accept that of the weapons involved in crime — which are, after all, traceable—only a fraction of 1 per cent. are recorded under the firearms certificate system? That is the point which—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The House is debating the Firearms (Variation of Fees) Order. That intervention has nothing to do with the order.

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Conservative Members are in some difficulty, because we are worried about the cost of the Government's proposals, and some of us fear that they may be a ploy to get rid of the private owner in a vain effort to control all the illegal firearms that are used —

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is making assumptions about the order that are not matters for me. I am concerned about the order and the scope of the debate, which should be related to the merits of the proposed new structure for fees. The various matters that are being raised now are neither matters for me nor relevant to the order.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is being suggested, and it has not yet been gainsaid, that these systems and fees can be used as a method of controlling the possession of firearms. That is manifestly correct; they can be so used. Surely we are entitled to debate the proposition that fees should be used as a method of controlling their possession.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. That is not the matter that has been referred to either in the points of order or in the latter part of the debate.

Sir Hector Monro (Dumfries): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The nub of the argument about the increase in fees is that the police say that it takes a very long time to investigate each person.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I do not know what the nub of the argument is, because I have not yet heard it. It might help the House if the Minister were eventually to be given an opportunity to explain the purpose of the order. In the meantime, we ought to return to the debate and to the speech of the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley).

Mr. Wiggin: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. My hon. Friend the Member for Wealden (Sir G. Johnson Smith) has rightly explained to the House that this debate is not simply about the amount of money that is involved. It is about the principle that underlies the order.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Gentleman is proceeding on a point of order that proceeds upon an entirely false assumption. The order that is before the House deals with the variation of fees. Before we make assumptions about what the issue is, we ought to allow the Minister to explain the purpose of the order. Before he does so, we ought to listen to the hon. Gentleman who has the Floor of the House. Mr. Clive Soley.

Mr. Wiggin: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Surely you must allow me at least to finish the point of order that I have started. This issue is extremely important to many people. It is not simply a question of the amount of money that is involved. We must also deal with the arguments that lie behind the order. In all my experience of this place I have never listened to a debate about an order that simply relates to pounds shillings and

[Mr. Wiggin]

pence and not to the arguments that accompany it. I hope that you will keep a moderately more open mind about the debate that we must have on this important subject.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I think that one chairman at a time is enough. Mr. Clive Soley.

Mr. Soley: As you will recall, Mr. Deputy Speaker, some time ago I was making a speech. As I was aware of the nature of the order, I was trying to phrase my comments in a way that would be within the rules of the House and helpful to it. Although the order can be debated simply in terms of cost, you rightly pointed out that one of the difficulties of the Prayer procedure is that the Opposition have to lead the debate without first having heard the Minister.

I have already said that the underlying point is whether the Government are attempting to raise the fees in order to pay for the service or whether they are raising them in order to control the number of firearms. Within the rules of the House and within the limits of the order, I hope to describe the way in which the Minister should approach this problem instead of by an order that simply increases the fees. The availablity of firearms in society is an important issue. The rights of legitimate users of firearms are also important. By "legitimate users" I mean those who use firearms during their work or for pleasure. Those two uses must be kept in proportion.

Continuing from the point at which the trout rose to the evening fly, the shooting sports lobby needs to take on board society's concern about the increasing availability of weapons of all types, including crossbows and firearms. The Government need to take on board the fact that they must face the problem of how to deal with phasing the increases in fees and also the problem of how to control the number and type of firearms that are available.

On previous occasions I have written to the Minister about this problem and have pointed out to him that books are available on British bookstalls that advertise certain types of weapons. Not only do they do that, but they publish articles which advise people on how to use weapons in specific situations. One of the magazines I quoted had an article on how to turn a neighbourhood watch committee into a vigilante group. That magazine and a number of others of the same type are freely available in bookshops. They also describe how to get weapons and give details of the fees. I know that the Minister is aware of those things because I made him aware of them when I met him, and I also wrote to him recently.

Underlying this order is a legitimate concern of the Government: that at a time of dramatically rising crime, firearms and other weapons like crossbows and paramilitary courses that are advertised in the magazines that I am talking about, are freely and easily available in society.

On 26 February the Home Secretary said that he was setting up a review of the use of guns by the police. In response to that, I asked the Minister to include a wider review of the whole issue of firearms—their availability, the costs of certification, and the conditions of security in which weapons were kept, and so on. In his written reply, the Home Secretary said:

"When the review is completed I shall advise the House of its conclusions." – [*Official Report*, 26 February 1986; Vol. 92, c. 564.]

My letter to the Home Secretary on 26 March was about the costing of firearms certificates. I emphasise that. The answer to the question asked in the intervention by the hon. Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg) is partly contained in that letter. My letter said:

"We strongly recommend the establishment of a Standing Advisory Committee set up by the Home Office to review and make recommendations on such matters as firearm licensing; the number and type of firearms, replica gun and other dangerous weapons (crossbows, airguns, and certain types of knife) in circulation; the number of registered firearm dealers; the growing trade in more general combat gear and training courses; the importation of firearms and other weapons; the use of weapons in crime; the minimum conditions of security in which legitimately held weapons are kept; the question of registering each shotgun with a number to ensure that they can be traced when necessary;"

That point was raised by the hon. Member for Grantham. I emphasise this part:

"and the desirability of creating a separate licensing authority to take the burden off the police."

Mr. Cranley Onslow (Woking): I am interested in the hon. Gentleman's idea of a Standing Advisory Committee. Will that have representation from shooting interests?

Mr. Soley: A lot of hon. Members and you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, are anticipating my speech. My answer to the hon. Member for Woking (Mr. Onslow) is yes, it would. I will come to that point. That Committee should have on it representatives — I emphasise the plural — of the shooting sports. Obviously, they should not form a dominant group but they should be on the Committee. A number of other people would be represented on it, including the police and criminologists. We are dealing with a complex subject and if the Government think they can get away from it by simply banging up the fees through an order which will slip through without a debate unless we in the Opposition pray against it, they are going down the wrong road.

Sir John Farr (Harborough): I am endeavouring to follow the hon. Gentleman's argument. It seems to me that he would put shotgun certificates on the firearms certificate procedure. If his party were in office would it seek to limit the number of shotguns a person was allowed to own?

Mr. Soley: I make it abundantly clear that I would not legislate until I had received recommendations from the Committee that I have described. That is because the more I go into the subject, the more complex I see that it is. It is easy to make a simplistic judgment in this House or outside and to say that far too many guns are available. That view is basically right, but it needs to be argued in more detail in relation to the problems of crime in society.

It is also easy to go too far the other way, as the shooting sports lobby tends to do, and to say that there is no problem because all the people who hold guns legitimately are proper, decent users who stay within the law. That is too simple a view and I ask the shooting sports lobby to bear in mind the dramatic increase in armed crime. If we do not take that on board, we can end up only with more people owning arms, more arms being available —whether legitimately or illegitimately—and increasing the problem for society. We must deal with that problem in a much more sophisticated way than we are using tonight. That is the core of my argument.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The hon. Member is being very candid, and we are grateful for that. As I understand him, he is saying that he and his party would greatly increase shotgun certificate fees to control the possession of shotguns.

Mr. Soley: I did not say anything which remotely resembles that. I think that controls must be of a different type. That is why I suggest the establishment of a standing advisory committee. By increasing fees, as is proposed in the order, we are hitting the legitimate low-income user. That is not a good way in which to control firearms. There is a case for controlling firearms and there is a case for saying that we will finance control out of the licensing system, but there is no case for increasing the fee to make it more difficult for low-income groups to use firearms.

To get around the problems, which we are all finding difficult, I recommend the establishment of a standing committee in the Home Office. The Minister would not then have to come to the House as he has tonight. We would have a much more informed debate and we might make better decisions as a result. There is a good case I should not like to put it any more strongly at the moment for a separate licensing authority. It is difficult for the police to tackle this matter without spending an awful lot of time on it, and there is dissatisfaction with how the police handle it. That may or may not be fair. I honestly do not know. I know, however, that if we tell firearms users that they must pay increased fees, they can legitimately reply, "We want some say in the type of service that we get." That is one of the reasons why I suggest that the shooting sports are represented on the advisory committee.

I have implied that the Government are at best confused and at worst deliberately confusing about their intention in the order. If they are trying to deal with the increase in armed crime, I acknowledge that there is a serious problem. The average annual use of long-barrelled shotguns in crime in the years 1974 to 1979 was 187. For the years 1980-84 it was 247. For sawn-off shotguns, the figure increased from 177 to 311. For pistols, it increased from 375 to 1,017. The average use of imitation firearms in crime increased from 86 to 130.

In those figures alone, we have a strong argument for setting up a committee such as I have described. The Government could then present the House with orders, which may well include fee increases, which would be well argued in terms of the services that are provided for legitimate users, and we could ask legal shooting sports bodies, as I have done already with individual groups, to adopt a more sophisticated and detailed argument of their case. It is not enough, as one or two have told me, to bring back capital punishment on the grounds that that will deal with armed crime. It will not. That argument is a nonsense. We need a well informed debate, whether it is about increasing fees or increasing the availability of arms.

My complaint to the Minister and my worry about the order it is that it simply increases the fees and covers over whether it is about a service or anxiety about the use of firearms and their availability. The Government have not addressed the central issue as I should have liked.

10.44 pm

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. Giles Shaw): The House will understand my difficulty this evening. The hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) gave us a full and generous account of the way in which a future Government — I was not entirely clear as to their composition — would tackle, not the firearms fees order, but the Firearms Act 1968, which provides the system by which controls are applied.

We must strike a balance between safeguarding the public from the misuse of firearms and the protection of the legitimate user. I am concerned only with the fees order and with the fact that the debate is limited in time. Therefore, I shall deal rapidly with some of the salient points that worry my hon. Friends. Unfortunately, I cannot deal with the Opposition's reasons for their prayer.

May I say for the sake of clarity, if not for the convenience of the hon. Member for Hammersmith, that the fees proposed in this order are strictly to recover costs and have not been devised to regulate the number of firearms legitimately held. Nor should they be taken as a moral predication for or against legitimate users of firearms or shotguns — the shooting fraternity. It is well known that the shooting fraternity has a substantial capacity to use, control and look after firearms and shotguns, because its members are properly devoted to their sport.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We are all delighted to hear that my hon. Friend is trying only to recover costs. How does he justify an increase of 65 per cent. in the context of replacing firearms certificates? Was the 1980 level too low, or has there been a 65 per cent. increase in the cost of processing applications.

Mr. Shaw: As usual, my hon. Friend precedes me by a short time. Had he listened a little longer, he would have heard the answer to his question.

Governments of both persuasions have long believed that a person who wishes to engage in an activity that is controlled in the public interest should pay the economic cost of issuing or renewing his or her licence. The inescapable fact is that income from firearms fees does not match the expenditure of the licensing system.

My hon. Friends will know the background to the order. They will recall the criticisms made of the proposal to increase fees in 1982, which was mentioned by the hon. Members for Hammersmith and for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith). That proposal was not proceeded with, but it is interesting to note that the fees proposed then — four years ago — were £41 for the grant and £30 for the renewal of a firearm certificate, with corresponding fees of £17 and £10 for shotgun certificates. My noble Friend the then Home Secretary was urged to introduce some standardisation of practice among police forces in their administration of the Firearms Act in an effort to keep costs down.

The Government reacted positively. In 1982 — as many of my hon. Friends will know, but as the hon. Member for Hammersmith conveniently forgot — we set up a joint Home Office and Association of Chief Police Officers working party to consider what improvements could be made to streamline and reduce the amount of work undertaken by the police. In its report, published in April 1984, the working party made several important recommendations, most of which have been implemented. It also drew up a series of standardised procedures — it was previously a major source of disagreement in the shooting lobby, which required a standardised procedure if at all possible — in the form of worksheets and

[Mr. Shaw]

recommended that they be used in reviewing the level of fees to recover costs. They showed the stages of processing an average application and the most junior rank of officer who might perform each task. The fees have been costed strictly on the basis of those worksheets, with the exception of the shotgun issue and renewal fee.

Under the new costing method—I stress that it is new—some fees have been reduced and others will remain at their 1980 levels. There would have been a slight reduction of £2·50 and a slight increase of 50p in the shotgun issue and renewal fee, but since the one would have balanced the other in terms of cost recovery, we have decided to leave both at their existing levels for the present. In any event—I hope that I carry my colleagues with me on this—we do not think that it would be in the public interest to reduce the shotgun issue fee at present. I must agree with the hon. Member for Hammersmith that there is public anxiety about the use of shotguns in the commission of crimes.

In 1975, 673 burglaries and thefts were recorded by the police in which shotguns were reported to have been stolen, and some 766,000 certificates were issued. In 1984, the equivalent figures were 678 and 798,000. Therefore, there is nothing to suggest that the rise in the number of certificated shotguns is related to an increase in the number of shotguns that find their way into criminal activities.

I turn to the matter of most concern to my right hon. and hon. Friends.

Mr. Soley: I have been trying to follow what the Minister has said. Why has he rejected the ACPO recommendation that the fee should be reduced?

Mr. Shaw: That recommendation was rejected for the two reasons that I have given. First, this would signal that people could then expect to obtain shotguns more easily, and one would have to consider whether that was in the public interest. Secondly, the decrease to £9·50 on the £12 fee, and the increase to £8·50 on the renewal fee, cancel each other out.

Mr. Wiggin *rose*——

Mr. Shaw: I am trying to answer the point raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg), but I shall give way to my hon. Friend.

Mr. Wiggin: Does my hon. Friend accept that his Department has an extremely bureaucratic attitude towards the issue of licences? Licences could be issued more efficiently. For example, a yachtsman obtaining a licence to save his life pays something like that fee for sending a piece of paper through the post every year. If my hon. Friend looked at that point within his Department, he might solve the problem that he faces tonight.

Mr. Shaw: I am not absolutely certain that I am surrounded by a massive problem that I cannot deal with. However, a not unreasonable response to that request would be to set up a working party to examine how many minutes are required to process fees, and to base a proposal precisely on that. The information has been published since 1984, so my hon. Friend should understand the minutage required for renewal. As laid down in the Firearms Act 1968, the renewal is required to be on exactly the same terms as the grant under the 1968 Act. The grant and renewal have been costed on the basis of a standardised procedure, which is what the British Shooting Sports Council would wish. The time arrived at is 145 minutes. *[Interruption.]* My hon. Friends are now pulsating with excitement, because they cannot believe that the working party could come up with that figure.

Mr. Wiggin: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Shaw: Of course, but for the last time.

Mr. Wiggin: The other day I had my firearms certificate renewed. The very worthy constable, who is a good friend of mine and a helpful fellow, was forced to write out a lot of information in longhand, and in a most appallingly out of date and bureaucratic manner. The most modest computer, costing only a few hundred pounds, could do it.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: It did not take 145 minutes, anyway.

Mr. Wiggin: It did not take five minutes. It is ridiculous, and bureaucratic nonsense, that that should cost £33.

Mr. Shaw: I would be more prepared to bear in mind my hon. Friend's splendidly delivered strictures if, in 1984, when the working party report was published and circulated to the shooters, he had expressed an opinion about it. For some extraordinary reason, he did not. After two years, we have come to put the working party's recommendations into fee form, and now he has spoken.

I know that my hon. Friends are concerned about this, and my hon. Friend the Member for Weston-super-Mare (Mr. Wiggin) has made that clear. The Firearms Act 1968 requires a chief officer to be satisfied that the applicant for renewal has a good reason for having the firearm, and can be permitted to have it in his possession without danger to the public safety. Those are the inquiries on which the minutage is spent.

In dealing with firearms, we are dealing, as we all know, with the senior category of weapons of greater lethal propensity than others. It does not seem outrageous that, after a three-year interval, a renewal should be conducted on the basis of ensuring that there are no changes in the arrangements that were made three years previously, in the conditions under which the firearm should be used, in the land over which it should be used, in the total number of firearms and their individual numbering. The police should also find out whether there are any additions to or subtractions from the requirements of the certificate holder. All that would take a police officer some time.

The fee increases that are being debated are the first for six years. My hon. Friend the Member for Weston-super-Mare has to recognise that costs have risen over that time. My hon. Friend may agree that the costs of police time have risen, and that this factor should be taken into account. Costs have to be reflected in the fees that we set. A firearm and shotgun certificate is issued for three years, and the increases for the issue and renewal of a firearm certificate before us amount to approximately £3 and £4 per annum. The shotgun fees are to remain the same. I cannot accept that the net effect of this package will be to price the shooter out of his chosen sport, but I believe that we shall begin to see a full recovery of the costs involved in issuing the certificate. This is all that we are seeking to do.

My hon. Friends have rightly drawn attention to the fact that the biggest single increase is the 65 per cent., so elegantly pointed out by my hon. Friend the Member for Weston-super-Mare, for the renewal of category 1 firearm. That is based on the assessment made by the working party of the minutage involved, at the lowest cost of police officer to ensure that it is as fair as possible. I am prepared, and I have told the British Shooting Sports Council so to invite it to join us in a working party during the process of the fees being enacted. It will be up to the working party to re-examine the work sheets that we are providing as the basis for the renewal fee of the category 1 firearm. If it can find that the average timetable in the 43 police forces in England and Wales, whose good offices have been used to arrive at this proposal

Sir Hector Monro: And Scotland

Mr. Shaw: And Scotland, as my hon. Friend rightly reminds me. If the working party can show that the 145 minutage is an excess, we shall have to consider that in the renewal of the fees order, which will doubtless be before the House in three years' time.

Tonight, we have to consider fees that have not been altered for six years, and the totals show that the recovery of costs is the sole basis on which we seek to judge them. The working party reported two years ago, recommending that the cost be related to the minutage involved, and that is a not unsensible basis on which to proceed. I trust that it might at least assume proportion in the minds of hon. Members as a significant step forward from the several haphazard bases from which previous fees were calculated, and which resulted in such substantial opposition from the shooting lobby. I have seen the BSSC recently, and I know that it is concerned about the renewal of the firearms licence.

Mr. Nicholas Lyell (Mid-Bedfordshire): I welcome the offer of a working party, but will my hon. Friend simply add one point? It is that the working party will have the benefit of the supervision of my hon. Friend's jaundiced good sense, not only as to the length of time that it takes to fill in the many forms, but also as to some common-sense in the questions that are asked and the procedures that are gone through to satisfy the proper authorities that the right person has the right type of weapon in the right conditions. It seems to some of us that proceedings are often prolonged in the courts.

Mr. Shaw: My hon. and learned Friend the Member for Mid-Bedfordshire (Mr. Lyell) will recall that the basis of the fees is set in the Firearms Act 1968. In following the procedures for the granting and renewal of category 1 firearms, we have to follow the correct procedure. That is the statutory position and it is not possible to vary it without primary legislation.

I hope that what I have said will allow the prayer to be defeated.

11 pm

Mr. Stephen Ross (Isle of Wight): The Minister is a very nice man, but he spoke from a rotten brief. He did much better many years ago when he abolished the Swansea licensing centre. I wish that he would deal with this matter in a similar manner.

I am not a sportsman and I do not have a shotgun, but I have a great interest in small-bore rifle clubs. They have suffered badly under such orders ever since I came to the House. My hon. Friend the Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) and I helped to defeat the Government in 1979. We are stuck with an increase of £33 and a renewal fee of £33. This affects not people on high wages but those who may have taken a cut in salary in the last few years.

I have visited the Shanklin small-bore rifle club and my hon. Friend the Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed has had representations from the Northumberland rifle club. We are talking about a legitimate sport. It is a keenly fought sport. I have travelled with club members. Why should we penalise it? Why can we not renew a licence for six years, as I proposed during the review? Why can we not give a club an overall licence? Why cannot people with shotguns pay for one licence and renew it at the same time? That would cut out some of the ridiculous costs.

We have heard statistics about the cost to the Metropolitan police of renewing licences, compared with the cost for the Isle of Wight and Wiltshire. There are vast variations, so the Minister will have to do much better to convince us that police time costs so much.

I ask the Minister to think again. It may be six years since the matter was reviewed. Inflation has increased, despite this Government's record, which we have to admit is quite good, but I ask the Minister to think about the people who enjoy the sport and to do something to help them, instead of crippling them all the time. The number of licences issued has gone down by about 50,000 since 1968, so it is obvious that people have had to give up the sport because they cannot afford it. Can we please look after small-bore rifle club members better than we have done in the past 12 years?

11.4 pm

Sir John Farr (Harborough): I welcome with moderation what my hon. Friend the Minister of State has said. I shall be brief as time is short and a number of hon. Members wish to contribute to the debate.

I welcome the system that has been introduced because it will eliminate variations in charges. We have opposed increases in the past because of the wide variations and fluctuations in charges by different forces. Before the new system was established, it cost three or four times as much to be issued with a firearm certificate in London as it did in Wales or on the Isle of Wight. That was manifestly unfair. I think that the House should welcome what my hon. Friend has done through the working party. We have a detailed costing system which is fair to everybody and has resulted in a standstill in shotgun certificate fees. Indeed, there has been a reduction in charges in the light of the proposals of a previous Home Secretary in 1982, which, in his wisdom, he withdrew.

The strange increase in the cost of renewal of a firearm certificate stands out like a sore thumb. I can understand the issue of a certificate being quite a lengthy and expensive procedure, but once it is known that the man who has the certificate will not flit overnight and has been at the same address for 20 or 30 years, there is no reason why the cost of renewal should be the same, as is proposed in the order, as the cost of issuing it. I hope that my hon. Friend will put in hand straightaway his suggestion to take up this matter with the British Shooting Sports Council and shooting people so that it can be ironed out.

As has been said by some of my hon. Friends, it is to be hoped that some form of modernisation, including computerisation, can be introduced to the system. Can we look forward to a day not too far distant when firearm fees

[Sir John Farr]

will be at a standstill, or will be reduced? That is what we are looking for as regards rates, and we are in a period when the cost of living is almost stable. The Home Office is out of step when it churns out massive increases in firearm certificate fees year after year.

I reject the suggestion of the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) that there is a link between armed crime and legitimate firearm owners. Expert statistical research has shown that there is no such link, and police officers will confirm that.

Mr. Soley *rose*

Sir John Farr: I shall not give way to the hon. Gentleman. He has spoken for too long already. When he reads the *Hansard* report of his speech, I think he will regret many of the things that he said.

I ask my hon. Friend the Minister of State to bear in mind the good suggestion made by a previous Home Secretary, that a six-year certificate should be introduced for shotguns and firearms. Would that not be a way forward? Would not that lead to a large saving in administrative costs and a considerable reduction of the burden which shooting people have to face? I ask my hon. Friend with great sincerity to consider that suggestion carefully. I have the detailed proposals in my possession somewhere and I shall gladly send them to him to refresh his memory. His predecessor was convinced that his suggestion was a sensible and economic step which should be taken in the interests of the country.

11.8 pm

Mr. Ron Davies (Caerphilly): Like the hon. Member for Harborough (Sir J. Farr), I shall be brief. I must, however, take up his reference to my hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) and his assertion that he claimed that there was a link between armed crime and legitimate firearm holders. That was not my hon. Friend's argument. It was the Minister who, when questioned by my hon. Friend, said that there was increasing public anxiety about the illegal use of firearms. When the Minister replies, I invite him to confirm that that was the position.

Mr. Beith: Does the hon. Gentleman recall that the Minister went further than that? He said that to put into effect the recommended reduction in the shotgun licence fee would be to give a signal that it was easier to obtain shotguns—a contention which I refute.

Mr. Davies: That was precisely the point that my hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith took up. My hon. Friend wanted to know whether that was the Minister's contention.

I have received representations from some of my constituents who are organised in a small shooting club at Senghennydd. It is a good club which has several hundred members, many of whom are on low incomes or unemployed. My constituents have two grievances. First, they believe that there has been inadequate time for representations to be made on the order.

The Minister said that it has been six years since the matter was last debated. It was last debated in the House in 1980. The working party has been sitting for four years, and its report was published in 1984. It seems strange that suddenly the Home Office has to lay the order before the House and push it through at this late hour without public debate. It may well be that the Minister is receiving advice from his hon. Friend, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, the hon. Member for Argyll and Bute (Mr. MacKay). I must tell the Minister about the reaction of people who will be directly affected by the proposals.

The order imposes a 65 per cent. increase in the renewal fee. There is no getting away from the fact that that will place a major burden on those low income earners who regard shooting as their prime sport. If the Minister wishes to use the licensing system to control the spread of firearms, and so on, he must accept that the proposed fee increase will adversely discriminate against low income earners and will do nothing to prevent the illegal use of firearms.

The Minister was challenged on the question of shotguns. He said that he did not want to give a signal that there should be wider ownership of shotguns, presumably because of public fear about the increasing use of shotguns in crime.

I understand, from discussions I have had today with Home Office officials that anyone who holds a foreign passport will be exempt from all the provisions. A person can come to this country, go to a dealer or a sports shop, show his passport, and say, "I will not be a resident of this country for more than 30 days", and he will be exempt from the provisions. He does not have to go to a police station to register. He does not have to get authorisation to buy ammunition. As long as he produces his passport and gives an undertaking that he will leave the country within 30 days, he will be exempt from the provisions.

How can the Minister justify his earlier comment that he does not want to give a signal about the wider ownership of shotguns when citizens of the Irish Republic, North America, and so on, can come to this country——

Mr. Beith: And Libya.

Mr. Davies: And from Libya—and have unfettered access to shotguns?

Will the Minister confirm that there is an inadequate method of control over shotguns which are imported by British citizens who can go to Spain, Switzerland, and so on, and buy weapons quite freely on the open market? When they return to this country—perhaps at Heathrow airport — and declare that they have a shotgun certificate, they are not required to produce any further evidence to Customs about the weapons they have brought in. They are not required to provide the serial numbers of weapons to Customs or to the police.

When there are such major, glaring loopholes, the Minister may understand why genuine holders of certificates and genuine users of shotguns and firearms in my constituency, who comply with the provisions of the Act, feel aggrieved when they face a 65 per cent. increase in fees just so they can continue to enjoy their proper, legitimate and controlled sport. I hope that the Minister will address himself to those major questions.

I find it difficult to accept the Minister's argument that the fees are calculated on the basis of costing police time. That does not apply in other areas of crime prevention. When the police go out and give advice on home security or road safety, we do not expect them to charge for doing so. The Minister is trying to draw a smokescreen over the

issue. I think that he wants to control the use of shotguns and the spread of firearms by a financial method. I hope that he will come clean, when he stands at the Dispatch Box, and say that is the case. He loses credibility when he tries to construct an argument on the basis that the police have carefully costed how much time is involved in the issuing of certificates or renewals.

The following example demonstrates that point. The South Wales police force takes, on average, three days to deal with an application for a variation. There have been no complaints about that police force or about the legitimate shooters who must deal with that police force. I have it on good authority that one applicant, in the county of Gwent, had 14 visits from the police when they were processing his application for a variation to his firearms certificate. When there is such a discrepancy between two neighbouring police forces, how can the Minister expect us to accept that there has been a careful, objective analysis to produce the median figure of 145 minutes as the time required to process applications? That is not on. All the evidence suggests that such a period is not needed. I ask the hon. Gentleman to reconsider.

I welcome the Minister's move to consult more widely the representatives of legitimate sporting interests. I ask him to give careful consideration to the suggestion of my hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith, because, if he is prepared to accept it, he will go a long way towards resolving this problem.

11.15 pm

Sir Hector Monro (Dumfries): My hon. Friend the Minister made his usual kindly speech, but I am afraid that it was throroughly unsatisfactory in relation to the renewal of firearms certificates. I speak from both sides of the sport. I am interested in country sports and am involved in the Clay Pigeon Shooting Association and the National Rifle Association. I accept that the variations are reasonable, except the incredible increase from £20 to £33 for the renewal of a firearms certificate. It is remarkable that the fee has increased by 65 per cent. when the Government have taken credit for bringing inflation down to 3 per cent. The increase is a knock on the head to those interested in enjoying a legitimate country sport.

The increased fee to renew a certificate is the same as the cost of the initial application for a certificate, which has increased by "only" 32 per cent., from £25 to £33. That is a large increase for a sport which should be encouraged at a time when we are doing all that we can to step up interest in sport and recreation.

I ask my hon. Friend the Minister to bear in mind that, in 1968, the fee for the initial application for a firearms certificate was five shillings and renewal cost half a crown — the initial application cost about 50 per cent. of the renewal cost. That was not at all like the increase now recommended.

I cannot understand why the nation is not prepared to bear a share of that cost. As the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) said, there are many other police activities, the costs of which will be not be recoverable from those who benefit from their intervention.

My hon. Friend the Minister has made much of the interpretation of the Firearms Act 1968. It has exactly the same wording as the Firearms Act 1937. How could the police manage for 49 years on the interpretation of the 1937 Act before they suddenly had to look at the procedure for renewing firearms certificates? What made the police change their minds about the interpretation of the 1937 and 1968 Acts?

We have referred to the fear of weapons falling into the wrong hands. The whole shooting world shoulders particular responsibility for weapons. After all, the owner of a valuable weapon is not going to have it stolen if he can possibly avoid it. I assure my hon. Friend the Minister that security is a high priority for all those who own shotguns or rifles, because they love them almost as much as their wives. Do not think that owners will throw their shotguns or rifles about in the street and let them be picked up or stolen by undesirable characters.

We have a duty to probe my hon. Friend the Minister on why the police believe they must have 145 minutes to renew a certificate. As my hon. Friend may know, I am the chairman of the police committee and therefore on the side of the police. I find it impossible to understand how the average time works out at 145 minutes, as announced by my hon. Friend. Why is it necessary to have a completely new certificate every time it is renewed? Why can we not just have a space at the bottom of the form to renew it for another three years? That would save about 20 minutes typing. Why do the police not use the telephone to ring up rifle club secretaries to ask whether Mr. X is a member? Why can the police not ring up the applicant and ask whether he is at home before they go on a fruitless visit? There are many ways in which we could reduce that 145 minutes at least by half, by administrative efficiency in working out the procedure.

I think that the Minister is quite wrong in saying that it will take three years to find out whether the 145 minutes is right. Any efficient police force could halve the time if it made the effort and had the wish to do so. I have some doubt as to whether the Minister and the police understand that we would like firearms certificates issued less expensively than under the present procedure.

There are other issues outside the order, such as the territorial interest the police show as to where one may use a weapon. If one is stalking roe deer or red deer one cannot say one is going to shoot until one is given an invitation to do so. Therefore, it is difficult to say in advance.

Since 1980, retail prices have increased by 46 per cent. The firearms certificate renewal has now gone up 65 per cent. Can my hon. Friend give us an assurance, not that he is setting up a committee, but that he will look at the increase in the renewal fee for firearms certificates again and come back to the House with a further variation order on that one issue? Tonight we should be encouraging shooting as an admirable pastime, but the Minister is doing something to make it totally restrictive. I hope that he will look at it again, and say so, if he wants our support.

11.22 pm

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith (Wealden): I warmly concur with the sentiments expressed by my hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro). Shooting is a worthy sport and one that has been horribly penalised by the order. I especially urge my hon. Friend the Minister to consider coming back to the House with a new order in respect of renewals.

It is an expensive sport, but it is worthwhile. In the last Olympic games our four shooters won four medals. No other group achieved 100 per cent. success. I have had representations from people who are hopping mad. Three rifle clubs in my constituency have written not with

[Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith]

bitterness, although they are very angry, but with constructive proposals, some of which have been mentioned tonight. I have heard from the Uckfield rifle club. The Felbridge rifle club, of which I am president, has been joined by an ancient and distinguished club in my constituency, the Uckfield (1944) Home Guard rifle club. We could not have more worthy citizens than those who belong to those clubs.

The facilities they use, particularly the Felbridge range in East Grinstead, are privately owned. They pay their own rates and are not a drain in any way on the finances and facilities of the local authorities. It seems to them that these proposals are penalising the legitimate owner. It is little wonder that one letter said that they felt this was a ploy to get rid of the private owner and that the police were behind it. These are honourable, law-abiding citizens who do not wish to be anti-police but they simply do not understand, any more than any of us, do, why it takes so darn long to process renewals. After all, one can get a vehicle registration replacement document for £2, so why is there this huge cost?

Therefore, I add my plea in the strongest terms I can command that the validity of the firearms certificates should be extended, police procedures should be streamlined and we should remember, above all, that this is a sport in which we can excel, in which we want to excel and which we want to encourage our young people to enjoy.

11.24 pm

Mr. Peter Griffiths (Portsmouth, North): I fear that the comments made by my hon. Friend the Minister of State will fail to convince or satisfy people in my constituency who take their shooting seriously, and take their lobbying of their Member of Parliament on those occasions equally so.

My constituents will not be so concerned as to whether the fees that have been announced reflect a just cost for a particular procedure; they will be concerned that so cumbersome and expensive a procedure is followed, which leads to such high fees. I draw to the attention of my hon. Friend the Minister the experience of New Zealand, where it is possible to administer a satisfactory system without so cumbersome a process and so large a cost.

I have attempted to say to my constituents that I would be willing to support increases in fees that represented the true cost of the processing of the applications, but it will be extremely difficult for me to explain to them how it can cost the same amount to renew or repeat an application as to make the original application, which requires a great deal more inquiry. It is not possible for me to say to my constituents that those two fees represent the costs. It does not make sense.

Therefore, I do not feel that the Minister can take credit tonight for having introduced an order that we can support. If there were a Division, some of us would be tempted to support the Opposition prayer.

11.26 pm

Mr. Douglas Hogg (Grantham): This debate once again illustrates the unsatisfactory nature of the procedure that we are adopting. One thing is wholly plain — that we have either to accept or reject the order. We cannot amend it, yet the House feels that an increase of 65 per cent. in respect of renewal is unreasonable. It is a great misfortune that we cannot strike out that provision and accept the rest. We are not able to do so, and that is a misfortune.

I welcome one part of my hon. Friend the Minister's speech: his assurance that what he is about is recovering costs, not seeking to control the possession of firearms and shotguns through the fees system. But that raises the further question, of whether he should be charging fees at all; and, if he is, on what basis. I do not object to his charging fees, but I object to his attempting to do so on a cost basis, because, as has been said by other hon. Members, there are many services that the police provide in the public interest and it is rare that the user is obliged to pay the full commercial cost. I challenge the basis of that. In any event, I also challenge the calculation because it is passing strange to think that one has to take up 145 minutes of a chief inspector's time. I assume that it is a chief inspector, because of the high fee charged.

One matter that I am pleased about is that the Minister of State has — *[Interruption.]* I know that he is looking at the clock. He will have to wait a bit. One thing that I am pleased about is that my hon. Friend has not increased the fee for the shotgun certificate. That is a good thing for the people of Lincolnshire, who are already fed up with a variety of things — for example, the proposal to site low-level nuclear waste —

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman should speak to the order before the House.

Mr. Hogg: I was merely pointing out that the people of Lincolnshire have quite a lot that they are fed up about. They would be even more fed up if there were an increase in shotgun certificate fees. I welcome that part of my hon. Friend's statement.

11.27 pm

Sir Eldon Griffiths (Bury St. Edmunds): I wish to speak for only 30 seconds, and I am obliged to my hon. Friend the Minister for allowing me to do so.

I shoot. I am president of various shooting clubs, and represent probably as many shooters in my constituency as anybody else in the House. I also represent the police. They want to prevent people from having such easy access to shotguns. However, they do not think that pricing them out is the right way to do it. I do not believe that it needs to take so long for police officers to carry out inquiries for renewing the shotgun licence. I hope my hon. Friend will say that, when he sets up his committee, he will allow some policemen to work with the shooting fraternity to see whether we can reduce the number of hours required for renewal.

11.28 pm

Mr. Giles Shaw *rose* —

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Does the Minister have the leave of the House to speak again?

Hon. Members: Aye.

Mr. Shaw: My hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) should not forget that policemen were on the initial working party.

With regard to what my hon. Friends seek, I cannot agree to amend the order because it is impossible under our procedure. I cannot agree to withdraw the order. We are looking at the order in total. It represents a package in which there are many reductions, including a 68 per

cent. reduction in the fee for replacement of firearms as well as the significant increase about which my hon. Friends are most concerned.

I have offered to examine that point with the shooting fraternity and with the police in a way which should prove that the 145 minutes set out in the 1984 working party report is a sensible measure. If it is not sensible, we will agree to bring forward, at the appropriate time, reductions in the firearms renewal fee.

I must tell my hon. Friends that, bearing in mind the last review of fees and the composite nature of the order before the House today, it represents a reasonable attempt to standardise these procedures. I trust that the House will support it.

Question put and negatived.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 79(5) on Statutory Instruments, &c.

HORTICULTURE

That the draft Horticultural Development Council Order 1986, which was laid before this House on 3rd June, be approved—*[Mr. Durant.]*

Question agreed to.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE (ESTIMATES)

Ordered,

That the first day allotted this Session under Standing Order No. 19 (Consideration of estimates) be deemed to have been a half day as provided by that Standing Order.—*[Mr. Durant.]*

Copyright

Motion made, and Question proposed That this House do now adjourn—*[Mr. Tony Durant.]*

11.30 pm

Mr. Alan Howarth (Stratford-on-Avon): In addressing the question of ownership of copyright in commissioned works of art, I would like to refer briefly to that great historical figure. William Hogarth's success during his lifetime was such that pirates paid him the compliment of copying his work for money. Indeed, so popular were his engravings that even pirated editions were themselves re-pirated. Hogarth, of course, did not receive a penny for this exploitation of his works.

Hogarth was a man of business acumen as well as an artist. He therefore set about devising a rule which would protect his work and that of fellow artists. He argued that the artists or producer — the person we now refer to as the author — should be allowed to control the reproduction of that work.

In 1735, Parliament enacted a law of copyright known as Hogarth's Act, under which no one was allowed to make copies of a work without the artist's consent. The modern expression of that principle is enshrined in the Copyright Act 1956. Section 4 of that Act, establishes the basic rule with regard to the legal ownership of the copyright in literary, dramatic, musical and artistic works. The rule is that the author of a work shall be entitled to any copyrights subsisting in the work.

Before I consider the special difficulty for visual artists thrown up by an exception in this Act to the general rule, I would like to consider further our international obligations. The United Kingdom is a member of the union established to protect the rights of authors under the Berne copyright convention. Article 9 of the convention expressly states that authors of literary and artistic works protected by the convention shall enjoy the exclusive right of authorising the reproduction of these works.

It is laid down in article 2 of the convention that the protection of literary and artistic works shall operate for the benefit of the author and his successors in title. By "author," is meant the person by whom the work has been produced, a construction which the English courts have adopted for copyright purposes.

The Government have made it plain in the recent White Paper on copyright entitled "Intellectual Property and Innovation" that they intend to ratify the Paris text of the Berne convention. Indeed, it is plain from the welcome inclusion in the White Paper of new moral rights for authors that the Government are fully conscious of their international obligations under the Berne convention. No doubt my hon. Friend the Minister recognises that the provisions of the convention are supposed to be enforceable in the countries of the union at the suit of the author or his successors in title. In the United Kingdom, the law of copyright is the vehicle through which the requirements of the Berne convention are carried in to effect.

It follows that anything in our domestic law of copyright which tends towards the involuntary transfer of rights by an author ought to be examined most carefully to ensure that authors are not denied the benefit of the protection contemplated by the Berne convention.

The White Paper has been warmly welcomed as offering much needed simplification in the law relating to

[Mr. Alan Howarth]

industrial patents and designs. It has also been admired for its modernising spirit embracing the new technologies of intellectual property including computer software. It is all the more surprising, therefore, that the White Paper should propose to leave unammended the provision in the Copyright Act 1956 which has the effect of automatically removing from artists the copyright in their work. It is not only a repudiation of the spirit of William Hogarth—it is perhaps fortunate for my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, who is to reply to the debate, that William Hogarth is not in position to retaliate with one of his devastating caricatures—but it is wholly contrary to the requirements of the Berne convention.

The provision in question is section 4(3) of the Copyright Act. Although the Act embodies the general rule that the author of a work is the first owner of copyright, there is in a section 4(3) an exception to the rule, which provides that when a person commissions a photograph, a painted or drawn portrait or an engraving, the commissioner and not the artist is entitled to the copyright in the work. In a nutshell, the provision means that the artist has to bargain to get back what should belong to him as of right. That is invidious and insupportable, and in the forthcoming legislation we shall have the opportunity to remedy it.

Not only are the anomalies contrary to our international obligations under the Berne convention, but, for practical purposes, connected with the economic activity of Britain's artists, they are eccentric and are inconsistent to a degree that has mystified artists for many years. It is indeed timely that, before the Bill that will follow the White Paper is introduced in Parliament, the Arts Council, backed by the Royal Academy, has made a most vigorous and detailed case on the matter to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. I hope that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary will be able to tell the House that he has pondered the Arts Council's case—I am sure that he has done so—that he acknowledges the expert legal and artistic opinion that has been placed before him and that he will endorse the striking out of section 4(3). In so doing, he would add not a jot to public expenditure but would ensure conformity with European law and adherence to the requirements of the Berne convention. He would also give a signal to the arts world that, in attending to pressing matters involving industrial copyright, the Government have not overlooked the economic interests of our native artists, who are much admired throughout the world.

It is a mystery why photographs, portraits that are drawn or painted, and engravings, which include etchings, lithographs, woodcuts and other printing processes, were singled out for exceptional treatment earlier in the century. Certainly the list appears arbitrary to modern eyes. Why, for example, are sculpted portraits not included?

It is reasonable to ask what motive there might have been for the statutory exception. It is said that the justification for section 4(3) was a perceived need to preserve the privacy of family archives and personal mementos, but it does not follow that the right way of remedying the supposed deficiencies in the law is to deny copyright protection in the United Kingdom to authors of commissioned photographs, portraits and engravings whose patrons have not specifically agreed that they should have it.

The abolition of section 4(3) would not prevent those whose privacy was flouted from seeking a remedy in actions for breach of trust or confidence. It would be better still if we had a generalised law of privacy in the United Kingdom. Moreover, the protection of privacy is hardly a consistent theme of the subsection. All photographs are included inthe list of commissioned works, whether or not they are of a private and personal nature. That results in the odd circumstance that, if a person commissions both a photographer anda painter to produce pictures of his house, he will automatically own the copyright in the photograph, butnot in the picture on canvas. But if the pictures commissioned were portraits of his mother-in-law, he would automatically own the copyright in both works.

The net effect of the subsection is to muddy waters which should be as clear as the general rule is already—the artist is deemed to own the copyright unless he decides to assign it voluntarily to someone else. It will not do to say that the artist who is commissioned to take a photograph or make a portrait should be required to insist on the express assignment in writing of the copyright every time. It should, rather, be the other way round, as is the case with landscapes and all other classes of commissioned literary and artistic works that are not covered by the subsection.

As Mr. Justice Whitford observed in his report on copyright in 1977:

"the commissioner can protect his position by express agreement."

In other words, the ownership of copyright can be part of the bargain struck between the commissioner and the artist, but where no contract exists the presumption should be, as elsewhere—namely, that ownership of copyright vests in the artist. The House will recognise the justice of that when it considers how weak, generally speaking, is the bargaining power of artists compared with that of their patrons.

The anomalies of this subsection of the current law work directly against the interests of artists in this country. The subsection applies, regardless of whether the commissioning party intends to keep the commissioned work confidential, or to exhibit it publicly, or to exploit it commercially. The subsection often results in the curious situation in which the commisioner owns the copyright in a photograph or an engraving and the artist owns the means by which to exploit it—in other words, the photographic negative or the engraved plate.

The subsection applies, regardless of whether the commissioner is the person whose privacy it may be disirable to protect. The subsection is arbitrary in not applying to other forms of commissioned works, which by their nature may be no less deserving of protection under a proper regime of privacy. I have mentioned sculpted portraits. Why not confidential art work or illustrations that are not portraits? In these cases, the artist is deemed to own the copyright, yet we hear of no grave difficulties for commissioners.

This subsection applies, even though the authors of these types of commissioned works have not voluntarily transferred, or may not have wished, or intended, to transfer their copyright in the United Kingdom to the commissioner. So we have the principle, inconsistently

established, of a copyright not enforceable at the suit of the author of the protected work, or anyone who is fairly entitled to be called his successor in title. The Arts Council has argued most strongly — and I believe fairly and reasonably — that such a situation is properly to be regarded as incompatible with the main objects of the Berne convention.

In chapter 16.3 the White Paper says:

"Variations from the simple, fundamental principle that the author owns copyright are justified only where convenience and natural justice clearly point in this direction."

It is very curious, therefore, that the White Paper proposes that the exception that I have been discussing should be retained. I hope that I have been able to persuade my hon. Friend the Minister that it creates considerable confusion and inconvenience, that it carries with it no significant practical benefit and that it embodies a palpable injustice. There is a wealth of reasons for the abolition of this subsection, and I hope that my hon. Friend will be able to tell us that it is no longer the Government's intention to re-enact it, or at least that he will look at it again very carefully.

So pleased was Hogarth with the introduction of the Copyright Act 1735 that he offered thanks to King and Parliament with a special engraving, in which the rays of royal favour emanating from the crown are shown falling upon mitres and coronets and upon Mr. Speaker's hat. The adoption of the reform that I have proposed would result in a gratitude, possibly less spectacular but no less warm.

11.43 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (Mr. John Butcher): I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Mr. Howarth) for demonstrating that on this side of the House there is no shortage of affection for the artistic community in the United Kingdom and its products. I think that we are doubly blessed in this debate. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry was, in a past incarnation, Minister with responsibility for the arts. The discussions that may take place after the raising of this issue will benefit from the close relationship between Sir William Rees-Mogg and my right hon. Friend.

The White Paper "Intellectual Property and Innovation" puts forward a number of proposals on the protection of various types of work under copyright law. As stated in this White Paper, the Government's broad aims are to ensure continued protection for those who create copyright works, while at the same time recognising that the public has a substantial interest in the availability of these works. I am pleased to say that the Government's proposals for copyright reform have, in general, been welcomed by both copyright owners and users.

We are dealing with those proposals which affect artists' copyright and I shall deal first with the changes that we propose to make. The most important change affects the so-called moral rights of artists, that is, those rights concerned with the reputation of the artist. Under our proposal, artists will be entitled to claim authorship in their works and also to object to any distortion of their works. This introduction of moral rights has been warmly welcomed by the artistic community and the Arts Council.

A further proposal will help artists who design sets of typeface characters for typewriters, computer printers, printing presses and so on. At present, although individual typeface characters may attract protection, no protection for sets of such characters is available. The Government will give the creators of original sets of type faces the right to control reproduction, importation and commercial distribution of copies. I know that my hon. Friend spoke about this proposal only obliquely, but I am sure that he will agree that this debate is the proper setting in which to clarify that small point about a specific constituency of the artistic community.

Those are the particular changes the Government are proposing. But what, of course, concerns my hon. Friend the Member for Stratford-on-Avon is a change that is not proposed. This is the matter of who should own the copyright in commissioned works. Under the current generality of copyright law, it is the artist who is normally entitled to any copyright subsisting in his work. This is spelt out in section 4(1) of the Copyright Act 1956. There are, however, three exceptions to this general rule. Two of these exceptions, in sections 4(2) and 4(4) of the 1956 Act, are about the ownership of works made by artists in the course of their employment.

Generally, it is the employer who owns the copyright in the absence of any agreement to the contrary. The third exception about which my hon. Friend has spoken generally, concerns certain works made in pursuance of a commission. The relevant provision is in Section 4(3) of the 1956 Act. This provides that where a person commissions a painted or drawn portrait, an engraving or a photograph, then that person and not the artist or photographer is entitled to the copyright in the work, unless there is an agreement to the contrary. These exceptions to the general rule of ownership were not new to the 1956 Act but were carried over from the previous Copyright Act of 1911.

The question of commissioned works was considered by the committee chaired by the Honourable Mr. Justice Whitford in its report on Copyright and Designs Law published in 1977. The committee, although not unanimous in the matter, recommended that copyright in all commissioned works should belong to the author in the absence of any agreement to the contrary. To protect the interests of the person who commissioned the work, the committee recommended:

"that the person should have an exclusive licence for all purposes which could reasonably be said to have been within the contemplation of the parties at the time the work was commissioned."

In addition, the committee said that he should have the power to restrain exploitation of the work for any purpose to which he could reasonably object. These proposals were subject to much comment, but the clear consensus of opinion was that considerable practical difficulties would arise in determining what was within the contemplation of the parties at the relevant time.

In response to this criticism, the Government put forward an alternative proposal for public discussion in the 1981 Green Paper "Reform of the law relating to Copyright, Designs and Performers' Protection." This proposal had two aspects. First, the existing exception — giving the copyright to the commissioner — should be retained for painted and drawn portraits, engravings and photographs. For other commissioned works, the copyright should also belong to the person who commissioned the work and not the author. If, however, the commission was for a specific purpose, then the author

[Mr. John Butcher]

should have the right to prevent any use of the work for any other purpose. As explained in the White Paper, in the light of the comments received on this alternative proposal, the Government concluded that it was unnecessary and undesirable to amend either the basic ownership provision or the existing specific exemptions.

My hon. Friend the Member for Stratford-on-Avon objects to vesting copyright in anyone other than the artist. This objection is based on the view that it is an unwarranted departure from the basic rule of ownership of copyright. In written answers to questions by my hon. Friend on 16 June and to my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) on 18 June, my hon. Friend the Minister for Information Technology referred to representations received from the Arts Council and the Royal Academy of Arts, and he undertook to look at the matter again in the light of those representations. As part of this exercise, I expect a meeting between my officials and representatives of the Arts Council and the Royal Academy to be arranged in the near future. Such a meeting has already been suggested by the chairman of the Arts Council. I also have a copy of our right hon. Friend's reply to Sir William Rees Mogg in which he rightly agrees to this exchange of views between officials.

I should however, like to make it clear that, in reconsidering this matter, we shall have to take into account the interests of those people who commission works as well as the interests of the artists who are represented by the Arts Council. The reason behind section 4(3) of the 1956 Act is that the artist or photographer ought not to be able to put the portrait, photograph or engraving to uses to which the commissioner may disapprove. This consideration would seem to apply as much today as it did when the provision was enacted in 1956 and 1911. It has to be borne in mind that while a professional artist or photographer might be expected to be aware of his rights under copyright law, it would not be reasonable to expect a person who commissions a protrait or photograph to have a detailed knowledge of the relevant statute. This suggests that the presumption, in the absence of an express agreement, would be in favour of the commissioner, not the artist. We would also need to be satisfied that the privacy of a person who commissions a portrait or photograph is not unreasonably prejudiced as a result of a change in the law. Furthermore, it should be remembered that it is always open to an artist who wishes to own copyright in a portrait which he is commissioned to paint or draw to provide for this in an agreement with the person commissioning the portrait — then the commissioner would know exactly where he stands.

On a more legalistic note, it has been suggested that the provision on ownership of commissioned works is out of step with the copyright law of most European countries and incompatible with the United Kingdom's obligations under article 2(6) of the Berne convention for the protection of literary and artistic works. On the first point, it has to be borne in mind that there are considerable differences between the copyright laws of European countries. The absence of an equivalent provision elsewhere should not stop us from doing what we decide is right for the United Kingdom. Such comparisons can also be misleading, since it may be necessary to take account of any laws relating to personal privacy or breach of trust and confidence, not just copyright law. On the second point, the Government's legal advice is that it is not correct to construe the Berne convention as overriding national legislation about ownership of property. The purpose of article 2(6) is to ensure that the protection provided for in the convention is enjoyed by authors where national legislation makes no relevant provision. If, therefore, a state chooses to legislate — as we do — to the effect that copyright should initially vest in one person rather than another, that does not constitute a breach of the convention.

As a result of the representations of my hon. Friend and others, we will re-examine the existing provision on the ownership of copyright in commissioned works. We will of course have to take fully into account the wishes of professional artists and the interests of those who commission works and who cannot be expected to have a detailed knowledge of their rights — or lack of rights — under copyright law.

With that undertaking, and with that recording of the agreement between the Secretary of State and the Arts Council to talk about the matter in some detail, I hope that my hon. Friend will be satisfied. He will be more than aware that, in this issue, the arguments are finely balanced.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at six minutes to Twelve o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 26 June 1986

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

FELIXSTOWE DOCK AND RAILWAY BILL

Order for consideration, as amended, read.
To be considered upon Thursday 3 July.

TEIGNMOUTH QUAY COMPANY BILL *(By Order)*

SOUTH YORKSHIRE LIGHT RAIL TRANSIT BILL *(By Order)*

BEXLEY LONDON BOROUGH COUNCIL BILL *(By Order)*

SHOREHAM PORT AUTHORITY BILL *(By Order)*

Orders for Second reading read.
To be read a Second time upon Thursday 3 July.

BLYTH HARBOUR BILL *[Lords]* *(By Order)*

Order for Second reading read.
To be read a Second time upon Tuesday 1 July.

Oral Answers to Questions

HOME DEPARTMENT

Crime Statistics

1. **Mr. Frank Cook** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish in the *Official Report* a statement of the clear-up rate for all crimes in each police force district in England and Wales in 1978 and in 1985.

3. **Mr. Pike** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish in the *Official Report* a statement of the number of crimes cleared up per police officer in each police force area in England and Wales in 1985.

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Douglas Hurd): Yes, Sir, but these figures do not take account of other important aspects of police work, such as crime prevention and public order, so they are of limited value as a measure of police effectiveness.

Mr. Cook: I am grateful to the Home Secretary for his commitment to publish these figures. Nevertheless, will he concede that last year's clear-up figures show an appalling total of 2·3 million unsolved crimes? Does he accept that that figure represents an increase of 17 per cent. in unsolved crime over the 1978 figure, which was the last year for which figures were published for the Labour Government? Does he agree that the only solution to this predicament is to recruit policemen who are trained with a genuine caring attitude towards society and an understanding of the needs of the community, rather than the quick resort to the baton round, the riot shield and the water cannon?

Mr. Hurd: The number of crimes cleared up by the police has been rising for some time. The number of cleared up crimes in 1985 was 1·2 million – an increase of 200,000 over the 1978 figure. However, as the hon. Member for Stockton, North suggested, the clear-up rate has been deteriorating for some time, but that deterioration started well before 1978. That is why I announced plans last month for a further increase in the police forces of England and Wales.

Mr. Pike: Does the Home Secretary accept that as the clear-up rate in the Metropolitan police force area is only 18 per cent. compared wth 40 per cent. in other areas, that shows that the Government do not have the solution to the problem? How can the Conservatives say that they are the party of law and order when people outside this House believe that the Government are not able to provide sufficient police to solve crimes?

Mr. Hurd: The public's confidence in the Government will be increased when they contemplate the alternatives.

It is important to remember that the clear-up rate is much higher for offences of violence – about 73 per cent. – and lower for burglaries. That is why we place so much emphasis – I hope with the belated support of the Opposition – on crime prevention measures such as we discussed in the seminar at 10 Downing street on Monday.

Mr. Robert Atkins: Is my right hon. Friend aware that a special team of police officers in Preston recently cleared up 500 crimes in three weeks and put 10 people in court as a result? Will he pay tribute to the great work done by the police force in Preston, not forgetting those who work on a day-to-day basis to contain the problems of crime, in addition to those in the special task force?

Mr. Hurd: The Lancashire police force is extremely effective, and I am sure that it is especially so in Preston. Across the country, police force by police force the police are experimenting with ways of preventing crime and of catching criminals and bringing them to justice.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the Conservative party's strategy of promoting personal and family responsibility will ultimately be the best guarantor of law and order? Does he also agree that, notwithstanding the Labour party's newly avowed zeal for law and order, Socialist policies, of their very nature, tend to undermine its basis?

Mr. Hurd: Yes, I certainly agree with that. We look forward to developing that theme in the months and years ahead. My hon. Friend referred in particular to attitudes among Labour Members. The best contribution that they can make to law and order is to do something about those in their own party who ceaselessly undermine the activities of the police.

Mr. Alex Carlile: Does the Home Secretary agree that a good crime clear-up rate depends on the wholehearted commitment of senior officers to detecting crime and that

that commitment has been shown by Mr. John Stalker? Does he also agree that, unfortunately, one reason for Mr. Stalker's suspension is that, in showing that commitment, he recommended the prosecution of senior officers in the Royal Ulster Constabulary for conspiracy to pervert the course of justice? If he does not agree with those propositions, will he tell the House why Mr. Stalker has been suspended?

Mr. Hurd: I am surprised that the hon. and learned Gentleman should get on to that tack, because he well knows, having served on the Standing Committee which considered the Police and Criminal Evidence Bill 1984, the care with which Parliament has established the procedures and responsibilities for investigating any allegations against the police, senior or less senior, and he will agree that such allegations should be seriously examined. He knows that Parliament has not given to me or to my colleagues in the Home Office any power to intervene in those procedures, until the point is reached when I have to decide, on appeal against any decision, that there has been a disciplinary offence. The hon. and learned Gentleman also knows that Parliament has established the independent Police Complaints Authority to supervise police investigations of the kind to which he referred. I hope that in this case the procedures laid down by Parliament, with which the hon. and learned Gentleman is well acquainted, will be operated thoroughly and quickly so that the matter to which he referred will be cleared up.

Mr. Franks: Is my right hon. Friend aware that at this very moment the chief constable of West Yorkshire is meeting the Police Complaints Authority regarding the deputy chief constable of Manchester? Does he agree that in the interests of natural justice some statement should be made by the Police Complaints Authority later today?

Mr. Hurd: My hon. Friend knows the exact position. In view of the responsibility which I might eventually have as the appellate authority, I had better simply repeat that I hope that the procedures laid down by Parliament will in this case be operated thoroughly and quickly.

Mr. Dubs: How can the Home Secretary say that the figures for the clear-up rate of crime have only a limited value when up and down the country they are of major concern to people who are suffering from the present crime wave? Is not the truth that, with two thirds of all crimes committed not being cleared up, the Government have a 65 per cent. failure rate? When will the Government get back to the rates pertaining in 1978?

Mr. Hurd: The Labour Front Bench continually tries to promote the fallacy and persuade the country that crime was invented in 1979. The figures of recorded crime and the clear-up rates have been deteriorating for a much longer period than that. What distinguishes the two sides of the House is that we have put resources into the problem, that we have a coherent policy for dealing with it, and that we do not include within our ranks a minority of influential people who undermine the efforts of the police and respect for law and order.

Mr. Mark Carlisle: Following the question asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Barrow and Furness (Mr. Franks), does my right hon. Friend agree that, while clearly any allegation against a senior officer must be taken seriously and investigated by the Police Complaints Authority, nevertheless, to an outsider in this matter, there appears to be a degree of character assassination? Is it not essential that, if disciplinary charges are to be brought, they should be formulated rapidly and the necessary procedures take place, or, alternatively, that Mr. Stalker should rapidly be restored to his position?

Mr. Hurd: As my right hon. and learned Friend knows, the investigation was set in hand by a decision of the Greater Manchester police authority and it has been placed under the supervision of the independent Police Complaints Authority. That authority, and now the chief constable of West Yorkshire, to whom it entrusted the investigation, has responsibility under the law for the investigation. For the reasons that my right hon. and learned Friend has given, and for other reasons, I agree that the sooner this matter can be cleared up under the procedures laid down by Parliament, the better for all concerned.

Following are the figures.

Clear-up rates for notifiable offences recorded by the police by police force area in 1978 and 1985 (excluding offences of criminal damage of value £20 or under)

England and Wales

Police Force Area	*1978* per cent	*1985* per cent
Avon and Somerset	42	36
Bedfordshire	46	37
Cambridgeshire	55	40
Cheshire	59	46
Cleveland	55	37
Cumbria	54	49
Derbyshire	45	55
Devon and Cornwall	46	46
Dorset	47	40
Durham	51	45
Essex	44	44
Gloucestershire	51	35
Greater Manchester	46	32
Hampshire	46	37
Hertfordshire	51	52
Humberside	45	40
Kent	40	39
Lancashire	55	47
Leicestershire	57	45
Lincolnshire	57	42
London, City of	23	17
Merseyside	43	35
Metropolitan Police District	21	18
Norfolk	49	41
Northamptonshire	50	39
Northumbria	51	46
North Yorkshire	52	31
Nottinghamshire	49	35
South Yorkshire	53	48
Staffordshire	55	52
Suffolk	55	46
Surrey	49	34
Sussex	56	36
Thames Valley	43	40
Warwickshire	46	38
West Mercia	48	45
West Midlands	34	30
West Yorkshire	49	42
Wiltshire	44	39
Dyfed-Powys	64	55

Clear-up rates for notifiable offences recorded by the police by police force area in 1978 and 1985 (excluding offences of criminal damage of value £20 or under)

England and Wales

Police Force Area	*1978 per cent*	*1985 per cent*
Gwent	59	56
North Wales	58	45
South Wales	46	44
England & Wales	42	35

Notifiable offences cleared up per police officer England and Wales 1985

Police Force Area	*Number of offences cleared up per officer*
Avon and Somerset	9
Bedfordshire	13
Cambridgeshire	11
Cheshire	11
Cleveland	12
Cumbria	11
Derbyshire	13
Devon and Cornwall	11
Dorset	11
Durham	13
Essex	10
Gloucestershire	8
Greater Manchester	12
Hampshire	10
Hertfordshire	12
Humberside	14
Kent	9
Lancashire	10
Leicestershire	12
Lincolnshire	10
London, City of	1
Merseyside	11
Metropolitan Police District	5
Norfolk	11
Northamptonshire	13
Northumbria	21
North Yorkshire	8
Nottinghamshire	14
South Yorkshire	13
Staffordshire	12
Suffolk	10
Surrey	6
Sussex	8
Thames Valley	13
Warwickshire	8
West Mercia	11
West Midlands	10
West Yorkshire	13
Wiltshire	10
Dyfed-Powys	9
Gwent	15
North Wales	11
South Wales	13
England & Wales	10

Crimes (Firearms)

2. **Mr. Jim Callaghan** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the increase since 1978 in the total number of crimes in England and Wales in which a firearm was used.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. Giles Shaw): The number of notifiable offences recorded by the police in which firearms were reported to have been used increased from 5,672 in 1978 to 8,376 in 1984. Within these totals the main increases were in respect of robberies and offences of criminal damage.

Mr. Callaghan: Is the Minister aware that the recent study produced by the Home Department into crimes of personal violence shows a dramatic increase in the number of crimes of personal violence related to armed robbery and a dramatic decrease in the number of those crimes that have been cleared up. Will the Minister tell the House of his ideas for changing the law to tighten up the availability of these weapons to criminals?

Mr. Shaw: I agree with the hon. Gentleman that there has been a substantial increase in the number of armed robberies. Pistols are the largest used category of weapon in those offences — some 1,106 in 1984. The best deterrent to armed crime is the risk of detection and severe punishment, and that is why the police will continue to have our full support in their efforts to bring those responsible before the courts. That is also why we have announced in the criminal justice White Paper our intention to increase to life imprisonment the maximum penalty for carrying firearms in furtherance of crime.

Sir William Clark: Does my hon. Friend agree that if capital punishment were to be reintroduced there would be a dramatic decrease in armed robbery?

Mr. Shaw: I am aware that my hon. Friend and other hon. Members feel strongly about these issues. He will know, of course, that there is a case for the other point of view.

Mr. Ron Davies: Will the Minister come clean on a point that I put to him in last night's debate? I suggested that there was a major loophole in the Firearms Act 1968 which allows any holder of a foreign passport to go to any gun shop, sports shop or gunsmith in Britain and, without restriction, buy any amount of shotguns or ammunition. Will the Minister confirm that that is the case? If it is the case, will he tell the House what he proposes to do about it?

Mr. Shaw: It is the case that section 14 of the 1968 Act allows that. In the next review of firearms legislation, the 1968 Act will be one of the major pieces of legislation that we shall look at.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Will the Minister confirm that in cases where firearms are carried in the course of robbery, the judiciary has made a practice of imposing substantial prison sentences over and above those that the offences would otherwise attract? Does he agree that that is a highly welcome development?

Mr. Shaw: I do agree; and it is essential that the public should see that those who carry firearms for whatever illicit purpose receive very severe penalties.

Mr. Soley: The point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) is another example

of why we need a committee set up in the Home Office and not the rather feeble consultation procedure by which the Minister tried to calm his Back Benchers last night during the debate on the firearms order. When will the Home Secretary reply to my letter of 26 March, which suggested that this was precisely the sort of issue about which we could be forewarned if we had a committee of the type that I have described?

Mr. Shaw: If the hon. Gentleman had allowed a reasonable time for responses to be made in last night's debate, he might have received a reply. I shall write to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Thurnham: In view of the success of neighbourhood watch schemes in deterring serious crimes, would my right hon. Friend condemn those who criticise such schemes, especially the Labour-controlled Manchester City police committee?

Mr. Shaw: I certainly would. My hon. Friend is right. There is no area of the country that can afford to have a police committee that takes a disinterested view towards the prevention of crime. It is absurd for the Manchester City police committee to publish a paper which is designed to undermine the authority of the police force.

Fraud

4. **Mr. Clelland** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any proposals to improve the investigation of *(a)* local and *(b)* transnational fraud.

Mr. Hurd: The report of the fraud trials' committee, under Lord Roskill's chairmanship, which we received earlier this year, provides an excellent basis for legislation and administrative action. We are now completing our consideration of the committee's many recommendations, including those affecting the investigation of fraud, and aim to bring proposals for legislation before Parliament in the next Session.

Mr. Clelland: Will the Home Secretary explain why so little emphasis is placed on tax fraud compared with that placed on social security fraud? Is he not aware that the latest estimates put the amount of money lost through tax fraud at more than 35 times the amount of money lost through social security fraud? Yet, for every one person gaoled for tax fraud, 20 are gaoled for social security fraud. Is this not yet another sign that the Government have one set of rules for the rich and another for the poor?

Mr. Hurd: No, Sir. That is a familiar charge, and I rebut it in a familiar way. If the hon. Gentleman tables a question to my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer, he will be told of the extent of the effort that the Inland Revenue is putting into pursuing tax fraud. As for fraud in a wider context, when the hon. Gentleman reads the Criminal Justice Bill, which we hope will be presented in the next Session, he will become aware of the rigorous and stern approach that the Government are adopting.

Mr. Lawrence: Is my right hon. Friend aware that there is little or no support for the abolition of jury trials in fraud cases? Does he accept that the most effective measures that can be taken to put an end to fraud are to strengthen the size of the investigating police force, to bring in more financial experts to assist the police, and to improve the extradition procedures between friendly states?

Mr. Hurd: My hon. and learned Friend picks out three admirable recommendations from Lord Roskill's report and puts his weight behind them. On extradition, I have already announced that we intend to act on the lines set out in the report. Trial by jury of complex fraud cases is one of the tricky matters on which we have to complete our consideration.

Mr. Skinner: Is the Home Secretary aware that his right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General said some time ago that he found the level of City fraud unacceptable? Notwithstanding that, the Home Department has failed to get anybody over to see Peter Cameron Webb and Peter Dixon in America, who have got away with £39 million as a result of fraudulent activities at Lloyd's. Yet, despite that, a common law bailiff has managed to serve a writ on them. It is a fine state of affairs when this law-and-order Government cannot deal with someone who has got away with £39 million, yet are hounding people at social security offices throughout the country.

Mr. Hurd: The investigation to which the hon. Gentleman refers is nothing to do with me. I am glad to be able to infer from what he said that when he reads our proposals for strengthening the law and the administration of the investigation of fraud, we shall have his support.

Sir Anthony Grant: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the council of Lloyd's is pursuing the PCW people with the utmost vigour and will welcome anything that the Government can do to pursue them with equal severity?

Mr. Hurd: I am sure that my hon. Friend is correct in both of his remarks.

Mr. Corbett: The Home Secretary said in reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) that the PCW affair has nothing to do with him. Why does he keep promising jam tomorrow? Is he aware that tax fraud has been estimated to be running at £3,000 million a year? When will he do something about that? Is he further aware that the latest annual report of the City of London police states that it faces a 60 per cent. rise in fraud investigations this year, with £482 million at risk? When will we get action?

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Gentleman has not noticed the increases which I have announced in the strength of the Metropolitan police. One reason or justification for doing that was precisely to increase its resources for the investigation of fraud. The remainder of the proposals in the Roskill report require legislation. Some of them will be controversial, and the hon. Gentleman would be the first to complain if we were to rush ahead with that without proper consideration.

Detention Centres

5. **Mr. Maclennan** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on his future policy for detention centres.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. David Mellor): Detention centres will continue to provide accommodation for those male young offenders on whom the courts impose short custodial sentences. The regime is being positively developed to provide a suitable programme of activity

within the statutory aims and general principles of detention centres, and the system will continue to be kept under review.

Mr. Maclennan: Does that complacent and bland answer not suggest that the Minister has not made himself aware of his Department's findings that the rate of re-offending by those held in such institutions is at least as bad as that of others in other young offenders' institutions? Will he now recognise that the experiment has failed and that the brutalising regime of those detention centres should be discontinued?

Mr. Mellor: I am glad to be accused of blandness by the SDP's answer to Bird's instant whip. The aim of the detention centre regimes has been to establish the significance for young offenders of briskness, good appearance and punctuality, to which I am sure the SDP attaches importance. We shall continue to work along those lines.

Mr. Bill Walker: Does my hon. Friend agree that detention centres have an important part to play in how we handle young offenders, and that those who criticise detention centres rarely put forward viable proposals that would deal with this category of youngster?

Mr. Mellor: I agree with my hon. Friend. When a short sentence must be served, it is difficult to establish the kind of training regime that we have in youth custody centres. We must make the most constructive use of the limited time. I am grateful for my hon. Friend's recognition of that.

Mr. Kilroy-Silk: Does the Minister accept that the Government's much-publicised introduction of the short, sharp shock at detention centres has been shown by Home Office research to have failed to reduce re-offending among youngsters and to have had no impact on the general level of crime? Does not that failure strengthen the argument for a single generic youth custody sentence, so that even the shortest sentences can be made as constructive as possible?

Mr. Mellor: I appreciate that there is a lively and worthwhile argument about whether there should be a single or a dual sentence, but the hon. Gentleman will know that the difficulty remains, as I pointed out to my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker), that there comes a point below which, in sentencing terms, it is impossible to adopt a proper training regime. The importance of the short, sharp shock——

Mr. Kilroy-Silk *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Mellor: Of course, the hon. Gentleman knows better. He always does on these issues. But if he will bear with me, I can tell him that the significance of the short, sharp shock regime is that it enables us to come to terms with the best regime that can be devised to deal with those short periods. Since last year, that is what we have endeavoured to do.

Committee on Broadcasting (Report)

6. **Mr. Chope** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the criteria to be used to determine the respective timings of the publication of *(a)* the report of the Committee on Broadcasting charied by Professor Peacock and *(b)* the Government's response to that report.

Mr. Hurd: My aim is to give the House the earliest opportunity to read the published report, together with our initial response to it.

Mr. Chope: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the publication is eagerly awaited, not least to see whether the report contains anything that has not already been leaked? To what extent will there be public consultation upon it, and to what extent will the publication discourage the BBC from issuing news broadcasts which contain comment thinly disguised and masquerading as news?

Mr. Hurd: I have noticed a certain interest in the report. Perhaps next week there will be an opportunity, if Professor Peacock agrees, for it to be published and for me to give a first response to it. It will have to be a first response, because it will contain much which the House and people outside will wish to discuss, including no doubt my hon. Friend's point.

Mr. Alfred Morris: Is the Home Secretary aware that any attempt to privatise Radios 1 and 2 will be fiercely resisted, as will any move to force the BBC to sell off any of its services? In his first response, will he say what study his Department is making of the damage that will be done to independent radio if Radios 1 and 2 are sold off?

Mr. Hurd: The right hon. Gentleman is leaping ahead. He may have an opportunity to comment on this when the report is published. There have been a good many leaks, and he has drawn on one or two. What has been lacking in any leak that I have seen is an account or summary of the interesting philosophy which underlies the report.

Crime Prevention

7. **Mr. Neil Hamilton** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent representations he has received about the Government's strategy for crime prevention.

Mr. Hurd: I receive many letters on crime prevention and am encouraged by the increasing support for the Government's initiatives in crime prevention.

On Monday I had the opportunity at our latest seminar to discuss the further development of those practical initiatives with a wide range of practical people representing industries and unions, central and local government, police, education and others.

Mr. Hamilton: Has my right hon. Friend received any representations on this subject from Manchester city council? Is he aware of the crime prevention strategy which that council enthusiastically pursues, supported by the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman), and of its police committee support unit, whose sole purpose seems to be to attack and undermine the police? It publishes a scurrilous publication called "Police Watch", which, in its first issue, seemed to accuse the Greater Manchester police force of conniving at murders, and seems to believe that the neighbourhood watch scheme is an exercise in setting up a secret police. Does my right hon. Friend think that that encourages effective policing in Manchester and is an effective crime prevention strategy?

Mr. Hurd: My hon. Friend is right. I am deeply worried about what is coming out of the city of Manchester. It seems to be following the worst example of the worst London boroughs in its anti-police activities. These are the

followers of the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman), in his city. What we do not yet know is whether he has either the power or the will to do anything about it.

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton: Does the Secretary of State recall that whenever any Opposition Member or member of the public suggests that the solution to the problems of education, housing and health involves increased public expenditure, the Government invariably reply that problems are not solved by hurling money at them? Does he realise that his Government have done nothing but hurl money at this problem, yet the crime rate has become worse and worse in each successive year?

Mr. Hurd: The serious answer is that public money should be spent on all the policies in which the hon. Gentleman is interested. The difficulty that we constantly find is that existing institutions are not targeting that high public expenditure effectively. That is part of the purpose of the inner city initiative of my right hon. and learned Friend the Paymaster General.

Mr. Malins: I congratulate my right hon. Friend on the enormous encouragement that the Department has given to neighbourhood watch schemes. In London they have proved very successful, and in my constituency the increase in the number of neighbourhood watch schemes has been matched by a reduction in the number of burglaries and other crimes. I urge my right hon. Friend to continue to encourage these schemes.

Mr. Hurd: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that point. I know that his borough is one of the leaders in that respect. There are now 14,500 neighbourhood or home watch schemes, which is more than twice as many as a year ago. This is not the result of any diktat from the Home Office or the police — although we encourage such schemes — but is rather the spontaneous wish of those living in such neighbourhoods. I hope that, regardless of party, everyone will give them a helping hand.

Mr. Chris Smith: Would not by far the best strategy for crime prevention be to ensure that local authorities have the proper resources to enable them to keep the streets well lit and their council estates more secure, better designed and patrolled? Have the Government not spent the past seven years going in precisely the opposite direction and has that not endangered crime prevention, rather than securing it?

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Gentleman would not make those remarks if he had been at our seminar and had heard about the priority estates project of the Department of the Environment. Plenty of practical people were there, and they could tell the hon. Gentleman about it. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment and his Department wish to tackle the design of housing estates and remedy the huge public expenditure mistakes that were made 20 or 30 years ago. At that time huge sums were spent, but wrongly spent.

Mr. Churchill: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the citizens of Manchester widely welcome neighbourhood watch schemes, and that those who oppose them are the criminals and also Manchester city council? Is it not a matter of grave concern that, instead of supporting neighbourhood watch schemes, that council is using ratepayers' money to finance a scurrilous anti-police publication, called "Police Watch"? Is it not sheer humbug on the part of the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) to lecture the Government about law and order, when he does not have the guts to condemn his fellow Socialists on Manchester city council?

Mr. Hurd: I agree with my hon. Friend. Now that the right hon. Member for Gorton has been converted to crime prevention, I hope that he will go and tell his supporters, or his masters, on Manchester city council what it is all about, and that, instead of nitpicking and finding imaginary difficulties, they should set about encouraging people in Manchester to join this effort.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: What of the Government's strategy on the prevention of kidnap crimes? Is the Secretary of State aware that when the Cunningham brothers were being tried in the courts in Dublin last week over the Guinness kidnap, Mr. Patrick McEntee, the solicitor for the Cunningham brothers said that the reason why they kidnapped the Guinness woman was that they knew that she was covered by kidnap insurance? Does that not indicate that kidnap insurance acts as an incentive to kidnap, and how is the review coming on in the right hon. Gentleman's Department?

Mr. Hurd: Slowly, because of the genuine difficulties, of which the hon. Gentleman knows, in dealing with this matter unilaterally or in trying to prevent the payment of ransom in these cases. The hon. Gentleman knows the difficulties — he has tabled many questions. I accept that the problem is a genuine one and if we can find practical ways of tackling it we will do so.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels: What consideration has my right hon. Friend given to improving the lighting on council housing estates and on side streets, where a lot of crime is occurring because the perpetrators can get away without being seen?

Mr. Hurd: My hon. Friend is right. The positioning of street lighting is crucial. Many mistakes have been made in this respect in the past, and this is one of the areas that my right hon. Friend and his Department and local authorities are energetically tackling.

Mr. Kaufman: Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that any claim that the Government have a crime prevention strategy could come only from a Home Secretary who is a writer of imaginative fiction? Is it not a fact that, with 4 million serious crimes last year in Great Britain, the Government's law and order policy has collapsed, and that these crime prevention seminars that the Government hold at Downing street are meaningless gimmicks that are almost completely non-productive? When will the Government take serious action to bring the crime level down to the 2·5 million which they inherited from the Labour Government, which that Government said was too much and which they said they would cure, because it has risen by 1·5 million since then?

Mr. Hurd: The right hon. Gentleman's appearance is at least one up for the parliamentary clear-up rate, anyway.

If the right hon. Gentleman thinks that the kind of measures that we were discussing on Monday, namely, the formation of a British Standard to improve the security of motor cars, or the agreement of 10 to 15 insurance companies and brokers to give discounts to people who improve the security of their own houses, are gimmicks, he

is a long way from reality. They are very practical steps, along with dozens of others, to encourage people to take sensible measures to prevent crime.

Autocrime

8. **Mr. Maples** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what discussions his Department has had with motor manufacturers about progress on a British standard for car locks as a method of deterring theft of, or from, cars.

9. **Mr. Forth** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress has been made in devising a strategy for combating autocrime.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Representatives of motor manufacturers and agents attended the crime prevention seminar which my right hon. Friend chaired on Monday. Autocrime was one of the subjects examined and good progress is being made.

The first part of a British Standard on vehicle security, which is being prepared with the co-operation of the manufacturers, will be published in the autumn. It will define, for the first time, a performance-based specification for secure locking systems. We will continue to urge car owners to use the security equipment available to them. We are undertaking a wide range of publicity campaigns and the motor manufacturers will be improving the advice on car security which they give to car owners.

Mr. Maples: The introduction of such a standard will be widely welcomed as a real practical step in the fight against car theft. Will my hon. Friend try to see that any such standard that is imposed in this country is imposed throughout the EEC, so that British manufactuers are not placed at a disadvantage?

Mr. Shaw: Yes, indeed. I welcome my hon. Friend's suggestion. We intend to do that. It will be a lengthy process before it can be adopted as a European directive, but we shall certainly try.

Mr. Forth: I thank my hon. Friend for his reply on this most important matter. Is he satisfied with the incentives and the publicity to encourage car owners along these lines? More important, is he satisfied with the penalties that are available to magistrates to impose on those who are found guilty of autocrime?

Mr. Shaw: My hon. Friend raises a fair point on penalties. He is right in his view that so often these penalties are not sufficient to deal with the problem. I ressure my hon. Friend on his first point. Not only will we spend money on television publicity to ensure that the autocrime problem is drawn to the attention of the public, but the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Centre at Swansea has agreed to circulate leaflets to every person who receives a licence from the centre.

Mr. Parry: Does the Minister agree that greater security car locks will help to reduce the number of young joyriders who take cars? In my constituency a number of young people have been killed when driving these vehicles and a number of innocent pedestrians have also been killed. The Ministr will be aware that those who are killed in the incidents are not covered by the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board.

Mr. Shaw: The hon. Gentleman is quite right. He lays stress on the fact that autocrime, which accounted for 846,000 criminal incidents last year, is largely an opportunist event. The police estimate that between 70 and 90 per cent. of all autocrime, whether pinching a vehicle or pinching from it, is entirely opportunist and that it can so easily be prevented by properly secured vehicles.

Radioactivity

10. **Mr. Robert Banks** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what responsibility local authorities bear to ensure that information on local levels of radioactivity is disseminated rapidly to all concerned organisations and departments.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Under the Civil Defence (General Local Authority Functions) Regulations 1983 local authorities must plan for the collection and distribution of information about the effects of hostile attack. There is no analogous responsibility for peacetime disasters. The Government's review of emergency arrangements in the light of the Chernobyl incident will include the role of local authorities.

Mr. Banks: I thank my hon. Friend for his reply. Who is responsible for measuring radiation in local areas, and is he satisfied that they have a sufficient number of radiation detectors? In view of the lack of information following the Chernobyl disaster about what people should or should not do, will he ensure that machinery is set up to cope with any future incident of a similar nature?

Mr. Shaw: I assure my hon. Friend that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment will be conducting a wide-ranging review of all forms of monitoring of an incident of this character. As for civil defence, my hon. Friend will be aware that the United Kingdom warning and monitoring organisation does not have instruments that could measure such low levels of radiation as those that have recently been experienced.

Mr. Corbett: Given that local authorities rely in part on the National Radiological Protection Board, has the Minister seen its June bulletin, which protests that "in recent years the cash limit has been systematically reduced in real terms"? How can the public have faith in the advice of either the board or the Government on radiation levels if the board is denied adequate funds with which to carry out its independent role?

Mr. Shaw: The board's role, and indeed the system over which it presides, will be considered in the assessment of the post-Chernobyl situation.

Mr. Neil Thorne: Will my hon. Friend consider the possibility of supplying radiation survey meters to all local authorities as soon as possible so that the population may be reassured, whenever necessary, if there should be a future disaster similar to the one at Chernobyl?

Mr. Shaw: Im my previous answer I said that the role of local authorities will be considered in the review of the post-Chernobyl incident. My hon. Friend should be aware that it is essential to have a national system wherby accurate measurements of this kind can be issued to the public in an understandable way.

Mr. Meadowcroft: Does the Minister accept that local authorities are keen to assist with the dissemination of such important information? What information has been

sent by his Department to local authorities since the Chernobyl disaster that might assist them in carrying out their duties in this regard?

Mr. Shaw: The Home Office has not issued information of that kind to local authorities, but the hon. Gentleman will recognise that in relation to civil defence, which is a Home Office responsibility, the passage of the Bill introduced by my hon. Friend the Member for Upminster (Sir N. Bonsor) will allow local authorities to use civil defence grants to cover peacetime disasters as well.

Litter

11. **Dr. Michael Clark** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will indicate the number of prosecutions that have taken place for litter offences during the last period for which figures are available.

Mr. Mellor: In 1984, 1,552 defendants were prosecuted under the Litter Act 1983, and 639 under the Refuse (Amenity) Act 1978.

Dr. Clark: I am sure my hon. Friend will be aware that I am a little disappointed in those figures, because I, too, would like to see a higher clear-up rate. As our towns, cities and countryside are disgraced by the amount of litter that one sees around the place, does my hon. Friend think that this is because the law is not adequate, or because the police forces are not given the right instructions?

Mr. Mellor: I think that it is because people drop litter and fly-tip when they should not. The Department of the Environment has in hand initiatives to deal with that problem. I think that the law is adequate, although there may be some question whether penalties are appropriate. Although the fine for dropping litter is a maximum £400, the average fine last year was £26, and although the fine for fly-tipping is a maximum £1,000, the average fine last year was on £36. I must say to my hon. Friend that there are so many calls on the time of the police that it is difficult for us to assert that they should give a greater priority to prosecuting those who drop litter.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Stan Thorne** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 26 June.

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen): I have been asked to reply

My right hon. Friend is attending the European Council in the Hague.

Mr. Thorne: The Lord Privy Seal will have seen the statement by the Eminent Persons Group that unless economic measures are taken against South Africa the cost will be counted in millions of lives. What will the Government do about that catastrophe.

Mr. Biffen: Initially we shall discuss this matter with our allies, and that is precisely what is happening at The Hague. We shall determine a policy that takes account not only of our desire for peaceful change in South Africa but of national interest.

Mr. Cash: Will my right hon. Friend note that in a radio broadcast last week an Indian Member of the South African Parliament said of the EPG meeting that those who had made that report should have taken careful note of its effect on the South African blacks and that he resisted the idea of economic sanctions because he believed that they would not be in their interests?.

Mr. Biffen: I take note of what my hon. Friend has said. These are all views that can be tested against the developments that will proceed from the conference at The Hague. We are wise to proceed with a very clear commitment that whatever is done shall be seen to be effective in the context of co-operation with our allies.

Mr. Kinnock: Following that question from the hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash), will the right hon. Gentleman also take note that the non-white Members of the so-called tri-cameral Parliament walked out when Botha used the President's council to overrule their objections to the Internal Security Act, which gives totalitarian powers?

I welcome the Government's belated, but none the less significant decision, to meet Oliver Tambo, President of the African National Congress. I invite the right hon. Gentleman to treat the claim by Radio South Africa this morning that this meeting was "a capitulation to terrorism" with the contempt that it deserves. Does the right hon. Gentleman agree with me that the reaction of the South African regime to that modest and sensible act of dialogue is evidence of the need to intensify pressure against the South African Government, as that is the only language that Botha will ever understand?

Mr. Biffen: My hon. Friend the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office made quite clear the terms under which the discussions took place with Mr. Tambo. They underline the Government's determination to have a forward policy in these matters, but one which above all must always be related to the test of effectiveness, within which we are co-operating with our colleagues in western Europe, North America and Japan. It is a modest but realistic policy, and stands in total contrast to what the right hon. Gentleman constantly reaffirms, which is his commitment to comprehensive and mandatory sanctions. We believe that that would be disastrous for this country and disastrous for relationships with South Africa.

Mr. Kinnock: I am prepared to accept that the right hon. Gentleman at least wants to see an end to apartheid. Does he think that the steps taken by the Government so far have been, to use his word, effective?

Mr. Biffen: The test of effectiveness is the way in which we can co-operate with all others who are engaged in this enterprise. *[Interruption.]* Oh yes it is. Once we are picked off one by one, the whole question of effectiveness is a total illusion. The right hon. Gentleman knows in his heart that nobody can stand at either Dispatch Box and say with certainty what are the economic consequences of action that we take and what are the political developments that flow from them.

Mr. Kinnock: If the right hon. Gentleman and the Government want those sanctions to apply to all, will he now tell me why the Government vetoed the mandatory sanctions in the United Nations last week, which was the one measure that would ensure that they applied to all?

Mr. Biffen: Because we think that in the first instance we should move in close co-operation with our allies, and secondly that we should have modest objectives which are attainable.

Mr. John Carlisle: Does my right hon. Friend agree *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman has as much right to be heard as anybody else.

Mr. Carlisle: Does my right hon. Friend agree that peaceful reform in South Africa is far more likely to take place in conditions of full employment and economic prosperity than in conditions of devastation and destruction, as proposed by the Opposition? Will he get a message to the Prime Minister at The Hague that the Government should be thinking of positive measures to increase investment in South Africa and increase the influence of British companies in that country, so that this initiative will be received by the South African Government as a way of helping them rather than hindering them towards peaceful reform?

Mr. Biffen: The initial task of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary at The Hague is to concert a policy in conjunction with our colleagues which can then be put on an effective basis and which will have clear and determinable objectives. That is a great deal more important than engaging in a moral foghorn approach to the policy, as has been suggested by some Opposition Members.

Q2. **Mr. Donald Stewart** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 26 June 1986.

Mr. Biffen: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the right hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Stewart: In the light of a Foreign Office Minister having seen a representative of the ANC, will the right hon. Gentleman make representations to his right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary that the Government should now see a representative of the Palestine Liberation Organisation, since the one-sided attitude of the American President is not conducive to a peace settlement in that area?

Mr. Biffen: The right hon. Gentleman's proposition is based on the assumption that there has never been a meeting of a Minister with the PLO. That is not true. There was a meeting, when my right hon. Friend, now the Home Secretary, urged upon the PLO the virtues of non-violence.

Q3. **Mr. Galley** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 26 June 1986.

Mr. Biffen: I have been asked to reply.

I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Galley: Will my right hon. Friend accept a modest criticism, that Ministers could perhaps be even more vigorous in extolling the virtues of the Government? Should they not say, frequently and without apology, that the vast majority of people in this country have never been better off in their lives? Should they not highlight the reductions in nationalised industry prices for the first time in living memory? Should they not emphasise the soundness of the economy, when, in the face of a dramatic oil price reduction it has reacted with hardly a murmur? If the Opposition had been in power they would have been scurrying around like headless chickens looking up the International Monetary Fund and issuing a series of mini budgets. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. It is selfish to take as long as that.

Mr. Biffen: My hon. Friend makes a perfectly valid point. He argues that the Government have a formidable list of achievements to their credit, and that it lies upon all Tories to be arch-evangelists to ensure that that record is more widely appreciated. We have a period — I do not know how long, but I know that the right hon. Gentleman the Leader of the Opposition hopes that it will be longer rather than shorter — in which to obtain public recognition of those achievements, and we shall do so.

Dr. Owen: Does the right hon. Gentleman believe that the over 9 million people who are living at or below the supplementary benefit level appreciate the policies of the Government? What does he intend to do about that, since there has been a 50 per cent. increase since the Conservative party took office?

Mr. Biffen: I preface my reply to the right hon. Gentleman by saying how much I enjoyed almost all of his remarks about South Africa on the radio this morning, which clearly puts him with us, if not with the Liberal party. *[Interruption.]* In reply to the substantive question, perhaps I can say that the report by the Low Pay Unit should be taken alongside the fact that under this Government supplementary benefit has increased in real terms, that for those on less than average earnings real take-home pay has increased substantially, and that there has been an increase in the tax threshold which has taken 1·5 million people out of taxation. I believe that any balanced reading of the position would not come to the social conclusions of the lobbyists behind the Low Pay Unit.

Mr. Proctor *rose*—

Mr. Speaker: I call Mr. Harvey Proctor.

Dr. Owen: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I shall take it afterwards, at the usual time. Mr. Harvey Proctor.

Dr. Owen *rose*—

Mr. Speaker: Order. I shall not take it now. I shall take it afterwards, at the usual time.

Orsett

Q4. **Mr. Proctor** asked the Prime Minister if she will pay an official visit to Orsett.

Mr. Biffen: I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend has at present no plans to do so.

Mr. Proctor: Is my right hon. Friend aware that my constituents in Orsett will naturally be disappointed with that response, as they would have taken the opportunity to show the Prime Minister the green fields that will be built on if Tillingham Hall is allowed to go ahead in the green belt of Essex? Realising that my right hon. Friend is unable to comment on the detail of the outstanding

appeal which has been to public inquiry, will he re-emphasise that it is general Government policy not to allow development in the green belt, except in exceptional circumstances?

Mr. Biffen: I thank my hon. Friend for his understanding of the fact that I cannot comment on something that is subject to appeal. I assure him that it is general Government policy to seek the preservation of the green belt. That must be at the heart of any constructive and socially constructive environmental policy.

Mr. Clelland: Is the Leader of the House not concerned about the increasing lawlessness of his Government, to such an extent that they have constantly had to introduce retrospective legislation to get themselves off the hook? Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that the latest example of that is that the Home Secretary, who has now received

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member must make his question relative to a visit to Orsett. Can he do that?

Mr. Clelland: Will the Leader of the House——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I shall help the hon. Member. Let us take it as read.

Mr. Biffen: I think that I could better answer the question if the specific instance of alleged retrospective legislation were put to me.

Q5. **Mr. Alan Howarth** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 26 June.

Mr. Biffen: I have been asked to reply.

I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Howarth: Has my right hon. Friend seen a report which finds that the number of individual shareholders in the United Kingdom has risen to no less than 16 per cent. of the population, which is the same figure as in Japan and only 3 per cent. less than in the United States? Does my right hon. Friend agree that there will be a continuing welcome for the Government's policies of privatisation and wider share ownership, which serve not only to increase the nation's wealth, but to underpin independence and dignity?

Mr. Biffen: I agree with my hon. Friend's points. The personal equity plan? Which was announced in this year's Budget, is just one further example of the attempt to develop people's capitalism. I am certain that that will be at the heart of the election appeal which we shall put in the most effective form and in such a way as to console my hon. Friend the Member for Halifax (Mr. Galley).

Mr. Chris Smith: This morning when the Secretary of State for Energy made such a ringing declaration of the Government's devotion to nuclear power and its future in Britain's energy production, was he speaking for the Government as a whole? Do the Government show any concern for the enormous public anxiety about the safety of nuclear power in the aftermath of Chernobyl?

Mr. Biffen: Of course my right hon. Friend was speaking on behalf of the Government. This Administration need no instruction on the necessity for safety in the development of a nuclear programme. Before anyone casts aspersions, express or otherwise, on the quality of work in our nuclear industry, and what it has already achieved in terms of safety, let it be understood that it will be a poor day for this country when its energy choice is capriciously narrowed to deliver it more and more into the hands of the interest groups which would otherwise serve it.

Dr. David Owen (Plymouth, Devonport): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. If the Leader of the House wants to associate with the policy of these Benches, both Liberal and Social Democrat, of wishing to support bans on new investment in South Africa, private bank loans and direct air flights——

Mr. Speaker: Order. This must be a point of order, and not a further question.

Dr. Owen: I shall reiterate my point. If the Leader of the House wishes to associate with the policies of these Benches, including a ban—*[Interruption.]* Mr. Speaker, I am going to be heard.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The right hon. Member is right, but he must obey the rules and direct the point of order to me.

Dr. Owen: Yes, Sir. This point of order is for you. I am saying through you, Mr. Speaker, that——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think that I know what is upsetting the right hon. Member. I ask him to put the point of order to me, and I shall ascertain whether I can deal with it.

Dr. Owen: My point of order, Sir, is that, if the Leader of House wishes to associate with our policy, surely—[HON. MEMBERS: "No."]—he should do so directly and not abuse Question Time when answering a question on supplementary benefit and the 9 million people who are living below the poverty line. Mr. Speaker, you would not allow any other hon. Member to answer a question in the way that the Leader of the House sought to do. I am putting it to you that that was an abuse of Question Time. It should not be allowed. There are rights in the House for minorities and we expect you to uphold them. We would have expected you to interrupt the right hon. Gentleman when he abused Question Time—*[Interruption.]*—as you would have done with any other hon. Member. We understand the right hon. Gentleman's difficulties——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The right hon. Member is making an accusation, and I cannot quite hear it.

Dr. Owen: I am delighted that you should want to hear it, Mr. Speaker, without the noise. The point to you was that there was an abuse of Question Time procedure by the Leader of the House. If anybody else had sought to answer a question which had not been put, he would have been called to order by you and not been allowed to do so. The question related to supplementary benefit and poverty—issues which are of some concern to some hon. Members—not to South Africa. If the Leader of the House wishes to dissociate himself from his party's policy, he should do it in another way.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The right hon. Gentleman knows as well as anybody that it was an open question and that I am not responsible in any way for the content of answers. We frequently hear things in the House which we do not like. That is what democracy is all about.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I call Mr. David Steel.

Mr. David Steel (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. With respect, there is a serious point of order for you. This is the second time this week that the Minister answering at the Dispatch Box seeks in the reply to distort the policy which my right hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) and I have been pursuing on South Africa. On Tuesday it was the Prime Minister and today it was the Leader of the House. My point of order is that it is not understood outside the House why the Deputy Leader of the Labour party should be allowed to come back three times on a question, whereas we are not allowed to reply to the answer.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The answer to the right hon. Gentleman's question is well known to him. We have a convention in the House of two Front Benches, and he knows that that has been a long observed tradition. On his second question, throughout the questions to Home Office Ministers various Back-Bench Members attempted to imply that the policy of the Opposition was not entirely in tune. It is not unknown for similar accusations to be made against the Government party or the right hon. Gentleman's party.

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Is it not clear that the two points of order raised by the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen), the leader of the SDP, and the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Mr. Steel), the leader of the Liberal party, have been brought before the House because of the exposure of the profound differences of view between the two right hon. Gentlemen? Would it not be of assistance to you if the two right hon. Gentlemen sat beside one another, if they could possibly bear to do so?

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think that the hon. Gentleman is trying to assist me. I should now like to be of assistance to the House: business questions.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I do not need any more help.

Mr. Skinner: Are you aware, Mr. Speaker, that we all worry about the distorted answers that we receive to our questions? My point of order is that today, having heard the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen), it is evident that you should seriously consider running a little class—a sort of seminar—to which you can invite hon. Members and where you can provide them with the sort of ingenuity that is needed to raise a point of order and to make a further point at the same time.

Business of the House

3.39 pm

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn): May I ask the Leader of the House whether he will state the business of the House for next week?

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen): Yes, Sir. The business for next week will be as follows:

MONDAY 30 JUNE AND TUESDAY 1 JULY—Debate on a motion to approve the statement on the Defence Estimates 1986 (Cmnd. 9763).

At the end on Tuesday, Third Reading of the European Communities (Amendment) Bill.

WEDNESDAY 2 JULY—Until seven o'clock, motions on Social Security Regulations. Details will be given in the *Official Report*.

Consideration of Lords amendments to the Housing (Scotland) Bill, the Airports Bill and the Drug Trafficking Offences Bill.

THURSDAY 3 JULY—There will be a debate on a motion to take note of the outstanding reports of the Public Accounts Committee to which the Government have replied.

Remaining stages of the Outer Space Bill *[Lords]*.

FRIDAY 4 JULY—Private Members' Bills.

MONDAY 7 JULY — Until seven o'clock, private Members' motions.

Debate on the tin industry on a Government motion.

[Wednesday 2 July:

Supplementary Benefit (Requirements and Resources) Miscellaneous Amendment Regulations 1986.

Supplementary Benefit (Requirements and Resources) Amendment Regulations 1986.

Social Security (Unemployment, Sickness and Invalidity Benefit) Amendment (No. 2) Regulations 1986

Supplementary Benefit (Conditions of Entitlement) Amendment Regulations 1986

Housing Benefit (Amendment) (No. 3) Regulations 1986.]

Mr. Kinnock: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman and not only for that reply. I thank him for responding to my request made two weeks ago, for Government time to discuss the awful plight of the tin industry. The Government's concern should extend to action to help Cornwall, and not be limited to the gift of three hours debating time on Monday.

When the right hon. Gentleman assured me last week that the Third Reading of the European Communities (Amendment) Bill would be taken separately from the debates planned for today and tomorrow, I did not expect that the Government would relegate it to after 10 o'clock next Tuesday. Nor, I suspect, did the right hon. Gentleman expect that he would be part of such a shabby manouevre. Will he recognise the seriousness of the Bill and its implications to the constitution, and give a day and time for Third Reading that will allow hon. Members on both sides of the House an opportunity to expose fully the real and potential dangers of the Bill's provisions?

Since Peel established the Church Commissioners in the 1840s, their annual report has never been debated. As their latest report was issued yesterday, and in view of the archbishop's statements on sanctions against South Africa, can the Government find time to make a historic breakthrough and ensure that the Church Commissioners' report is debated?

I ask once more when the Government will table a motion for the reinstatement of private Members' time following the dirty tricks that led to the loss of business on Friday 6 June. The right hon. Gentleman has now conceded twice on this matter, but we still await the motion, so I hope that he can make an announcement today.

Finally, I ask the Leader of the House to ensure that the Prime Minister makes an early statement on South Africa following her discussions with the EC Council of Ministers in The Hague.

Mr. Biffen: I shall take the points raised by the right hon. Gentleman the Leader of the Opposition in their given sequence.

I recognise that many would wish for more time to be given to a debate on the tin industry, but we are now moving into July when time is at a premium. I hope that we can have a satisfactory debate covering all the issues that have been raised by the right hon. Gentleman.

I understand that there is a great affection for the Third Reading of the European Communities (Amendment) Bill to be other than the time that I have given. I again say that we are under considerable time constraints, and I cannot reasonably hold open to the House the prospect that that time is likely to be changed.

As to the debate on the Church Commissioners, the right hon. Gentleman properly reminded us that not since the days of Robert Peel in 1840 has this device been made use of. He quite properly underlined the growing sense of historical nostalgia that affects the Labour party. Only last week, the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) was extolling the virtues of the House of Lords in their activities. I shall look charitably on the suggestion, but I cannot be too forthcoming.

As to the question of private Members' time, I shall be tabling a motion today proposing that private Members' motions are taken until 7 o'clock on Monday 14 July. I fully understand and underline the importance of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister making a statement to the House next week, and that is arranged for Tuesday.

Sir John Biggs-Davison (Epping Forest): I revert after a decent interval to the early-day motion about the miscarriage of justice in the Maguire case.

[That this House notes the widespread concern felt in Parliament by eminent scientists, by other responsible observers and by members of the public who have viewed programmes on the matter screened by Channel 4, that Anne Maguire, Patrick Maguire (senior), Vincent Maguire (then aged 17), Patrick Maguire (then aged 14), Sean Smyth, Patrick O'Neill and the late Guiseppe Conlon, sentenced in 1976 to long terms of imprisonment since served, now appear, despite confirmation of their convictions at the time by the Court of Appeal, to have been entirely innocent of the crime with which they were charged; further notes at the conclusion of a debate in the other place on 17th May 1975, the recognition by the Parliamentary Under Secretary at the Home Office of the strength of feeling on the matter in that House and his pledge to draw the attention of the Secretary of State for the Home Department to what had been said; and therefore earnestly urges the Secretary of State for the Home Department in the interests of the highest standards

of British justice of which this country needs to feel rightly proud, to move without delay for a review of these convictions, either under the provisions of section 17 of the Criminal Appeal Act 1968, or by such other process of review as he may deem appropriate to this disturbing case.]

Is my right hon. Friend aware that we are grateful for the interest being taken in the matter by the Home Secretary? Will he keep open a suitable slot for discussion on the Floor of the House of this miscarriage of justice?

Mr. Biffen: I take note of my hon. Friend's point, which he has made with such engaging persistence over the months. He will agree that this is the time of the year when opportunities are available for those matters to be raised through the initiative of private Members. I hope that he will be successful in that context.

Mr. David Steel (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale): In the light of the anxiety expressed on both sides of the House this afternoon, will the Leader of the House have words with the Attorney-General, the Home Secretary and the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, and arrange for a statement to be made next week on the police inquiries being conducted by Chief Constable Sampson? Is he aware that, even before those inquiries are completed and acted upon, there are matters upon which the House is entitled to have answers? The House wants to know who was involved in the decision to take Deputy Chief Constable Stalker off the RUC inquiry. Will his work and recommendations be included in Chief Constable Sampson's report? Mr. Stalker and Mr. Taylor have been under investigation for some weeks. They should be prosecuted or have their names cleared.

Mr. Biffen: As the right hon. Gentleman has fairly observed, an inquiry is proceeding. That inhibits what can be done by my right hon. Friends, but I shall make the representations that he has requested.

Mr. Geoffrey Rippon (Hexham): Has my right hon. Friend's attention been drawn to the early-day motion in my name and that of many hon. Members on both sides of the House?

[That this House requests Her Majesty's Government to provide parliamentary time for consideration of the Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms Bill which has completed all its stages in the House of Lords.]

Will he make available time for discussion of this important matter, bearing in mind the fact that a similar Bill has already passed through all its stages in the House of Lords on three previous occasions? This is the fourth attempt in the other place to initiate proper discussion of the matter in this House.

Mr. Biffen: My right hon. and learned Friend makes the point all the more effectively because of the record of the other place in this matter. I cannot be too hopeful at this time in the parliamentary year, but I shall look into the matter.

Mr. Alfred Morris (Manchester, Wythenshawe): Can the Leader of the House be a little more forthcoming than was the Home Secretary this afternoon about the timing of the publication of the Peacock report? With his responsibilities to the House as a whole, can he say exactly when that report will be in our hands?

Mr. Biffen: The right hon. Gentleman would not expect me to elaborate on what my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary said. I assure him that there will be no delay in securing the publication of the Peacock report.

Mr. Kenneth Warren (Hastings and Rye): Will my right hon. Friend give more details about the debate on Monday week on the tin crisis? It would be helpful to know the nature of the Government motion. Will he ensure that that motion recognises the fact that the problem affects Cornwall, the City of London and the entire country? It would be sad if the three-hour debate were swamped by lengthy speeches from both Front Benches at the beginning and end of the debate.

Mr. Biffen: I accept my hon. Friend's point about speeches from the Front Benches. As Chairman of the departmental Select Committee, my hon. Friend properly reminds us of its important role in this matter. I shall consider his point about the Government motion. That can be discussed through the usual channels.

Mr. Jack Ashley (Stoke-on-Trent, South): Is the Leader of the House aware that the Committee on Safety of Medicines—our medical watchdog—has still to act on drugs which damage patients? It is slow to act in comparison with its American counterpart, the Food and Drugs Administration. There is a suspicion that those delays are caused by secret pressures from the drug companies. Will he consider initiating a debate next week to lift the Official Secrets Act 1911 from the decisions of the Committee on Safety of Medicines, and bear in mind the fact that full disclosure in the United States has worked there and should work here?

Mr. Biffen: I accept that there is a great deal of public interest in the point that the right hon. Gentleman has made. However, I have to be negative and say that I am sorry that there is simply no way in which Government time can be made available for a debate next week. Perhaps he will seek the other means that are available to Back-Bench Members to ventilate the matter.

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): Is my right hon. Friend aware that discussion of the Widdicombe report is now urgent in the light of the experience of the Conservative minority group on the Wolverhampton council which has been denied representation on committees equivalent to its representation on the council and yet the majority Labour group argues that that denial is lawful?

Mr. Biffen: My hon. Friend is a doughty advocate of the civic cause, and I shall look at the possibility of discussing the Widdicombe report, but I am sure that he, as a great realist in all these matters, knows perfectly well that July is not the best month in which to be finding time.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): Has the Leader of the House seen early-day motions 992, 1018, 1019 and 1021?

[That this House condemns the arrest and detention of 3,000 youths and workers, including union general secretaries, regional organisers and shop stewards, as an attempt by the Botha Government to break the momentum of workers' struggles in South Africa, and to behead the independent, democratic trades unions of their leaders; and calls for the release of Z. Mtshelwane (South African Allied Workers' Union, Pretoria), and the following officials of the

[Mr. Dave Nellist]

Congress of South African Trades unions, namely, B. Najedi, Vemabantu and Mzuzani of Bloemfontein, and H. Maqua of Cape Town and all other detainees.]

[That this House condemns the imposition by the South African Government of a State of Emergency and for the widespread arrests of 3,000 youths and workers, including key trade union leaders; and calls for the release of the following members of the Metal and Allied Workers' Union (MAWU): P. Tom, organiser, Sharpeville, A. Pilane, steward, Brits, F. Mtshali, organiser, J. Moropa, organiser, H. Ebothome, shop steward, ATC, M. Lekoba, Brits, D. Tladi, organiser, Sebokeng, J. Magarne, organiser, Brits, Moroke, organiser, Brits, S. Moyo, Brits, P. Mabutsela, steward, Brits and the following members of the National Automobile and Allied Workers' Union (NAAWU): J. Lebese organiser, Mamelod, M. Shongwe, organiser, Brits, D. Hoshe, steward, Willard Batteries, S. Wilson, steward, Willard Batteries, P. Pheku, Springs and K. Dunjwa, steward, General Motors, and all other detainees.]

[That this House congratulates the Congress of South Africa Trade Unions, the youth organisations, the United Democratic Front and those other organisations for the 16th June one-day strike to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the Soweto massacre in 1976; condemns the widespread police arrest of 3,000 youth and workers, the police swoops on trade union officers and the detention of many union officials; and calls for the release of the following members of the Food and Allied Workers' Union: P. Makhuda, organiser, Hammanskraal; T. Mkhanazi, branch secretary, N. Natal; M. Nhlapo, branch secretary; the following members of the Paper, Wood and Allied Workers' Union: A. Willem, organiser, Port Elizabeth; B. Mnguni, organiser, Empangeni; J. Nthilinga, organiser, N. Natal; Z. Nthimkulu, organiser, Piet Retief; the following members of the Commercial, Catering and Allied Workers' Union: K. Xulu, O. K. Bazaars, Rosebank; M. Hlongweni, O. K. Bazaars; Rosebank; A. Maletso, O. K. Bazaars, Rosebank; E. Lestwalo, Hyperama, Sandton: J. Nhlongo, organiser; O. Shebangu, Empangeni, and T. Mkaliphi, acting chairman, Chemical Workers' Industrial Union (C.W.I.U.), and L. Ntlokoa (C.W.I.U.), and all other detainees.]

[That this House condemns the state of emergency declared on Thursday 12th June in South Africa and the detention of 3,000 youths and workers in the following days: congratulates COSATU, the UDF, youth and other community organisations for the solid act of defiance in the largest national strike in South Africa's history on 16th June, to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the Soweto massacre; and calls for the release of the following members of the National Union of Textile Workers; O. Ngwenya, organiser, Harrismith; M. Mkhize, organiser, Harrismith; M. Kheswa, shop steward, Durban; J. Ntuli, shop steward, Durban and L. Tsotetsi; the following members of the National Union of Mineworkers: V. Bambani, regional vice-chair, Kimberley; M. Dipico, organiser, Kimberley; V. Ngcold; M. Gladli; and D. Matuembula; the following members of the Transport and General Workers' Union: E. Ngubbane, Empangeni; J. Maxambela, Port Elizabeth; and T. Mponjana; D. Khumalo, Retail and Allied Workers' Union, Mamelodi; Mathatha, Chairman, Media Workers' Association of South Africa; and the following members of the Alexandra Action Committee: Mzwanele Mayekiso, A. Vilikazi, C. Hlatshwayo; O. Baphela of the Alexandra Youth Congress; and all other detainees.]

Those four further motions, bringing the list to over 130 key trade union leaders arrested in the past 10 days or so in South Africa.

Will the right hon. Gentleman arrange for a statement next week not only from the Prime Minister on the deliberations in The Hague today, but also from the Department of Trade and Industry to discover whether they have received the report from the Ethical Investments and Research Information Services produced in the last few days which details 135 British companies, many of which have directors sitting on the Conservative Benches, including Lonrho and Pritchard Services, which are not just paying cheap wages in South Africa but less than half that set down in the weak EEC code of conduct for the minimum level of payment for black workers in South Africa?

May we have some more Government time on South Africa so that we on the Labour Benches can tell the hon. Member for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle) that if he thinks that South Africa is such a wonderful place it is a wonder and a pity that he does not go to live there?

Mr. Biffen: If the hon. Gentleman is going to make such a free and easy accusation and add a certain amount of personal animus to it, he must not expect Government time to be provided; he must seek it on his own account.

Mr. Douglas Hogg (Grantham): Will the Leader of the House consider what my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy said today about the need for a nuclear policy? Will he, please, provide time as soon as possible for the House to consider the extent of that need? He will remember that the debate on 13 May was limited to the environmental aspects of nuclear energy and we now want to consider the energy requirements.

Mr. Biffen: My hon. Friend makes an extremely fair point, but, as a realist and sometime incumbent of the Whips Office, he will know that July is an extremely difficult month in which to find time for more general debates, but I shall bear in mind what he has said.

Mr. Eric Deakins (Walthamstow): Why does the Leader of the House treat the House with such contempt and arrogance with regard to the Third Reading of the European Communities (Amendment) Bill, which is one of the most important Bills this Session—some of us would say the most important? Surely it deserves a full day of Government time so that most hon. Members who have an interest in the matter can take part in a vote on it? Otherwise, it might well mean a vote coming in the small hours of the morning, which may suit some of us, but will not be to the convenience of hon. Members Generally.

Mr. Biffen: I understand the hon. Gentleman's point and I am not insensitive to it, but I cannot go further than what I have said to the Leader of the Opposition.

Sir Ian Percival (Southport): Has my right hon. Friend observed early-day motion 991 relating to the penalties available to those convicted of acts of terrorism which has in a short time attracted the support of no fewer than 116 of my right hon. and hon. Friends, representing a wide cross-section of our party, some of whom are well know to have been against the death penalty until now?

[That this House congratulates and thanks all those whose efforts played a part in securing the conviction of the Brighton bomber on charges of murdering five people and of those who so recently pleaded guilty in Belfast to murdering 17 people; extends its heartfelt sympathy to all who suffered loss or injury from their acts; asks itself whether there is available in such cases any penalty such as will in any sense meet the crime and whether in permitting the law as to penalties to remain as it is, it is doing sufficient to protect those who may be the next victims of such appalling evil; is of the opinion that it should give fresh consideration to extending the death penalty, now limited to treason and piracy, to criminal acts such as those done to terrorise; and asks the Leader of the House to arrange for it to have time to debate these matters.]

Does he appreciate that many of our constituents will find it difficult to understand our priorities if we cannot even find time to discuss whether the death penalty should be available in the context of the appalling developments in international terrorism? Will he find time for such discussion?

Mr. Biffen: Of course, I understand the problem, but my right hon. and learned Friend will also concede that the matter has already been debated in this Session of Parliament. However, there is simply no way in which I can hold out the prospect of easy Government time during July.

Mr. Robert Kilroy-Silk (Knowsley, North): Will the Leader of the House find time for an early debate on the procedures for investigating alleged disciplinary offences against policemen so that we may have an opportunity to discuss the disgraceful public trial of the deputy chief constable of Greater Manchester and the way in which innuendo and rumour have been gaining currency when he has had no opportunity to defend himself or to state his case? Whatever he may or may not have done, he is entitled to an impartial, objective investigation; and, if necessary, a fair trial. Is it not now appropriate for the House to debate those matters?

Mr. Biffen: As the hon. Gentleman will know, the matter has already been raised this afternoon by the Leader of the Liberal party, and I would prefer to rest my reply on the answer that I gave him.

Mr. Ivan Lawrence (Burton): As the shop steward of the House, can my right hon. Friend do something about the vile smell, the disgusting rubbish and the danger to the public presented at one of the accesses to the precincts of the House underneath Bridge street? It has been there for some time and the authorities have not done anything about it over many years. There is an enormous amount of support for the view that something should be done. Can my right hon. Friend offer any help?

Mr. Biffen: I have been asked a question on which I can offer some help. I shall consider the point and see if something can be done.

Mr. Seamus Mallon (Newry and Armagh): I should like to reinforce the request by the Leader of the Liberal party for time to debate what is now known as the Stalker affair. On three occasions in the past three weeks I have tried to raise this matter. May I reinforce those requests by pointing out that there is grave anxiety in Northern Ireland about this man's dismissal from the inquiry that he was professionally carrying out? I respectfully suggest that if an inquiry was taking place into policing in Greater London or Greater Manchester a ministerial statement would have been made long ago.

Mr. Biffen: It would be improper for me to comment upon the circumstances of the inquiry, and for that reason I shall not respond to that part of the question of the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon). I shall add his voice to the other representations made on this matter and report his view to my right hon. Friend.

Mr. Christopher Chope (Southampton, Itchen): Will my right hon. Friend make time before the summer recess for a debate on the Peacock report and upon bias in the BBC? Does he accept the urgent need for such a debate, bearing in mind the latest example, the spurious report by the Low Pay Unit which qualifies for only one column inch on an inside page of *The Guardian* today but which was featured as, I think, the third item on the BBC television news last night?

Mr. Biffen: I take account of what my hon. Friend the Member for Southampton, Itchen (Mr. Chope) says. He knows that the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) has already shown an interest in this matter. I shall see that the views are conveyed to my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary.

Mr. Robert Parry (Liverpool, Riverside): The Leader of the House will recall early-day motion 770 in the last Session about the import of South African coal through the port of Liverpool. It was supported by 97 hon. Members.

[That this House condemns the Banbury Coal Company of Northwick for importing domestic coal for the Lancashire area from South Africa through Liverpool Docks; regrets that the company is prepared to put at risk Lancashire mines and Lancashire jobs in favour of supporting economically the evil apartheid régime in South Africa; further regrets the special arrangements made with the company by the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company for handling this cargo which could lead to unrest amongst Liverpool dockers; and calls upon the Secretary of State for Energy to show his much vaunted support for the United Kingdom mining industry by seeking to prevent such unnecessary imports.]

He will have seen on today's Order Paper early-day motion 1007 tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Pontefract and Castleford (Mr. Lofthouse) which is supported by 40 hon. Members.

[That this House deplores the continuing importation into the United Kingdom of 30,000 tons of cheap South African coal each month; regards this as deplorable when the National Coal Board has plans to axe a further 24,000 jobs in the coal mining industry; and calls upon Her Majesty's Government to ban these imports.]

May we have a ban on the unnecessary import of coal from South Africa which further threatens miners' jobs?

Mr. Biffen: A statement on the general question of United Kingdom policy in the context of South Africa will almost certainly be made on Tuesday. I suggest that the hon. Member for Liverpool, Riverside (Mr. Parry) tries his luck then.

Mr. Cecil Franks (Barrow and Furness): I fully understand the difficulty facing my right hon. Friend about arranging a debate while the inquiry into the circumstances surrounding the deputy chief constable of Greater Manchester is being pursued. However, I should

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like to add my voice to those of hon. Members who have requested that when the inquiry has been concluded and hopefully that will be soon — he will consider the possibility of an early debate thereafter about all the circumstances of this most bizarre situation.

Mr. Biffen: I appreciate the considerable interest that my hon. Friend has taken in this affair. I shall report his views to my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary.

Mr. A. E. P. Duffy (Sheffield, Attercliffe): Is the Leader of the House aware that there is yet another aspect to the Stalker inquiry, which is that of allegations of shoot to kill by British forces in Northern Ireland and covert cross-border incursions into the Irish Republic by British forces in Northern Ireland? These are matters of grave concern in Dublin — we understand that they will be the subject of exchanges between the Prime Minister and the Taoiseach tomorrow — and in the House. Is it not time that the Leader of the House provided an opportunity for hon. Members to discuss how the Government allowed the inquiry to become enveloped in fumblings and misinformation and, apparently in murkiness?

Mr. Biffen: I take account of what the hon. Gentleman says. As he knows, I cannot respond by commenting upon the matter as it is now the subject of an inquiry. In all these matters I can best carry out the undertaking that I gave to the Leader of the Liberal party.

Mr. Cranley Onslow (Woking): Can my right hon. Friend shed any light on the extrordinary inability of the Selection Committee to find any member of the so-called alliance who is willing to serve on the Select Committee that is to consider the Channel Tunnel Bill?

Mr. Biffen: I can safely say that that is quite without my responsibility.

Mr. Michael Meadowcroft (Leeds, West): Does the Leader of the House recall earlier efforts to persuade him that the House should debate the serious matter of extra-territoriality? Does he realise that Anglo-American relations are being soured still further by the efforts of the United States Administration to impinge upon our sovereignty? Does he recognise that it is time that we had a debate on this extremely serious subject?

Mr. Biffen: I understand the hon. Gentleman's arguments, and I shall refer them to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry.

Mr. John Stokes (Halesowen and Stourbridge): As the Defence Estimates are to be discussed next week, can my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence be asked to refer to the defence implications of the present situation in South Africa, in view of the danger that there will not always be a Government of that country favourable to the West and of the vital importance of the sea routes round the Cape and the valuable minerals in that part of the world and of the fear that after these troubles there might be a Communist Government in that country?

Mr. Biffen: I shall most certainly ensure that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence is made aware of my hon. Friend's anxieties.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): Has the Leader of the House heard from the Patronage Secretary, to whom has been reported the great concern of the grain trade about the administrative chaos that will follow the introduction of the co-responsibility levy on cereals? Will he seek to enable the House to debate this appalling proposal before it becomes effective on 3 July?

Mr. Biffen: I am well aware, from a constituency interest, of the point that the hon. Gentleman makes. I shall certainly look into the matter further.

Mr. Ivor Stanbrook (Orpington): May we have a debate on the curious anomaly that in every case where an ex-service man has been appointed to the public service after the war he receives the extra war service credit on his pension, except where his public service was overseas? Would it not be useful if we had a debate upon this anomaly so that the Government might remedy this injustice?

Mr. Biffen: I thank my hon. Friend for drawing my attention to that anomaly, of which I was not entirely aware. I suggest that he might use all the scope that is offered in private Members' time to raise the matter. I must be candid and say that I do not think that there is very much opportunity for Government time to be made available to debate the issue.

Mr. Frank Cook (Stockton, North): I ask the Leader of the House to call to mind his response to me last week at about this time when I referred to the attempt by his hon. Friend the Minister for Environment, Countryside and Local Government, the hon. Member for Bristol, West (Mr. Waldegrave), to criticise the BBC "Panorama" programme and the possible response to the rebuttal which I had published. The right hon. Gentleman responded by saying in effect, wait and see. Since then I have not even received an acknowledgement. As the summer recess is so imminent, is it the Government's intention to allow their response to go into the shadows of the recess in the same way that their publication of the new ionising regulations was kept quiet last year by publishing them on 4 September?

Mr. Biffen: In a mood of optimism, I hoped last week that this was a self-solving difficulty, but apparently it is not. I shall look into the matter.

Mr. Nigel Forman (Carshalton and Wallington): May I associate myself with the question of my hon. Friend the Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg), and urge my right hon. Friend to seek to find time in the near future for a wide-ranging debate on the future of nuclear energy? It is important that all points of view be expressed.

Mr. Biffen: Yes, of course. I have to say to my hon. Friend that July is a bad time for the finding of Government time, but I think that he is right in saying that nuclear energy is a matter of great political importance.

Mr. Roland Boyes (Houghton and Washington): Has the Leader of the House had an opportunity today to read an article in the *Financial Times* by Richard Evans that states that water authority debts may be written off? If that happens before privatisation, £5 billion will be handed to the Government's friends in the City rather than being used to build houses, hospitals and schools and to create jobs in areas of high unemployment. It seems that a £27 billion industry is to be sold off for £5 billion to £7 billion. Is there no financial limit to the price that the Government will pay to achieve their political objectives? Quite rightly,

and for good reason, Mr. Speaker turned down a PNQ application from me today, but as a consequence of that I ask the Leader of the House, to assure us that a statement will be made very shortly on this important matter.

Mr. Biffen: I think that there may be a case for saying that a statement is needed to correct that string of misconceptions. On the other hand, I do not travel too hopefully along that course. I shall draw the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment to the fears and anxieties that have been expressed.

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham): Can my right hon. Friend confirm that in next Thursday's debate we shall be able to discuss the conclusion of the Public Accounts Committee in its eleventh report that the Committee was gravely disquieted by the decision to set up a joint services defence school of music, and to ask the House to endorse the view of 164 of my right hon. and hon. Friends expressed in early-day motion No. 397 that the training of British Army bands, with their high standard of excellence, should long continue to remain at Kneller hall Twickenham?

[That this House pays tribute to the high standards of excellence of the bands of the Army trained at Kneller Hall, Twickenham, the Royal Marines trained at Deal, and the Royal Air Force trained at Uxbridge, all of which add splendour to royal and state occasions, promote recruiting and morale, lift the spirits of the nation, and as part of the traditional British scene, help to attract to British shores visitors whose spending generates income, employment and a tax yield to Her Majesty's Government; takes note of the Eleventh Report of the Public Accounts Committee which expresses grave disquiet that the Ministry of Defence should have decided on a joint Defence School of Music which would disrupt the training of service musicians and entail expenditure of £10 million before carrying out a full investment appraisal, and recommends that the Ministry of Defence should review the need for a Defence School of Music, as well is its possible location; thanks the Right honourable Lady the Prime Minister for her reply on 6th February to the honourable Member for Twickenham that the new Secretary of State will look at the matter afresh in the light of the latest facts; and hopes that band training will long continue to flourish at Kneller Hall, Twickenham, at Deal and at Uxbridge, respectively.]

Mr. Biffen: My hon. Friend has been a successful campaigner in this matter and we all envy him his success. I am sure that the debate next week will give him a chance to advance further the arguments that he has in mind in what is, in its own way, a real and political issue.

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, East): Can the House expect a statement before 8 July, when Kurt Waldheim is expected to be inaugurated as president of Austria, concerning his involvement in the interrogation and subsequent fate of British prisoners of war? As it is difficult to come to any proper conclusion without the evidence which the Germans have so far refused to reveal concerning his activities, will Her Majesty's Government take the opportunity of the most welcome visit of President von Weizsäcker, the President of Germany, to ask him whether as a gesture of good will he will show them? Will the Government at the same time ask the United Nations to reveal its files, which show why the United Kingdom voted against and vetoed the appointment of Waldheim as Secretary-General the first time round?

Mr. Biffen: I shall see that my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary is made aware of the hon. and learned Gentleman's views.

Mr. Andrew MacKay (Berkshire, East): As there is grave concern in the motor trade about the Government's original proposals to alter the month when the new registration suffix is introduced from August to October, and as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport has been good enough to say that he will reconsider this decision, will my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House ask our right hon. Friend to make a statement before the summer recess? There is considerable uncertainty which is doing great damage in the motor trade.

Mr. Biffen: I appreciate my hon. Friend's anxieties, which I think are widely held. I shall most certainly draw the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport to this difficulty.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): In view of the string of defeats which the Government have suffered in another place, will the Leader of the House appreciate that we can well understand why the Government seem to be planning to send the House of Lords into outer space? As Mr. Bernard Ingham seems to have told the Lobby this week that the Government are planning to respond to the latest defeats that they have suffered during the passage of the Social Security Bill through another place, when is the Leader of the House planning to tell this place of the Government's intentions in respect of those defeats?

Mr. Biffen: The hon. Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden), as an experienced parliamentarian, will be aware that there is a strong convention that legislation which is before the other place is not the subject of statements here. All will be revealed in due course.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): May we have an early debate on the need to protect the interests of children against Labour authorities such as Ealing which is putting children for adoption with gays and lesbians — *[Interruption.]* Labour Members may think that this is funny, but I have a large mailbag of objections to it and every day, I am receiving deputations about it from parents and citizens. It is a serious matter.

The authority is inviting teachers to apply for posts in schools regardless of their "sexual orientation". Advertisements have been put in the *Church Times* and *The Universe* without the permission of the governors who have the responsibility for making the appointments. In view of the extreme damage that Labour authority appointments—as in Ealing—of sexual deviants or even paedophiles as guardians, foster parents and teachers could cause, is it not important that there should be an early debate on this important matter?

Mr. Biffen: I quite understand that my hon. Friend feels that this is a matter which should receive much wider public recognition. Therefore, I suggest that, at least in the first instance, he should see whether he could do well with an Adjournment debate on it.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): In the event of the motion, which was on the Order Paper for 6 June, not

[Mr. Tam Dalyell]

being chosen by the winner of the ballot for 14 July, what opportunity will the House have to consider the report of the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs of 1-2 May 1982, which was published last July and on which the Leader of the House gave an undertaking to the Leader of the Opposition?

If the motion of 6 June is not chosen, will there be an opportunity for a statement to be made on question 9? That concerns the relationship between the Prime Minister and her Law Officers. They were set up to write a letter, then, finding that she blamed the civil servants and her Trade Secretary when things went wrong, there was an inquiry into something which she herself had instigated.

Mr. Biffen: With all affection for the hon. Gentleman, I must say that I think that we have debated this several times over. I do not think my answer would add materially to his sum total of knowledge. I understand his point about the Select Committee report. That is something I will consider.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels (Leicester, East): Does my right hon. Friend share my continuing concern about the high rate of acquittals in jury trials, especially in Snaresbrook, with a 58 per cent. acquittal rate? Does he agree that we ought to have an opportunity to debate the rules and role of people who come forward to be jurymen? They need to take morality and loyalty tests and they must believe in punishment which is fitting to the crime. They should also be loyal to the Crown. Surely jurors should be totally representative of the whole of society rather than sometimes—because of defence counsel—only part of it.

Mr. Biffen: My hon. Friend makes a perfectly fair point; it must concern all law-abiding citizens. I hope that my hon. Friend will carry on campaigning in the way that he does, even though he occasionally runs the risk of misunderstanding.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Is the Leader of the House aware that there were quite a number of Home Office questions today on the matter of the Birmingham pub bombings of 1974? Is he aware of the growing concern about whether the six people in gaol took part in this crime? Shortly, a book is to be published which suggests that that is not the case. Is he aware that recently on Granada television the forensic evidence of the Home Office scientist, Dr. Frank Skuse, totally collapsed? Will the right hon. Gentleman have a word with the Home Secretary with a view to his making a statement in the House? This concerns not just Labour Members; at least one Tory Member has shown anxiety about it.

When the Leader of the House gets hold of the Home Secretary, will he also tell him that several weeks ago I sent him a letter about the imprisoned Kent miner, Terry French, but I have not had a reply. We want this lad's parole to be reviewed as urgently as possible.

Mr. Biffen: The hon. Gentleman said that, to some extent, his points were all raised at Question time this afternoon——

Mr. Skinner: No, they were not.

Mr. Biffen: I am sorry; it happens to us all from time to time. I will certainly draw my right hon. Friend's attention to the points that the hon. Gentleman has raised. In a sense I will be a substitute for the question he was unable to ask.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): Will my right hon. Friend find time for an early debate on the orders, conventions and procedures of this House, and, in particular, will he embrace within that debate the need for right hon. Gentlemen, representing minority parties, to accept and understand the meaning of open questions? Back Benchers who regularly come to the House are often disadvantaged by the actions of right hon. Gentlemen who fail to recognise the way in which this House proceeds.

Mr. Biffen: My hon. Friend must remember that the Liberal party and the Social Democratic party are going through a certain passing difficulty. This is a great place for charity, and this is a time when one should show rather more charity than my hon. Friend has exhibited.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): The Leader of the House has followed the affair of Jim Smith and Aish and company. Is he aware that a new whistle blower concerning excess profits from defence contracts has surfaced? His name is Mr. Don Pitman, a former employee of Thorn EMI, Portsmouth. He maintains that his company was also fiddling the books. Within the next couple of weeks may we have a full statement from the Dispatch Box on this matter? Can the Leader to the House assure me that the fullest possible inquiries will take place within the Ministry of Defence as to why Department officials were able so effectively to cover up what this man reported?

Mr. Biffen: I think that the hon. Gentleman's most immediate and rather engaging prospect would be to make his speech in the two days that will be devoted to defence Estimates. I can think of no better time.

Mr. Robert N. Wareing (Liverpool, West Derby): Is the Leader of the House aware that millions of disabled people who have found their standard of living eroded by the Government now see a glimmer of hope in the two decisions made in the other place against the Government's Social Security Bill? They understand from the rumours from Bernard Ingham's office that the Government are not willing to abide by that decision. Is it not therefore an opportune moment for a statement to be made to the House by the Secretary of State for Social Services as a prelude to a full scale debate—we have not had one for a year—on the plight of the disabled under the Government?

Mr. Biffen: I hear what the hon. Gentleman says, but he is aware that the matter has recently been raised by his hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden). I do not think I can fairly go beyond what I have already said.

Mr. Speaker: Before I call the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick), I wish him a happy birthday.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Perhaps I should say that it is also South Africa freedom day and it would be proper to debate South Africa.

In view of the ugly scenes which took place after Question Time, to some extent arising from the remarks made by the Leader of the House, will the Government give careful consideration to appointing an eminent

persons' group to look into the differences between the Liberals and the SDP in order to try to resolve those differences?

Mr. Biffen: It is quite simple. They are putting themselves into a state of disarray which will make them the natural partners of the Labour party.

Royal Assent

Mr. Speaker: I have to notify the House, in accordance with the Royal Assent Act 1967, that the Queen has signified Her Royal Assent to the following Acts:

1. Drainage Rates (Disabled Persons) Act 1986.
2. Corneal Tissue Act 1986.
3. British Shipbuilders (Borrowing Powers) Act 1986.
4. Horticultural Produce Act 1986.
5. Armed Forces Act 1986.
6. Civil Protection in Peacetime Act 1986.
7. Safety at Sea Act 1986.
8. Health Service Joint Consultative Committees (Access to Information) Act 1986.
9. Commonwealth Development Corporation Act 1986.
10. Land Registration Act 1986.

Orders of the Day

European Communities (Amendment) Bill

Considered in Committee, [Progress, 16 June.]
[MR. HAROLD WALKER *in the Chair*]

4.20 pm

Sir Russell Johnston (Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber): On a point of order, Mr. Walker. You may remember that at our first sitting the Minister intervened and the Government moved the closure before many hon. Members had had an opportunity to speak. Have you had any discussions with the Government about their intentions or any intimation from them with a view to protecting the rights of minority parties and of Back Benchers?

The Chairman: I have received no such representations. It is the Committee that decides whether a debate should be brought to a conclusion.

Mr. Eric Deakins (Walthamstow): On a point of order, Mr. Walker. I wish to raise four points of order, and it may be for your convenience and that of hon. Members if I raise them one by one, in case any hon. Member wishes to intervene.

First, I thank you for removing amendments Nos. 23 and 25 from the first group of amendments and for putting them into a grouping into which they fall more naturally. As a result, the Committee will be able to have a more coherent debate. You may well be aware, Mr. Walker, that two of the subjects put together, although analogous, are also important in their own right. When we reach that group of amendments, which involve economic and monetary union as well as political union, will you bear in mind that some of us may wish to raise detailed points on both subjects? I hope that you will take that into account when deciding whether to accept a closure motion on that debate.

Mr. Chairman: I am not sure whether that was a point of order or prior notice of what may happen. At the relevant time I shall take into account the view expressed by the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Deakins: My second point of order relates to the first group of amendments, as it now stands. Two subjects are involved. The first subject covers the new power of the Assembly, and amendments Nos. 2, 3 and 13. The second subject involves clause 3 and among other things the change of name from Assembly to Parliament, and affects amendments Nos. 51, 52 and 42 to 45. Although those amendments are all related to the Assembly, I hope that due consideration will be given to the fact that they represent important subjects in their own right.

Many of us would have liked to go into each subject in some detail. However, we understand that there is a feeling in the Committee that there should be a reasonably early vote on this important group of amendments. Consequently, I hope that our restraint and self-denying ordinance during the first debate will be taken into account during later debates. There are many things to be said on the first group of amendments, but they will go unsaid because of the relative shortage of time.

For example, I was going to raise the whole issue of financial control by the Assembly during the debate on the first group of amendments. However, I have decided not to do so then, as there is a desire in all parts of the Committee for an early vote. I shall thus try to introduce it at a later stage, subject to your discretion.

May we have a separate vote on amendment No. 13, which relates to the new power of the Assembly to interfere in and approve international agreements concluded by the European Communities? The Assembly does not enjoy that power at present, and it impinges on the royal prerogative. Given the importance of the royal prerogative, will the Committee be allowed to express its opinion through a separate vote?

The Chairman: At the appropriate time, I shall take into account the hon. Gentleman's representations.

Mr. Deakins: I wrote to you, and gave you notice of my third point of order, Mr. Walker. Amendment No. 26 relates to title III of the Single European Act, which concerns co-operation and the co-ordination of foreign policy in pursuit of a common foreign policy among the 12 member states of the EEC. I pointed out to you that on 7 May the Minister of State gave evidence before the Foreign Affairs Committee. When challenged by members of that Committee, the hon. Lady indicated that she would have favoured a debate on the issue of political co-operation. At present, you have chosen, in your wisdom, Mr. Walker, not to select amendment No. 26 or any of the two or three other, similar amendments. However, given the Minister's concern that there should be a debate, and my submission now, perhaps it will be possible to reconsider the matter, if not now, later in our proceedings.

If you rule that that is not in order, Mr. Walker, I am prepared to develop the argument. I would submit that the amendment is in order, and I would welcome an opportunity of raising a point relating to the contents of the documents before us, suggesting that that is so.

Mr. George Robertson (Hamilton): Further to that point of order, Mr. Walker. I very much appreciate the way in which you have treated the representations made to you about the selection of amendments. We are all extremely grateful to you for your perception.

However, I seek your guidance. My hon. Friend the Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Deakins) has made a valid point. One of the most significant parts of the Single European Act is title III, which is entitled:

"Treaty provisions on European Co-operation in the Sphere of Foreign Policy".

There are many provisions in article 30 that are of enormous consequence for the future conduct of Britain's foreign policy. The Heads of Government are meeting today in The Hague, and they will spend most of their time considering a major issue of foreign policy — South Africa. We are only too well aware that, although the EEC might want to keep such a provision outside the precise terms of the treaty, the reality is that events will dictate what happens. If Heads of Government are spending so much time debating the provisions which we have already agreed and which the Minister of State signed in Luxembourg earlier this year, how can hon. Members have an opportunity to debate the implications of that part of the Single European Act which is probably of more consequence than any other part?

The Chairman: As the hon. Gentleman fairly recognised, I gave very careful consideration to all the many representations made to me during the past few

days. I have tried as hard as possible to be fair to hon. Members in all parts of the House. However, I came to the conclusion that it would be wrong to accept that amendment. When we debate clause stand part, the Chair may be able to recognise the interest expressed in those points.

Mr. Deakins: You have anticipated my fourth point of order, Mr. Walker. I was going to point out that there are several other amendments that have also not been chosen. I entirely accept your ruling on such matters. However, there is to be no debate on social policy, on social and economic cohesion, or on research and technology. All those subjects are relatively important and are considered as such in Brussels and elsewhere. Consequently, I was hoping that you would take into account the fact that there had been no separate debates on those subjects, when considering whether there should be a debate on clause 1 stand part.

The Chairman: I have heard what has been said and the Chair will take it into account when we reach that point in our proceedings. I shall, of course, have regard to the scope of any debate that precedes it.

Attention has been drawn to the fact that the selection of amendments before the House last week has been revised. Hon. Members may be pleased to know that I have sought to take into account all the representations made, including those made about the possibility of a debate on clause 2 stand part. It would be proper to allow such a debate when we reach that point.

4.30 pm

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): On a point of order, Mr. Walker. I join my colleagues in thanking you for the changes that have been made and endorse the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Deakins) on clause 1 stand part and in view of the wide ambit of subjects that have been agreed in the matter of closure.

My point relates to Standing Orders Nos. 28 and 29 in relation to the moving of a dilatory motion. Standing Order No. 29 says that the Question on a dilatory motion may be put at once, or may not be put, by the Chair in the event of the issue being an abuse of the rules of the House.

I hope, Mr. Walker, that I would never knowingly be guilty of such an abuse. I therefore seek your permission to move, That the Committee do report progress and ask leave to sit again. I do not want to trespass on to the substance of the matter, in the expectation that you will accept the motion.

On 17 June last the Minister of State, Treasury signed a memorandum for the House and for the public which stated in effect that the Commission of the European Communities, at its meeting on 22 May last year, had proposed a supplementary budget to the EEC which amounted to extending expenditure for the current year up to the limit of the so-called 1·4 per cent. VAT ceiling.

Paragraph 7 of the memorandum says:

"Adoption of the preliminary draft supplementary and amending budget No. 1 as presented by the Commission would exhaust the own resources available within the 1·4 per cent. VAT ceiling."

Paragraph 2 states that the proposal will be considered by the Council of Ministers at the 16-17 July Budget Council.

While I do not wish to go further into the merits of that, I would commend that not only is this proposed extension of expenditure — it may not be accepted — of considerable importance in relation to what we are about to discuss, but, the 1·4 per cent. VAT ceiling having been reached, the Fontainebleau arrangement for rebate, which has been a strong feature of debates and, indeed, of the Government's case, would fall and our relationships with the EEC would therefore be of a wholly different character and nature from that envisaged were the document not available.

The memorandum was not available in the House until, at the earliest, yesterday, and in effect today. The substantive document, which of course we would not have known about, was sent from Brussels to the Government as long ago as 22 May.

I seek to move the adjournment of the Committee, if briefly, to give the Minister an opportunity to reply to many of the financial points which arise, which have not been made very clearly in the Government's financial memorandum and which, I submit, will change the atmosphere in which our debates on the Bill will take place.

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): Further to that point of order, Mr. Walker.

On 23 June, which was only Tuesday this week, the Minister of State, Treasury in a parliamentary answer stated that the highest rate of VAT contribution for 1986 was 1·22 per cent. I have this morning received a paper from the European Commission, document 7116/86, in which the words are used:

"own resources within the 1·4 VAT limit are insufficient to cover all requirements."

In other words, the Government are saying that 1·22 per cent. is adequate for all contingencies, while the Commission is saying that the Common Market is in effect insolvent and does not have the money to pay for the things that it has agreed to do this year.

One may ask, is this not a wholly separate issue from the Bill? I think you will be aware, Mr. Walker, that two of the clauses deal specifically with the participation of the European Assembly and the Council of Ministers in budgetary matters. I am wondering whether it would be more helpful to the House, before we deal with the two specific articles concerning budgetary matters, to clarify whether the Government are right in saying that there is plenty of room for extra spending this year above 1·22 per cent. or whether the European Commission in its document — an official Community document signed by Commissioner Christophersen — is correct in saying that the Community is in effect insolvent and does not have, even on maximum resources, the money to pay its basic bills for this year.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): Further to that point of order, Mr. Walker. The Bill is being put forward as part of our total relationship with the European Community. As part of that total relationship, various negotiations took place and various agreements were made about the level of rebate and therefore the level of net cost contribution that the United Kingdom would make towards the Community. In view of what my hon. Friend has just said, there is a real prospect that that net contribution — the amount of money that the British taxpayer will have to pay net to the Community — will be significantly greater than anticipated.

The British people would be appalled if we were to continue the debate without their first knowing what

[Mr. Tony Marlow]

commitment we are making on their behalf in financial terms, as the Bill is part of the general arrangement that balances out the financial contribution that we intend to make.

The Chairman: I am grateful to the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) for having given me notice of his intention to raise this matter.

I have listened carefully to what has been said. It seems to me that the matters that have been raised have no bearing on the content of the Bill. Certainly they may be matters for the Committee to take into account in reaching its conclusions. I do not think that they provide any substance for my accepting a motion such as that suggested by the hon. Gentleman, and I cannot accept such a motion.

Clause 1

Extended meaning of "the Treaties" and "the Community Treaties"

Sir Edward du Cann (Taunton): I beg to move amendment No. 2, in page 1, line 13, after 'Communities)', insert

'but not Articles 6 and 7 thereof'.

The Chairman: With this it will be convenient to discuss the following amendments: No. 3, in page 1, line 13, after 'Communities)', insert

'but not Article 8 thereof'.

No. 13, in page 1, line 13, after 'Communities)', insert 'but not Article 9 thereof'.

No. 51, in clause 3, page 2, line 22, leave out paragraph *(a)*.

No. 52, in clause 3, page 2, line 25, leave out paragraph *(b)*.

No. 42, in clause 3, page 2, line 32, leave out from 'below' to 'but' in line 33.

No. 43, in clause 3, page 2, line 33, leave out from 'Act' to end of line 41.

No. 44, in clause 3, page 2, line 34, leave out paragraph *(a)*.

No. 45, in clause 3, page 3, line 1, leave out sub-section (3).

Sir Edward du Cann: Before I deal with the substance of the amendment, I should like to make a short reference to the exchanges that have taken place in respect of points of order on the timetable for our discussion.

The title of the measure that we are now discussing in some detail—European Communities (Amendment) Bill—is wholly misleading. The Bill, if Parliament in its wisdom decides to enact it, gives effect to an international agreement, the Single European Act, which is a new treaty, and at least equal in significance to the original treaty of Rome. That measure is of supreme constitutional importance. It is a great step towards the creation of a European super-state and of a European political union. The outstanding thing, the regrettable thing, is that this Single European Act has never been discussed in either House of the British Parliament.

I do not comment on whether the treaty is desirable or undesirable. I say only that any attempt to suggest that the Bill is a minor matter and exists merely in order to facilitate the workings of the Common Market would be a confidence trick.

I think that Opposition Members and my hon. Friends who have spoken publicly in the Chamber and privately to you, Mr. Walker, and to the Leader of the House and to the Patronage Secretary requesting that adequate time should be taken to discuss this measure have not only right but common sense on their side.

If we take the separate subjects for debate — the harmonisation of taxation, the common agricultural policy, European union, the powers of the European Parliament and other subjects which, as the hon. Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Deakins) said, we shall probably not have an opportunity to discuss — each of those subjects alone requires a whole day at least for proper discussion. Therefore, it is appropriate to say that it is good that the representations on this subject — not through the usual channels but through unusual channels — have been heeded.

Whatever our views on the European Community may be, none of us wishes to delay the debate, or to prolong it unnecessarily, or to impede sensible legislation, but it is entirely appropriate that Back Benchers should demand adequate time in which to bring into the open the realities. They need to be fully discussed in this Chamber. The great British public needs to be made fully aware of the realities and their implications.

As for amendment No. 2, in a nutshell the Bill gives additional powers to the European Parliament to influence decisions of the European Community. Already there is great controversy about the extent of the increase in those powers. I shall not cite the references; right hon. and hon. Members are well aware of them. However, in my experience unclear law is always bad law. I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Wallasey (Mrs. Chalker), the Minister of State, will make a very clear statement about the intentions of Her Majesty's Government. First, what will happen? Secondly, what will occur in practice? Thirdly, in the event of a dispute between the Commission and the Assembly, who is to be the arbiter? I am sure that, like me, every other right hon. and hon. Member has observed that the Members of the Euro-Assembly are now hungry for power and authority.

Individual Members of the Assembly have already stated that they will exploit these new powers to the fullest possible extent. What individuals say is one thing, but what the Assembly has said collectively is pretty remarkable. The Assembly has collectively expressed the view that it will exploit the new powers to the fullest extent. Indeed, such a decision was made formally by the Assembly in a resolution that was passed by 206 votes to 63 on 16 January 1986.

In case you, Mr. Walker, or anybody else should think that 63 elected representatives were not prepared to go quite so fast as the 206 who formed the majority, let me stress that the 63 who voted against did not vote against the sentiment — quite the reverse. They expressed their distress about what they saw as the inadequacy of the new powers in the Single European Act. The text is available and the writing is very clearly on the wall. If right hon. and hon. Members do not care for the graffiti on the wall, they can see the text in the Library of the House of Commons.

Mr. Marlow: My right hon. Friend has been telling the House very eloquently that the significance of this

monumental piece of legislation is not yet sufficiently recognised. I remind him of a judgment earlier this week in the European Court of Justice. Effectively, it requires Her Majesty's Government to make social payments to various categories of the population. Years ago, when the original European Communities Act was introduced and when various debates took place and a referendum campaign was held, nobody suggested for a moment that an impost of this kind would be placed upon Her Majesty's Government by an institution such as this. Things will happen as the years unwind that at this stage nobody is able to imagine. The result will be a massive reduction in our sovereignty.

4.45 pm

Sir Edward du Cann: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for raising the point that I wanted to make to the House next and for putting it so clearly.

Hitherto, the Assembly has been chiefly an advisory body. When the question of our signing the treaty of Rome was widely discussed in the country during the referendum, it was never suggested that the Assembly would be other than an advisory body. Now, however, its function is about to change, and change dramatically. If the amendment is not carried and the Bill is passed in its present form, the Assembly will be able to block Council proposals, unless the Council disagrees unanimously with its views. It is obvious to anybody who knows anything about the way in which the European Community now operates that that is extremely unlikely.

The chances of achieving unanimity are the slenderest ever. There are now 12 members of the Community, including Italy. That country favours extra-parliamentary powers. It always has done and it makes no secret of its views. And, as everyone knows, it rarely disagrees with the Council. If the Council wants to get legislation through there will be immense pressure on it to accommodate the views of the European Parliament. Whether we like it or not, whether people know about it or not, the European Parliament will take immense new authority. Part of the reason for moving the amendment is to make that point absolutely clear to our fellow countrymen and countrywomen.

Sir Anthony Meyer (Clwyd, North-West): Does my right hon. Friend not think that there is a rather sad irony in the fact that a new democracy such as Italy should be so keen on providing the European Community with an effective parliamentary constitution but that apparently this country, the mother of Parliaments, should be so reluctant to do so?

Sir Edward du Cann: It is legitimate to hold another point of view. We have evolved our style of parliamentary democracy over the centuries. There is not one hon. Member who is privileged to serve in this House who is not immensely proud of it and who wants to make his contribution in his own way to its effective working and, as time moves on, to its enhancement. Not every European country has the same proud parliamentary tradition of democracy. I prefer to defend what we have rather than to embark too early upon a new and untried experiment in which we shall have only a minority interest. The proposal is that the authority of the European Assembly should be greatly increased. In effect, it follows that there must be an equivalent decrease of the authority of United Kingdom Ministers. It follows, too, that equally there must be a decrease in the authority of United Kingdom parliamentarians from whom Ministers are selected and to whom hitherto they have been answerable. My view, for what it is worth, is that that is unacceptable at this stage in the European Community's development.

The purpose of the amendment is to exclude these proposals from United Kingdom law and thereby to continue to preserve, or to attempt to preserve, the sovereignty of this Parliament. I repeat what I said earlier in a different context. At no time has the proposal to increase the powers of the European Assembly been put to the United Kingdom electorate. If that were done and if the answer were in the affirmative, I might be content. That has not been done, and as it has not been done I cannot be content.

It is absurd that this Bill should be sold to the community — by which I mean this country's community — as a simple tidying measure. This proposal represents a most significant constitutional change. If this choice were put squarely to the electorate of this country, I doubt very much whether they would be in favour of it. The electorate may like to make jokes about us and about their Parliament — that is their right, their privilege and their freedom — but they probably prefer to keep what they have rather than to embark on a new experiment. Therefore, at this time I think it is right to refuse to sanction this part of the Bill.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): As a signatory of the amendment, may I say on behalf of the official Opposition that we support the amendment. If the Government are not prepared to accept it, we shall divide the House.

I must say to the right hon. Member for Taunton (Sir E. du Cann) that the demand for adequate time to discuss this matter comes not only from the Back Benchers on both sides of the House, but from the Labour Front Bench.

Like the right hon. Member for Taunton, the Opposition believe that this group of amendments, and amendment No. 2 in particular, brings us to the key issue of the Bill. It is of serious concern to the Opposition. We are not just talking, as the phraseology of Europe would have us believe, about co-operation between the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission. We are talking of cold decision-making by the European Parliament. This measure represents a substantial change, which must not be under-estimated.

The change may not be enough for the European Parliament. The right hon. Member for Taunton called its Members power-hungry. It is understandable that they have this wish to increase their power, but it is also right for us to examine the effect of the measure, if implemented, on our powers as a democratically elected institution.

The European Parliament may have said in resolutions that were adopted on 16 January that that was only modest progress towards its aims. We disagree with that view because we regard it as a significant transfer of power, from Westminster, to Strasbourg as well as Brussels. That is why we oppose it.

Mr. Marlow: I am sorry to intervene so early in the hon. Gentleman's speech. Can he tell the House at this stage, if a Labour Government were to be elected, whether they would repeal the Bill?

Mr. Foulkes: That is something that we would have to take account of when — not if — a Labour Government was elected. It would depend on how circumstances changed before then.

The changes proposed diminish the powers of Westminster in four ways, which I shall outline to the House. First, scrutiny by the House of Commons will be even more difficult than it is now. We accept — indeed, I believe that even the Government accept — that scrutiny is not good at present. The Government accepted the Opposition's amendment on 4 March and promised improvements. But the Government's response so far to the improvements in scrutiny that the House — not just the Opposition — demanded has been inadequate so far.

Secondly, the power of the Council will be reduced and circumscribed. As Minsters are also responsible to Parliament, that factor would reduce our powers in the House of Commons of the United Kingdom.

Thirdly, the opportunity to veto by the United Kingdom Government, or the power to block, will be greatly reduced. We shall discuss later the areas where the decisions now carried out by unanimous agreement of the Council will be changed to a qualified majority. Suffice it to say that at present the Luxembourg compromise, which we have never accepted as legally binding but which has been effective up to now with one or two exceptions, will become less effective.

The fourth way in which our power is being diminished is that the compromise will be much more difficult because of the second stage in decision-making. This is not just the view of the Opposition, although I am stating it on behalf of the Opposition. The Government recognise this and they were strongly opposed at first to the changes that they now advocate in the Bill. The Bill represents a humiliating climbdown by the Government.

To answer the question put by the right hon. Member for Taunton, it is no wonder that the Government want to keep the issue, as well as this debate, low key. It is embarrassing for them to climb down in this way.

In the Dooge report, the then Minister of State who has been promoted to be Secretary of State for Scotland, the right hon. and learned Member for Edinburgh, Pentlands (Mr. Rifkind), insisted, along with the Greek Government, on a reservation on this matter. The right hon. and learned Gentleman, as it says in the report,

"entered a reservation on this section. He considers that the European Parliament should be encouraged, within its Treaty powers, to make more effective contributions to Community decision-making. The Parliament should make more use of its right to put forward proposals for Community action. The Council should follow up resolutions with the Parliament, or explain its reasons for not doing so. There should be improvement and extension of the conciliation procedure, in particular by more effective consultation between the Council and the Parliament at earlier stages of the consideration of proposals."

That was as far as the Government would go. They insisted on that reservation being included, but they were clearly and firmly against co-decision-making. The Prime Minister herself was against any intergovernmental conference even to discuss and consider the matter, yet all the proposals in Dooge, except powers in relation to revenue-raising, have been adopted by the Government and are advocated by the successor to the right hon. and learned Member for Pentlands, by the hon. Member for Wallesey (Mrs. Chalker).

As those of my hon. and right hon. Friends who are members of the Foreign Affairs Select Committee will know only too well, these institutional and procedural changes embodied in the Single European Act go further than the Government had proposed at first. They will have a significant effect on the operation of most of the Community's institutions.

The Opposition believe that the Government's first response was correct and that we should examine the implications in more detail, especially in relation to scrutiny. The extended procedure for considering legislation — the Second Reading nature of the procedure — will make scrutiny by the House of Commons much more difficult. Each proposal will have to be examined and then, if it is changed, it will have to be examined again by the House. That would potentially double the time given to examination. In some ways, speeding up the timetable of procedures and the ultimatum date will also make that difficult.

Although the Minister of State wrote a letter to me explaining how she thought the scrutiny procedures could be improved in Parliament here — that is published on page 67 of the Select Committee's report — it goes only a small way towards achieving the improvements in scrutiny that we were asking for.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman is entirely up to date with what has been happening. Is he aware that the Minister of State has written to the Chairman of the European Legislation Select Committee, of which I am a member? In her letter of 16 June she says:

"May I simply confirm that we recognise that the Single European Act will involve some added burden of scrutiny and the Government are ready to make the necessary changes in existing scrutiny arrangements."

Therefore, it would appear, subject to what the Minister of State will say, that there is every reason to suppose that we shall have effective scrutiny arrangements, in line with the Government's commitment.

Mr. Foulkes: I thank the hon. Gentleman for bringing me up to date on that matter. I have not seen that letter. He is more optimistic than I about the Government's ability to put forward adequate scrutiny arrangements. The Minister will be speaking later in the debate, and I look forward to hearing her reply and perhaps an elaboration of her remarks on 16 June.

Let me deal with the Government's improvement in the scrutiny procedures. The Minister might be able to answer some of the questions about scrutiny — for example, about the recesses. The recesses of this Parliament do not correspond in time to those of the European Parliament, and that will create difficulty. That point has not been dealt with.

Mr. Spearing: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. However good the scrutiny procedure is, it only allows vision, and does not allow for any influence or action on the Ministers or the European institutions.

Leaving that aside, is my hon. Friend aware that the second special report from the Select Committee on European Legislation, of which I have the honour to be Chairman, suggested ways in which the work of the Committee could be slightly extended to give the House proper notice of all European developments. I should add that the report was unanimous and encompassed many views on this matter. Despite its name, the Select Committee was not able to report wholly on the very business before us today.

Mr. Foulkes: I accept all the points made by my hon. Friend. I know that the House is grateful to the Select Committee, and especially to my hon. Friend as Chairman, for the work it does. I also know that he is the first to admit that the way in which it is able to operate is inadequate to scrutinise the burden of legislation that we get from the European Community. We are not doing it justice. Important matters are considered inadequately, late at night and in a cursory way.

That brings me to another point that needs to be answered, which is the timing of debates. The squeezing in of important issues at an inappropriate time late at night or between other business so that no proper scrutiny can be carried out has been raised again and again. I accept that scrutiny is only one aspect of it and does not necessarily allow influence.

5 pm

As I said earlier, the power of the United Kingdom Government in the Council will be reduced. I mentioned the Luxembourg compromise. The House of Lords Select Committee on the European Communities said in its report, pages 6 to 8, that it will be difficult for any Government, in our case the British Government, to resist a united front of the Commission of the European Parliament and the rest of the Council. It is clear from the report—I think that its analysis is right—that a political momentum will build up behind a particular proposal and that although there may be a technical agreement in relation to the Luxembourg compromise it will be very difficult for the British Government to resist that momentum.

Proposals which are amended by the European Parliament, the amendments of which are accepted by the Commission, can be rejected only by a unanimous vote of the Council. That means that the powers of the British Government are severely circumscribed.

The Prime Minister stated, I believe in reply to the hon. Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor), that the last word remains with the Council. That is not much good if the only last word it is permitted to say is "Yes".

Mr. Marlow: As I understand it, the hon. Gentleman was suggesting that the European Assembly or Parliament, whatever it is to be, can propose an amendment. The Commission could agree with that amendment. That amendment could be very radical and very much alter the proposal being put forward. The hon. Gentleman was saying that, unless the Council is unanimous in opposing that amendment, it would go through. The hon. Gentleman is saying that the Commission and the Parliament/Assembly together could bring forward almost totally new legislation unless all members of the Council — every country in the Community, at Foreign Minister level—were against it.

Mr. Foulkes: The hon. Gentleman has underlined my statement and made it clearer. That is an exact description of what I understand the position to be.

As the report of the House of Lords Select Committee says, the power of United Kingdom Ministers within the Council has been reduced, so the power of the United Kingdom Parliament has been reduced. It says that United Kingdom Ministers

"may be outvoted more often. The intervention of the European Parliament is outside their control. They will have less opportunity . . .to influence the Commission through negotiation at the second stage . . ."

It also says that some legislative powers will actually be delegated to the Commission.

Sir Russell Johnston *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Foulkes: The hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston) may shake his head, but that is correct. The Minister will have an opportunity to contradict not only me but the report of the House of Lords Select Committee. The members of the Committee may not be elected—I have my reservations about that —but they still have an ability and understanding of the situation and have made their comments quite clear.

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will agree that we shall want a full explanation from the Minister because at an earlier stage she talked about this not being a zero-sum game. When it was put to her that those proposals would lead to a reduction in power both of the House and of British Ministers she was very keen to suggest that there was some way in which power could be expanded . I hope that we will get some explanation because since we have had the two very useful reports of the Select Committees it has become obvious that she is wrong.

Mr. Foulkes: I know that the hon. Gentleman is as concerned about this matter as I am. We are in Committee and do not necessarily have the formal structure of Second and Third Reading and the Minister will have an opportunity of correcting the Select Committees, the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen) and myself if we are wrong. However, I very much doubt that all of us are wrong.

I shall now come to the areas on which co-decision-making, the important extension of the responsibility of the Community, is taking place. It is important that we know exactly what areas are affected. Are they marginal; to our way of life? Are they peripheral matters? The areas are not peripheral or marginal; they are important. We are talking about article 7—

"rules to prohibit discrimination on grounds of nationality"

—

and article 49—

"measures to bring about freedom of movement for workers . . .by ensuring close cooperation between national employment services:

(b) by systematically and progressively abolishing those administrative procedures and practices and those qualifying periods in respect of eligibility for available employment".

These are important matters. The responsibility is going to be increasingly transferred away from the House towards Strasbourg.

We are talking about article 56(2), which states:

"directives for co-ordination of national measures providing for special treatment of foreign nationals on grounds of public policy, security or health."

Article 57(2) refers to

"mutual recognition of formal qualifications."

and, of course, all the arrangements for the internal market.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) and others will participate in the debate later on the group of amendments dealing with the internal market. Samples of the areas concerned are speed limits for motor vehicles, public procurement arrangements, life insurance and mortgages, company liquidation, takeover bids and policy on state aid for coal, steel and shipbuilding or whatever. Therefore, these are not peripheral matters. They are central to our economy.

[Mr. Foulkes]

On top of all that, the Bill implementing the Single European Act introduces majority voting for the Council on a number of areas on which unanimity was previously required. The Single European Act talks of moves towards European union. It means greater integration, as we have seen in terms of the European monetary system. I know that the hon. Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) is in favour of that. It means a movement towards tax harmonisation. The official Opposition believe in co-operation with our European partners and within Europe. However, we are against moving towards a united states of Europe. We are against the kind of union that is implicit and explicit in the Single European Act and the Bill that implements it. That is why we oppose the Bill and ask the House to support amendment No. 2 tonight.

Mr. J. Enoch Powell (South Down): When in 1978 the House ill-advisedly consented to convert the European Assembly into a directly elected body, it was predicted that a directly elected body, which was already endowed with the power to refuse assent to the budget of the Community and to dismiss the Commission, would soon discover and explore the potential powers which it would exercise, as in past centuries the House had made a similar discovery and exploration. The anxiety which was expressed on that score was strong on both sides of the House. As a result of that, what professed to be a protection was written into the European Assembly Elections Act 1978 which enacted:

"No treaty which provides for any increase in the powers of the Assembly shall be ratified by the United Kingdom unless it has been approved by an Act of Parliament."

Hon. Members who have looked at clause 3(4) of the Bill will notice that that is precisely what we are invited to do in approving the Bill. We do not need to argue whether the consequences of the treaty and the Bill are an increase in the powers of the Assembly. The Government say that that is so. The Government may seek to argue that that increase of the powers of the Assembly is not at the expense of the powers of the Parliament of the United Kingdom. That proposition rests on an important fallacy about the nature of power. There is no vacuum of power unexercised, unavailable, which is ready to be dished out to new occupiers and exercisers.

At the moment, the power exists and it is shared between this Parliament and the institutions of the Community in accordance with a particular pattern. If the power of any portion of those institutions is increased, as the Government tell the House it is increased in respect of the Assembly, by the treaty and the Bill, it must follow that the effectiveness and real power—the political power—of the other elements, the other possessors, is diminished. Whatever is arrogated to the Assembly by the legislation and the treaty is deducted from what is available to this Parliament and, thus, to the people it represents.

No unoccupied ground or unexplored territory can be colonised by the Assembly without a diminution in the control and powers of this House. We are discussing an actual deduction from the powers of this House so that those powers may be exercised by other bodies over which we do not have anything like the same opportunity of control.

There is a kind of tripod in the institutions of the Community—the Council, the Commission, and what was hitherto called the Assembly. It is only through the Council that this House can assert itself. It is only in the Council that the members of the Government who are answerable to this House can assert themselves. Of course, in the last resort, they can only assert themselves in the Council when there is decision by unanimity. Whether they decide in the Council by unanimity or otherwise, it is through the Council that this House still exercises a degree of power, on behalf of the United Kingdom, in the institutions of the European Community.

A big shift is created in relative power the Council—its relative power in the tripod—by the treaty and the Bill. That power is transferred and inures to the benefit of the other two elements—the Commission and the Assembly. Anyone who has studied the co-operation procedure, as it is delicately called, with which the amendment deals will have seen the joint interest that the Commission and the Assembly have in co-operating with one another. Indeed, an almost corrupt deal has been struck between the Commission and the Assembly—a log-rolling or back-scratching arrangement between the two—whereby, if the Commission proceeds by way of the co-operation process, it can use the added power which has been attributed to the Assembly to strengthen itself and its intentions vis-a-vis the Council. Therefore, it is the Commission and the Assembly, jointly, which are given an accretion of power at the expense of the Council and, therefore, at the expense of this House—the Council being the only element which can be directly influenced and ultimately controlled by the Parliament and people of the United Kingdom.

Sir Anthony Meyer: I wondered why the right hon. Gentleman used the word "corrupt" in that sentence. It seems a perfectly legitimate exercise on the part of the Commission to seek to extend its influence.

Mr. Powell: All power tends to be associated in human experience with corruption. [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh."] It is not strange to hon. Members that methods which could indelicately be described as "corruption" are essential to the control and management of any democratic and elected Assembly. I hope that the House will not be too prissy about the use of that rather ugly expression. Two of the three elements in the structure of the European Economic Community can, by collusion with one another—by mutually supporting one another—weaken the third. If the hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West (Sir A. Meyer) prefers the words "collusion" and "conspiracy" to "corruption", I am prepared to make that concession.

Mr. Spearing: Is the right hon. Gentleman more right than perhaps he first thought? The preamble to the Single European Act states:

"the wishes of the democratic peoples of Europe, for whom the European Parliament, elected by universal suffrage, is an indispensable means of expression".

If that is taken to heart as it is meant, the Commission will present proposals which are liked by the European Parliament but which together will be corrupting to the influence of this House.

Mr. Powell: Before I conclude I shall refer to the nature of the Assembly and its claims to be democratic or parliamentary.

I now turn to the three subjects covered by the group of amendments. The first is the embodiment by the Act in the law of the United Kingdom of what is called the co-operation procedure, which reduces the powers and opportunities of the Council in the event of certain

decisions being taken by the European Assembly. The second concerns the hitherto external powers of the Council to make additions to the associated membership of the Community. The third subject concerns the nomenclature of that body.

5.15 pm

I have discussed the consequences of the new co-operation procedure which is at the heart of the treaty. It is probably the prize which was most valued by those in the Government who secured agreement to the treaty. It represents an actual and literal transfer of power from one place to another within the institutions of the Community. The result of that procedure is that the input of the European Assembly alters the respective powers of the Commission and the respective power of the Council of Ministers in a manner which inevitably diminishes the influence and possibilities open to a member of the Council representing one of the member states of the Community.

It is a machinery whereby, at the will of the Commission and the Assembly, the hand of this Government and, therefore, of this Parliament and the electorate of the United Kingdom can be weakened or tied. The matter does not need to be argued at exhaustive length, because the co-operation machinery, as it is set out in article 7, displays quite clearly what the consequences for control through the Council will be.

It is useful to look at the effect of articles 8 and 9 which amend articles 237 and 238 of the treaty of Rome. As the treaty stands, under article 237 the decision to increase the membership of the Community is dealt with by the Council after the opinion of the Commission has been obtained. The new article which will replace that provides for the key power to be transferred to the Assembly. That can happen only after the assent of the European Parliament is received. The European Parliament is put in the key position in the expansion of the Community which was hitherto exclusively occupied by the Council of Ministers. If hon. Members will look at the consequences of article 9, amending article 238 of the treaty of Rome, they will see exactly the same process being applied to association.

The Parliament is being inserted in the position of ultimate authority and control, which was hitherto occupied by the Council. It is another reminder and indication—it may be marginal in its practical effect but it is significant—of the triumph of the Assembly, as against the other institutions of the Community, which is represented by this treaty and the Bill.

That brings me to the third topic—nomenclature. It is no small matter for the House of Commons to declare solemnly that the European Assembly is a Parliament and to bless that nomenclature, although it has been popularly used hitherto. "Parliament" is a word of magic and power in this country. We refer to "parliamentary sovereignty." We live under the sovereignty of the Crown in Parliament. Our history and political life would be unintelligible if Parliament were removed from that history. There is no other European nation of which the same can be said. There is no other European nation at the heart of whose identity and history lies its parliamentary assembly.

When we proceed to accord the title "Parliament" formally and by the law of the United Kingdom to another assembly, we should be conscious of the symbolical nature of the act which we are performing. We are endowing that institution potentially with the same sovereignty, powers and representative quality that we in this Parliament possess. It is an act of meaning. It is not something that we can dismiss as a mere formality, a matter of nomenclature to be hurried over. It is significant and, if there were any possibility of otherwise mistaking the meaning and importance of the treaty and the Bill, we should be put upon warning by this part of the legislation.

The hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West interrupted the right hon. Member for Taunton (Sir E. du Cann) and asked what was wrong with calling the European Parliament a Parliament, because it was a democratic assembly. He said that it was an elected assembly, and he asked what was wrong with equating election with democracy. But merely to be elected is not to be democratic, in the sense that we understand it. There is a certain relationship between electorate and elected body upon which the very nature of parliamentary sovereignty and our claim to be a representative body depends.

Our Parliament implies a homogeneous electorate. It implies a single nation which elects the disparate Members who sit together in the House. It is the Parliament of a united kingdom. The Parliament which assembles at Strasbourg is an assembly of those who have been elected in different nations, and, incidentally, under different electoral systems, to congregate together. They do not come together as the representatives of a single self-recognising community. The nature of that assembly is different in kind from the nature of this Parliament. We are performing a type of solecism in attributing the term "Parliament" to that Assembly. What we should not do is create the implications and hallow the assumptions which attach to the word "Parliament" when applied to the European Assembly. The European Assembly is not, in our sense of the term, a "Parliament" and it is not the wish of the people of this country that it should ever be a Parliament in the sense of being the ultimate repository of the legislative and executive powers under which the people of the United Kingdom are to live.

By sanctioning these changes, and especially the change in nomenclature, we are perpetrating a lie in the face of Europe, implying that the British people voluntarily intend to surrender to the institutions of the Community those powers over themselves which hitherto have been exclusively vested in the House. They do not intend to do that. When they become aware that that is what is happening, they will put a stop to it.

Sir Anthony Meyer: It is impossible to withhold admiration for the determination with which the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) defends the shadow of the absolute sovereignty of this Parliament. I shall refer rather more to the substance of this Parliament's sovereignty. In his own eloquent, incorruptible way, the right hon. Gentleman fights against all change, however inevitable and inexorable.

I should like to take up one aspect of that substance. The right hon. Member for South Down said that any powers taken by the European Parliament would be powers taken away from this Parliament. In theory he is correct, but he makes no allowance for the factor that underlies the purpose and existence of the European Community—the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. If the Community becomes effective, it will exercise real power and influence in the world. This Parliament, as a constituent member of that Community, may, in theory,

[Sir Anthony Meyer]

have surrendered some of its powers to a European Parliament, but it will exercise its powers, slightly limited, on matters in which it can influence events.

It was sad to listen to the speech of my right hon. Friend the Member for Taunton (Sir E. du Cann). There is no hon. Member who has contributed more, from both the Front Benches and the Back Benches, to making this one of the great Parliaments of the world. We all greatly esteem his contributions to our debates.

Mr. Budgen: Now put the knife in his back.

Sir Anthony Meyer: This is no knife. I wish merely to express sadness at the fact that my right hon. Friend should so lack confidence in this Parliament's ability to put its ideas across to the rest of the world that he fears that, by allowing ourselves to be drawn into the operations of a European Parliament, we will prejudice the rights and privileges of the House.

I felt sad, in a different way, when listening to the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes). I know of his great devotion for many years to the cause of closer co-operation in Europe. He talked a lot of sense about the need to improve our arrangements. If those arrangements are inadequate, the fault lies, not in our stars, but in ourselves. It is up to us to evolve a better system for scrutinising the great mass of legislation from the European Parliament. It was sad to listen to the hon. Gentleman's nit-picking, mean-minded approach to a matter of vital interest to us all—how we can make parliamentary institutions in the European Community function more effectively.

When Britain joined the European Community, there was one thing which the other Community states looked confidently towards us to provide—an example of how the parliamentary institutions of the Community could be made to function effectively. I am the first to admit that the solution which has been chosen of a directly elected European Parliament is not necessarily ideal. I see a possible difficulty in trying to treat this Parliament as though it were closely analogous to a national Parliament. There is a fundamental difference, because the European Parliament in no way sustains an Executive. None the less, it can and should play a vital role in controlling that Executive. This is surely a function that we should teach the European Parliament the better to fulfil instead of constantly carping and seeking to limit its powers and restrict contact between this Parliament and the European Parliament. In this respect Britain has been a great disappointment to the other members of the European Community, who looked to us, in this matter above all, to set them a good example.

We have already heard much, and we shall hear a great deal more during the rest of the debate, about the restrictions which the new clause will place on the powers of our Parliament. I have already admitted that it will place some theoretical restrictions on it. None the less, by those timid steps in the direction of creating a European Community the better able to carry out its functions, and the better able to subject those functions to some parliamentary scrutiny, we shall create a Community which far more effectively than the present one can further the purposes of Britain's policy, economically and in foreign affairs.

Therefore, I warmly welcome the provisions of the agreement and shall have no hesitation in opposing the amendment.

5.30 pm

Mr. Michael Foot (Blaenau Gwent): I strongly support the amendment moved by the right hon. Member for Taunton (Sir E. du Cann). I join the tribute paid by the hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West (Sir A. Meyer) to the right hon. Gentleman, but I make my tribute absolutely unqualified in the sense that I shall be happy to support him in the Lobby. He has done a great service, along with the many other services he has contributed to the House of Commons, in bringing the matter before us.

I am sad that I was not present on 23 April when the right hon. Gentleman made another important contribution on the subject. I recall that James Maxton once said that the House of Commons is a very dangerous place to be away from. I regret the fact that I was away from it on that day, especially because I was unable to vote then, although I shall vote for the right hon. Gentleman's amendment with all the more pleasure today.

As hon. Members listen further to the debate they will have the experience that we had during our debates on the European Communities Act 1972, which we are now amending, increasingly recognising the growing significance of what we are discussing. When we debated the 1972 Act, people thought at the beginning that most of the Committee matters could be dealt with briefly, but we soon discovered that the issues became greatly enlarged. That is the case now. It should not be called the European Communities (Amendment) Bill, but the "European Communities (Concealment of Real Intentions) Bill".

The Bill goes far further than was suggested by the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he introduced it on Second Reading. Naturally, I read carefully what he said then. My hon. Friend the Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) enlarged on the matter when he presented it today. The more we discuss the Bill, the more it will be recognised that the Government must deal with it differently from the way they intended. No one can tell how long the proceedings will continue in Committee, but I hope that the Government will make up their mind immediately that they cannot deal with the Bill on Third Reading next week in the way that has been proposed. I hope that they will set aside a full day for the discussion. The more they listen to the issues, the more they will recognise that that is the proper course.

I would not use words such as "corruption" or "corrosion", as did the right hon. Member for Taunton, to describe the processes by which those matters are discussed in the European institutions. There is not the slightest doubt about the truth of what the right hon. Gentleman says about the balance between the European Assembly and the other institutions of the European Community. Different powers are given to the different bodies in the European Assembly. In 1972, if we had been told that the European Assembly would have increasingly enlarged powers—if the European Assembly's rights and powers had been defended in 1972 on the grounds that the hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West suggested—the objections to the Bill would have been even stronger than they were, because we could have seen the mammoth transfer of power from this place to the other institutions. But it was concealed.

The transfer was concealed because it did not take place between this democratic Assembly and the Council of Ministers. The legislative powers were transferred, but, of course, the Council of Ministers was a different institution. No one knew exactly what sort of institution it was, because it was an extraordinary body. It was an executive body which also had legislative powers, and which was removing from this place the power of exercising proper legislative control over our actions.

In 1972, we did something unknown in the history of Parliament. We transferred great chunks of legislative power from the House to an institution which had no proper legislative process. We agreed to do it because we were told that that was the only way in which the Community could be established. If we had been told at the same time "By the way, a bit later we shall introduce a little amendment Bill to ensure that the European Assembly and Parliament will control this extraordinary contraption, removing some powers from the House of Commons," the objections would have been even greater.

I shall not discuss all the other matters which were presented to the country at that time. Many hon. Members will recall that we were told at the time of the referendum that there would be a great enlargement of our employment opportunities and our economic prospects. We were told that there would be no interference with the power of economic decision-making in Britain. Those were the prospects held before us. That was how the referendum was pushed through and the majority was retained. It makes it all the more important that the House of Commons should not proceed to the next stage without examining everything in detail and ensuring that every possible safeguard exists.

We should pass the amendment moved by the right hon. Member for Taunton. I hope that we shall not be told, as we were at the time of the 1972 Act, that the entire Bill must be passed and that no clause could be removed without the agreement of the other countries.

That was an infringement of the rights of the House, which was why some of us objected so passionately to the Act and the form in which it was presented. It was presented to the House of Commons without any possibility of amending even one clause.

I hope that the Govenment will give us the absolute assurance that that does not apply to the Bill, that we can amend it as we wish and that we may have enough time to do it. That is what the House of Commons should do; if it does not, it will fail to discharge its responsibilities.

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): Although I did not have the good fortune to be a Member of this place and see at first hand the right hon. Gentleman's heroic opposition to the European Communities Bill, could he remind the Committee whether he was in the same Lobby as I was when I opposed the European Assembly Elections Act 1978?

Mr. Foot: No. It is perfectly true, as the hon. Gentleman reminds the Committee, that I was a member of the Government who introduced that measure. As a member of that Government, I supported it and helped to carry it through. It is all the more necessary that we should prevent an extenson of the powers of the European Assembly, however it may be elected. I have been opposed to the extension of those powers, and I remain so.

Of course, I understand that such assemblies have a natural power hunger. One does not blame the individuals concerned. Some of my best friends are members of the European Assembly. Mrs. Castle could never be described as lacking power hunger. Even she has been able to restrain herself, however, so great is her allegiance to the authority of the House. We should follow her example. I am not surprised that the Italians and the Spaniards, who have just joined the Assembly, wish to make it stronger, although many of them will draw back, as we should draw back, when they see what really happens. The Parliaments of many member states, including the French Parliament, try to retain powers in their countries, although the French seek to do this differently because of the greater authoritarian powers vested in their President and executive.

We must preserve every precious part of the power that we retain in the House. The right hon. Gentleman's amendment serves that purpose and I hope that it will be supported by the Government. Perhaps when the Minister replies she will show us the best way forward, which would be by allowing a free vote. That would settle the matter here and now. I hope that the hon. Lady will give the House an absolute assurance that the Bill will not be forced through the House with the insistence that every letter, comma and clause must be carried. She should give us an assurance that the Bill can be amended, and that the House can apply its ideas to the Bill so that the result may be a better Bill, if indeed any Bill could emerge from such proper scrutiny.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: Every hon. Member has agreed that the clause is one of a series which would remove power from the British Government and the British Parliament and transfer it to the institutions of the Community. Therefore, it is right and proper that we should think carefully about whether this is a sensible thing to do at present and especially on today of all days. Despite the solemn agreement made by all member states on 4 December 1984 that strict budgetary controls would be applied, we have today received a paper from the European Commission, which is only now available in the Vote Office, stating that the Commission will not have enough money to pay its bills, even on the basis of the further 1·4 per cent. VAT contribution. Even more worrying is the fact that this has come only two days after the Government's solemn assurance in a written answer that a 1·22 per cent. rate was more than enough for its requirements.

I suggest, therefore, that we should consider not whether to give more power to the Community institutions, but whether we should take greater powers to try to control some of the excesses of the European Assembly and Commission. When discussing proposals and pledges, we should also remember that the agreement of 4 December 1984 gave a solemn pledge that member states would be given a monthly report on agricultural spending. I have asked the Prime Minister three times, and the Foreign Secretary twice, when we shall receive those reports. Not one such report has been produced. We must ask ourselves whether it would be wise to transfer more power and responsibility from the Government to the institutions of the Community.

It is important that we should consider whether the European Parliament uses its existing powers in such a way as to justify more power being given to it. Hon.

[Mr. Teddy Taylor]

Members have complained that the European Assembly does not have enough power, but it has some power. We must ask ourselves whether it uses that power responsibly.

We need consider only two recent decisions of the European Court. The first related to complaints that the European Parliament had illegally and fraudulently given £27 million to political parties and had not asked for it back. Secondly, the European Assembly passed an illegal budget. The British Foreign Secretary and Attorney-General complained to the European Court about the illegal action. The battle is still being fought, but Britain has won the first round. Is it wise to give more power to that organisation?

The crucial thing is that not many hon. Members are aware of the details concerning the power that will be transferred to the European Assembly and the reason for this is obvious. The House of Commons Library provided the excellent advice that, after studying the Single European Act, it was not clear as to how the new arrangements would work, nor what additional powers would be transferred. This is probably the most dangerous aspect, especially when we remember, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Taunton (Sir E. du Cann) said, that the Assembly has passed a resolution saying that it will exploit to the full its new powers, and do so in the context of a European union of member states.

5.45 pm

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): Does my hon. Friend take any comfort from the fact that the existing powers of the European Parliament derive not so much from its original treaty powers as from the Iso Glucose case, which gave it considerable powers to delay legislation under the existing provisions? Does he take even greater consolation from the fact that the European Parliament has rarely got its act together sufficiently to exercise any influence over the EEC in any way, shape or form? What makes him believe that with any enlargement of its powers it will be able or prepared to take advantage of those powers in the future?

Mr. Taylor: My hon. Friend is well aware that one of the Assembly's powers relates to budgets. He will know that it has had much influence, because it passed the illegal budget which caused a massive extension in the provisions made for spending by the Council. It has used its powers considerably.

I shall deal with two matters which I hope will cause hon. Members some concern and persuade those who believe that this is a positive step forward not to increase the Assembly's powers. Will the extra powers be positive powers? If the Assembly is a bright, fresh democratic institution, will ideas be put forward to help solve the problems of the EEC?

My reading, with which I hope the Minister of State will agree, is that the Assembly's new powers are almost wholly negative. They will stop things happening and stop the passage of reforms. That is the most dangerous sort of additional power to give to any democratic assembly.

Paragraph *(c)* of new article 149 on page 6 of the Single European Act states clearly:

"If the European Parliament has rejected the Council's common position unanimity shall be required for the Council to act on a second reading."

The Council's only defence, if the European Parliament should muck up something, or insert massive amendments, is to drop the whole business. Paragraph *(e)* states:

"Unanimity shall be required for the Council to amend the proposal as re-examined by the Commission."

The Assembly now has the power to change or reject something which the Council can overturn only unanimously. This would be unlikely, bearing in mind the fact that at least two member states are constantly looking for ways to give additional powers and responsibilities to the Assembly.

My fear is that, instead of being a comparatively new legislative power or a power to consider expenditure, the Assembly will have the power to prevent things from happening and to block proposals coming from the Council of Ministers, which, in many cases, are desperately needed to reform the institutions.

Mr. Marlow: Is not there a very grave danger that the Assembly, or Parliament, will indulge in power politics on its own behalf? There may be things which we would all appreciate and agree with in this House which the Community wants to put through. There may be things which the Assembly wants done through amendment to enhance its own prestige, power and authority. May it not seek to delay those which we would all agree with so that it can enhance its own power as a quid pro quo for agreeing to that which we would want?

Mr. Taylor: That is my other fear. My hon. Friend has anticipated me. Sadly, in the EEC, as those who have taken part in it will be aware, things are not always decided on their merits. For example, five or six Councils sit in the same week. If one country wants something passed through one Council, it may have to do a deal to allow something else through. An example is the Single European Act. Although the British Government did not want it, the Prime Minister opposed it, the Foreign Secretary had the courage on this occasion to say he did not want it, and we were told that there was no need for it, we have a Single European Act. My understanding is that we agreed many matters, including strict budgetary controls, which turned out to be utterly irrelevant because they did not work. Matters are decided on package agreements one way or the other.

I appeal to hon. Members who are anxious for the European Community to develop to ask themselves whether they feel that the powers in article 149 will help the Common Market in any way to become a better organisation. I accept that my hon. Friend the Member for Clwyd, North-West (Sir A. Meyer) would like the European Parliament to do the big stuff and to undertake a great deal of the decision making at present done by national Parliaments. He has advocated his case with great sincerity. I could understand it if he regards this as a stepping stone to that objective, but the powers in article 149 are wholly negative and will certainly not make the Common Market any better, even if the powers were used responsibly.

I hope that hon. Members will bear in mind what my right hon. Friend the Member for Taunton said so eloquently, which was that the trouble was that nowadays we pass matters in dull, colourless language. The words do not mean a great deal to us and refer to general principles. We are all fully aware that the day will come before too long when our constituents and businesses and organisations in our constituencies will ask, "Why can't

you as a Member of Parliament do something about this?". Increasingly we shall have to reply, "I am terribly sorry but the power has gone entirely from us."

Section 145 of the Single European Act gives massive new powers to the Commission. The erosion of the veto will mean that Britain will have far less say in decision making, and that laws will be imposed on us against our wishes. These new powers for the European Assembly will greatly diminish the powers of the Council to do anything except abandon its reports.

Mr. Spearing: The hon. Gentleman has been suggesting that the powers are negative and would not help even the aspirations of the hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West (Sir A. Meyer). Does he agree that article 149(2)(c) states:

"The European Parliament may within the period of three months referred to in point *(b)*, by an absolute majority of its component members, propose amendments to the Council's common position"?

If that change in the Council's common position is contrary to the views of Ministers of this House and is passed by an absolute majority of the European Parliament, does it not show that it has substantial positive powers, especially if the Commission agrees?

Mr. Taylor: As the hon. Gentleman is aware, the procedure is rather complex. If, for example, the European Parliament suggests amendments, the suggestion goes to the Commission which introduces a revised package. The Council could make those changes only by a unanimous decision. Therefore, the Council has the power, either to accept the changes made by the Commission to the proposals put by the European Parliament, or to scrub them completely. We are all aware, bearing in mind the European Assembly's wishes to extend its powers and to extend harmonisation and expenditure, that the changes which the Assembly and Commission will propose will involve all those objectives. Therefore, there will be a choice of either abandoning the original reform which the Council wanted, or accepting the amendments which will probably be expensive and give further powers to the EEC. This new power will not enable changes to be made, but, sadly, will simply cause the Council not to get through some of the amendments and changes to new decisions which it wants. To that extent, I regard the powers as negative and dangerous.

We know that the Common Market has some problems. It has a problem controlling its expenditure, which has been a complete disaster area. Despite all the promises and pledges, we have news today that the Common Market is insolvent and does not have the money to pay its bills for 1986. We know that the common agricultural policy is nonsense. Everyone accepts that. When £150 million a week is spent on dumping, destroying and storing food, something is wrong. It must sicken poor Mr. Geldof, who sweated his guts out to raise £100 million, to find that the Common Market spends 50 per cent. more every week on dumping and destroying food.

What I say and what I hope all hon. Members will say is, "Why can't the Common Market get down to solving those problems before it looks for more power and responsibility?" For that reason I hope that we shall approve the amendment. It is the right way forward. If we do not, we shall bitterly regret this step in years to come.

Sir Russell Johnston: It will not come as a stunning surprise to the hon. Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) or the right hon. Member for Taunton (Sir E. du Cann) that I do not accept their arguments. I wholly accept the need for a full and proper debate, but I am sceptical about it resulting in any sort of change. Even the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) mentioned change. I have participated in these debates for approximately 14 years and I have never observed anybody changing his opinion. The House should take that into account. The more that the hon. Gentleman and I listen to each other, the more we are convinced that we are right and the other is wrong. That is a plain fact. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Bryan Gould (Dagenham): The remedy is in the hon. Gentleman's own hands.

Sir Russell Johnston: The remedy lies with the hon. Member for Southend, East. I have entreated him on many occasions to take it.

Sir Anthony Meyer: Does the hon. Gentleman want to make an exception of the right hon. Member for Blaenau, Gwent (Mr. Foot) on the subject of direct elections to the European Parliament and changing his mind?

Sir Russell Johnston: It was a question not of a change of mind but of the pragmatic necessities of the moment.

The Single European Act introduces only modest increases in the powers of the European Parliament. Certainly there are fewer changes than the European Parliament wants. The changes mean that the process of Community legislation is brought rather more out into the open and will be subject to better, fuller parliamentary scrutiny than has previously been the case. They will also oblige the Council to state its position more clearly, and the member Government represented on the Council to vote more openly. That is all to the good. They will have to make clear how and why certain decisions in the Council have been made, who made them and why they adopted that position. That is desirable. Anyone anxious for openness of government and for open covenants openly arrived at cannot but welcome the changes.

Many hon. Members and others are worried about the way in which major legislative decisions are reached in the Council. To try to subject individual national Ministers after a Council meeting to national parliamentary scrutiny and review is a recipe for chaos. It would bring the whole Community procedure to a halt. The Community cannot be subject in the normal process of legislation — if, indeed, we want Community legislation — to a veto by a national legislature, whether it be the House of Commons or the Luxembourg Chamber of Deputies, after the agreement has been reached by the Council. The time to exert influence is before the agreement is reached.

The House of Commons and the House of Lords, which all hon. Members will agree does exceptionally well, are entitled to examine draft Community legislation and to express their views to Ministers before they go to the decisive Council meeting. But in the last analysis, if there is to be Community legislation and if there is to be parliamentary supervision of that Community legislation, it can be achieved effectively only by the European Parliament.

Mr. Marlow: When the Cabinet decides on legislation, it introduces a Bill into the House. Indeed, there may even be a White Paper first. The Bill is debated in the Chamber, in Committee, on Report, and on Third Reading and then goes to the House of Lords. Equally significant legislation

[Mr. Marlow]

can come from the European Community. Is the hon. Gentleman saying that he does not believe that we should have any power whatever as the democratically elected Parliament of the United Kingdom to have a view on that legislation?

Sir Russell Johnston: I did not say that. The hon. Gentleman dreams about the so-called parliamentary democracy of this Chamber, about which we hear so much. It is nothing like so marvellous as some suggest. I said that, knowing what proposals come up in the Council, the House should scrutinise them before Ministers go to the Council to make a decision. To try to do it the other way round is not practical or possible. We have the European Community, and if we want to be democratic we have to give the Parliament more power. It is unrealistic to refer ritualistically to sovereignty and its erosion. I never cease to be amazed at the persistence of nationalism in Europe despite its malign record. If we are to have democratic decision making in the Community, it can be done only through the Parliament.

6 pm

I do not know how many hon. Members read the interesting article by Sir Henry Plumb in *The Times* on Wednesday.

Mr. J. Enoch Powell: It was very bad.

Sir Russell Johnston: That is a matter of opinion. The right hon. Gentleman's opinion is different from mine. The paragraph that I shall quote conveys the truth of the matter much more directly and clearly than the hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) suggested. Sir Henry Plumb said:

"The Single Act, if ratified by all governments by the end of the year, will certainly herald a transfer of sovereignty. Not a transfer from the national to the Community legislative structure, but a transfer from government and Commission civil servants to the democratically elected representatives of the people. The European Parliament is still a long way from being able to exercise its mandate over the majority of the Community budget, but this small extension of influence in regard to the internal market is good news for those who care about effective democratic control of our institutions, and bad news for the hardened professional civil servant who has long been used to usurping this function. That is the real transfer of sovereignty inherent in the Single Act."

Mr. Cash: The hon. Member may recall that Sir Henry Plumb's article, which I have here as well, followed an article that I wrote in *The Times* last week, in which I pointed out the importance of maintaining effective scrutiny and control here in Westminster over decisions taken both in Brussels and by our Civil Service. Sir Henry Plumb makes it clear in this article that he shares my great concern about this matter. He shows that he, too, thinks that there is a role for Westminster as well as for the European Parliament. I should be grateful if the hon. Gentleman would be good enough to make that clear.

Sir Russell Johnston: I admit to the human weakness of quoting articles with which one agrees rather than those with which one disagrees. There is no need for me again to go over the ground over which I went with the hon. Member for Northampton, North, which meets the point that the hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) is making. It is incredible that someone like Sir Henry Plumb cannot get into the House of Commons unless he queues outside or is brought in. He cannot get a pass to come into the place. If we wish to have proper relations with Members of the European Parliament we should take a more civilised attitude than that. American research assistants find it easier to get in here.

The core of the changes provides for the European Parliament, after giving its initial opinion on a proposal from the Commission, to have the right to amend or reject, within three months, the position adopted by the Council. If the Parliament does not exercise this right, the Council position prevails. It should be stressed that this new co-operative procedure does not extend to all Community decisions—something that has not been emphasised so far—but is confined to a limited number of them.

It would be foolish to deny that there are risks of conflict between the three institutions. The challenge to all three institutions is clear. They must make a positive effort towards the closest co-operation, or at least consultation, at the earliest possible stage. For example, the Commission could extend the practice of informal discussions with the Parliament and its Committees before it formally publishes draft legislation. That is a sensible thing to do. While those Committees are subsequently scrutinising the proposals, the opportunity for discussion with the Council and the individual Governments with their own Parliament would enable effective scrutiny to take place.

The Government are to be congratulated. The hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) made a rather rumbustious assault on the Minister on the ground that the Government have rather changed their position, which is true. I would rather compliment them on this. That they and the Minister have seen the light is admirable and the Government should be congraulated, having treated the European Parliament rather badly before, on putting this behind them. They seem to have entered into the new spirit. I understand that, in the latter half of this year, it is planned that 15 of our Ministers will be addressing the European Parliament. That shows a different attitude, while also of course reflecting our Presidency of the Council.

Perhaps the greatest challenge is to the European Parliament itself. Since 1979, it has not always been clear that it has fully found the direction that it wishes to take, or it has found it difficult to find a future direction. That is not surprising, because it has never had a Government or an executive as we have, but is nevertheless subject to the same natural political division as we have. Parliament will have to arrange its procedures to be more effective, and the challenges of where it sits and so on will have to be looked at carefully. A strong, consistent stand on the way in which it gets elected should also be taken.

Because of my self-restraint and the pressures on time, I shall not dwell on the scandal of the way in which Members of the European Parliament are elected in the United Kingdom, which excludes a whole section of political attitude. This Parliament should not be proud of that. The constituency system is irrelevant to the European Parliament, which is concerned not with specific cases but with guidelines and general principles.

On Second Reading on 23 April, I raised a question with the Minister about which she subsequently wrote to me on 30 April. I inquired about the proposition by the Dutch that, if the Commission is allied to a minimum of three member states within the Council, this would obligate the Council to proceed directly to a vote, which might accelerate the decision-making process. The

Minister's letter was a beautiful example of agreeing and not agreeing simultaneously, which I suppose is one of the delights of diplomacy. She said:

"At present, it is for the Presidency alone to decide when to call a vote; and . . . the Presidency is often the best judge . . . though if a majority of member states made clear that they wanted a vote, that would significantly influence the Presidency's decision."

There is nothing wrong with that.

The letter continues:

"Any individual member state or the Commission should, in the Government's view, be able to propose a vote when it thinks this appropriate, but not to determine when a vote is held. Calling a vote when the majority do not want one would be pointless."

It would not be pointless. The whole point is that, if a number of Members consistently, over a length of time, prevent any votes being held, that is a means of putting off a decision. Sometimes the decision may be no, but at least one knows what it is.

I draw the Minister's attention to the European Parliament working document A2-56/86, part I, which is a report on the use of the veto in the Council by Mr. Nord, the Dutch vice-president of the Liberal group in the European Parliament dated 30 May. It says:

"the co-operation procedure established by the Single European Act between the European Parliament and the Council denotes the will of the Member States to improve the Community decision-making process and to involve the European Parliament in this process. To this end, it would be wise to take over the proposals formulated in the Dooge report with regard to voting rules: The Presidency must proceed to a vote where the Commission or 3 Member States so request. The vote must be taken within a time limit of 30 days."

I would appreciate the Minister giving some account of what she thinks about that proposal.

I cannot end without some brief reference to the speech of the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell). I have heard his speeches on many occasions and he seemed once again to be caught up with the mysticism which is inherent in nationalism. It almost seemed as if he would levitate during his speech. The right hon. Gentleman said that Britain was a "self-recognising community." We are not the same as the other communities across the Channel. By the clearest implication, we are also better than these other fellows across the Channel. A "'self-recognising community" indeed. That sounds more like self-perpetuating tribalism. He used those familiar words, "control, veto and assertion". These are negative and fractious words.

Right hon. and hon. Members must realise that Europe's problems and the problems of the Community will not be solved by some resurgence of nationalism, in so far as that has any real meaning any more. They will be solved only by political solutions, whether they be Conservative, Labour or Liberal. The proper forum for that, within the Community, is the European Parliament. I welcome this limited extension of its influence.

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East): We need only remind ourselves of the traditional and heroic alliance manifested yet again between the speeches of the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) and that of the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) to oppose the amendment. We heard again that saddening and depressing recourse to the past.

I agree with much of what the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston) said about the self-delusion which Members such as the right hon. Members for Blaenau Gwent and for South Down reveal about our system and this Parliament. He described their sense of fantasy and imagination which is in no way connected with the truth either of yesterday or of today. If anything, their view is a reverse of the truth. Their view must be par excellence the reverse. Unfortunately, the parliamentary system in the Euorpean countries — and there are many details, exceptions and constitutional traditions which we could discuss at great length but we will not do so tonight — where the power of the Parliament vis-á-vis the Executive, both the Civil Service part and the ministerial part, is weakest when the process is a self-sustaining ritual and which, as many commentators have said, is a quintessential and classical demonstration of the elective dictatorship.

We can by all means say that there are many good and positive aspects of that system which enable Governments to go ahead on a rapid basis with the creation of new legislation. However, to pretend that that is not true and that there is some heroic mystical and perfect democratic function in this place is absurd. It is also absurd to imply that those terrible, ill-educated foreigners — ill educated in all matters of democracy and constitutions — have no idea about these sacred subjects. That is not only absurd; it is irresponsible. That idea would give people outside this House with a less elaborate education than the two right hon. Gentlemen I have mentioned the impression of something speciai which is phantasmagoric, self-imagined and absurd.

Right hon. Members of such distinction and with such long parliamentary careers as those to which I have referred have a responsibility to the public. They should be more realistic about the limitations of our system. They should espouse its good qualities, but also say honestly and truthfully that there are many weaknesses —

Mr. Foulkes: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Dykes: I will give way later.

They must be honest and say that there are many weaknesses in the system. However, that does not help us much in what we are considering today. We are considering the practical world and the complexities of these relationships between giant bureaucracies and the major, complicated decisions which must be made for the promotion of the economic and social welfare of the public in this country and of the other European states. To pretend that there is some special sovereignty syndrome in this place, which must not in any way be changed by accession to any treaty, is nonsense.

6.15 pm

Mr. Foulkes: The hon. Gentleman is attacking hon. Members on both sides of the House. However, he has not made any arguments in favour of the transference of power away from this House to Strasbourg and Brussels in the areas of competence which I and other hon. Members described earlier. The hon. Gentleman has not given any reasons why these decisions can be better taken by the Community rather than by the United Kingdom Parliament or why we should agree to them. If the hon. Gentleman addressed himself to those points, we might listen to him rather more carefully than we are now, as we listen to the general assertions and attacks that he is indulging in.

Mr. Dykes: That is the second part of the complete picture which I will discuss in a moment. However, it is

[Mr. Dykes]

necessary as a preamble to that to establish what I am suggesting. Of course the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) would not accept that as he really is a good European.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mrs. Lynda Chalker): He is a good European when it suits him.

Mr. Dykes: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's correction. I believe that he wants to be more enthusiastic but his Opposition position prevents that.

Mr. Foulkes *rose*——

Mr. Dykes: I have given way once to the hon. Gentleman. If he can restrain himself, he will be able to speak later. I believe that I know what he wanted to say.

Of course the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley was right to allude to the second part of the picture. I simply do not like the false premise which was created at the beginning of the debate. That was a chemistry of nonsense. Those arguments are completely at variance with the truth.

The additional powers that will accrue to the European Parliament are important. The stronger relationship of the European Parliament with the Council of Ministers and the so-called transference of powers are also important. These points have already been mentioned in paragraph 29 on page 10 of the 12th report of the House of Lords Select Committee on the European Communities entitled "Single European Act and Parliamentary Scrutiny".

Mr. Deakins: Paragraph 28.

Mr. Dykes: I will then refer first to paragraph 28 as I have been prompted to do so by the hon. Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Deakins). There is no effective parliamentary scrutiny procedure or mechanism for maintaining a strong surveillance of NATO decisions. That is a more powerful treaty when we consider its subject matter. Any treaty agreement in relation to that is more ominous in terms of the surrender of power from this place as a sovereign Parliament when compared to anything else in the European Community, however profound the European Communities are by way of the creation of a treaty base. All treaties do what is stated in paragraph 28.

I intended, however, to refer to paragraph 29, which states:

> "The erosion of some of the power of national Parliaments was an inevitable consequence of membership of the Community."

We have always known that and it was always made clear. That was a positive aspect and part of the recommendation of the keen Europeans. It was accepted by others who said that there would be a reciprocal benefit greater than that diminution of the intrinsic national power. Paragraph 29 continues:

> "It is liable to be accelerated by measures which make the Community more effective politically and economically."

That is the centrality of the case. We can see how slow the Community has been to develop to the benefit of all member states and how the constitutional frustration can be overcome only by additional power-increasing measures for the European Parliament vis-á-vis other institutions. As the proponents have already said, these powers are limited and modest and should not terrify me or others who are more dispassionate than I am about our membership of the Community.

The paragraph goes on to say:

> "it is encouraged by the existence of the Community's own directly-elected Parliament."

Once we as a sovereign Parliament, like the others in the member states, took that decision, rightly, I think, to favour direct elections — the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent was enthusiastic about it—the increased powers of that Parliament have to be rationalised as well. It is not a Parliament in the national sense of an Executive being present within it, as the right hon. Member for South Down said, but it is a true and developing Parliament in the sense of a trans-national body, perhaps akin to the developing, germinating United States Congress in the early days.

Many similarities are now developing in the separation of powers. It will be greatly to the benefit of the new European entity and the European union of the future. That will not be a United States of Europe, so those fears are groundless. It will be a special new creation, not known in the world so far, but none the less one which will be greatly to the benefit of the economic progress of members of the public of the member states.

However, there is an additional difference which must be brought out. I do not agree with the right hon. Member for South Down who said that there would be a straight net transference process of power from this place to the European Parliament plus a bit to the other institutions as well. He referred to there being no vacuum, but at least a semi-vacuum exists in the set up which has to be taken care of as well, and is effectively, by the Bill. That is an additional reason why the amendment should be rejected.

The vacuum or semi-vacuum has been all the decisions which the Council of Ministers should have made in recent years at the suggestion and behest of the Commission, which has a constitutional duty to propose new legislation under the treaty, which it has not done for reasons of the overweening nationalism which exists in that body. The right hon. Gentleman may be pleased about that. The paralysis comes from the feeling that it has to agree unanimously because of the Luxembourg compromise, and the desire of the politicians in that Council, of whatever country, to stop progress in the EEC, even if that progress is not a direct reflection of any diminution of any national policies expressed in one or two member states. That at least is a semi-vacuum. By overcoming that by the proposals in the Bill we shall see that the Community can make the kind of progress that members of the public in all the member states want because they know that that is synonymous with rising living standards, the freedom that comes more and more from being a European as well as a citizen of an individual member state, and the feeling that Europe can survive and prosper only by acting more and more closely together through its developing and sophisticated parliamentary mechanisms.

Mr. Deakins: Three of the amendments that we are debating in this group are in my name. Therefore, I hope that the Committee will bear with me if I take a few minutes to develop certain themes.

The hon. Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) talked about Labour Members coming clean. I remind him that he and those whom he supported in the 1975 referendum,

and still supports, both the federalists and those who wish to see a European Government, should come clean with the British people.

I have here a document put out by the British Government for the 1975 referendum. On two separate pages there is a headline:

"Will Parliament lose its power?"

Part of it says:

"No important new policy can be decided in Brussels or anywhere else without the consent of a British Minister answerable to a British Government and British Parliament."

Where does that assurance stand now in the light of the new co-operation procedure? I shall have more to say about the loss and weakening of the veto in the debate on clause stand part.

The same document says:

"Remember: All the other countries in the Market enjoy, like us, democratically elected Governments answerable to their own Parliaments and their own voters. They do not want to weaken their Parliaments any more than we would."

Is not the clear implication of those words that there would be no weakening of the sovereignty of the British Parliament in the acceptance of the European Communities Bill in 1972? The electorate was misled by the hon. Gentleman and his friends in 1975, and they would no doubt go on misleading them again if there were a similar opportunity.

Sir Russell Johnston: Can the hon. Gentleman justify a view in which he seems to be saying that he would prefer to give influence and authority to a British Conservative than to a German Socialist in determining legislation?

Mr. Deakins: The only way that one could justify giving authority to anyone from overseas, however linked with us in co-operative agreements, would be as part of a European system of government, which I completely reject. I do not wish to see Britain as part of a federal Europe or any form of European union. However, we shall have these debates in more detail on later amendments. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will forgive me if I simply express my profound and absolute disagreement with him. He is a federalist. There is nothing wrong with that; it is perfectly legal. People should declare themselves rather more than they have done in debates such as this.

I shall say nothing about the growth in the Assembly's power since 1973. In view of the undoubted wish of the Committee to proceed to a vote in a reasonable time on this group of amendments. I shall reserve my remarks on that aspect for the clause stand part debate. Indeed, I shall say little more on the issue of the veto.

Amendments Nos. 43 and 45 relate to the change of name and the retrospective provision in clause 3. The Minister and the Foreign Secretary have been misled by their officials over clause 3. It would have been perfectly possible to deal with the change of name, regardless of what one feels about it—I am utterly opposed to it—without going to the length of introducing retrospective legislation. In effect, clause 3 rewrites history. It will expunge from the records of Britain any reference to a European Assembly. In future, all those references will be changed so that we shall be referring to a European Parliament. That is worthy of a totalitarian Government of the worst possible type—rather like the Communist regimes which continually rewrite histories. Russian history books contain no mention of Trotsky. Secondary legislation passed by the House of Commons in the past 14 or 15 years since we have been a member will contain no reference in future to the European Assembly. I am sure that if it could the Foreign Office would like to rewrite the history books as well.

I do not see what advantage there is in that. A change could have been brought about perfectly simply by merely saying that, where the word "assembly" occurs in legislation passed up to the date on which the clause comes into force, it shall be taken in future as referring to the European Parliament. It is as simple as that. But the Foreign Office, which is now full of federalists—most of them advising the Minister—is telling the Minister and Parliament in the Bill that we must expunge the word "assembly" from our record. I challenge the Minister when she replies to give me any logical explanation of why this method was chosen rather than the method that I have suggested.

The fact is that the Foreign Office does not like, and has never liked, the idea of an assembly. It has always been responsible for Ministers, including the Prime Minister, from the time that we became a member in 1973, calling it a Parliament when it was still legally an assembly. The Foreign Office did that for its own purposes and it has taken Ministers along with it.

In the referendum campaign in 1975 the Assembly was called an Assembly and not a Parliament. If it had been called a Parliament, as it will be if the Foreign Office and Ministers have their way under this legislation, there might well have been a different outcome to the referendum.

Mr. Cash: Does the hon. Gentleman recall that in evidence to the Select Committee on European Legislation on 26 March 1985 my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Pentlands (Mr. Rifkind) said:

"as is well known, we would not support the federal or quasi-federal interpretation of the concept"—

by which he meant the concept of European union. In the light of that comment, can the hon. Gentleman explain how he sees us moving towards a federal or quasi-federal system of government in Europe in the terms that he has expressed it?

6.30 pm

Mr. Deakins: I apologise to the hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash), because I shall not have time to go into the detail in which I would like to explore this set of amendents. I give him an undertaking that during the debate on European union I shall go into the matter in much more detail, because I shall have more time than is available to me now.

The co-operation procedure has been the subject of a couple of Select Committee reports in this place and in the House of Lords. In this co-operation procedure there is a great danger not merely to the House of Commons and to the Government, but to the Council as a whole—to other member Governments. At present the Commission can accept or reject amendments passed by the Assembly. It can do that now, so why are we making such a fuss about the change in the co-operation procedure? The answer is that there is a fundamental and major change. In future, the Assembly will act on an absolute majority of all its members. It does not have to do that now when making amendments to Commission proposals and going up to the Council.

That absolute majority will strengthen the Assembly's hand vis-á-vis the Commission. At present the Commission can say that something was passed by a fairly

[Mr. Deakins]

small majority and that it need not bother with it and it can explain its action when it puts forward revised proposals for consideration by the Council. I am talking about legislation. That is an important matter for the House of Commons, because the House is our major institution concerned with legislation. Now we are proposing to introduce a rival.

The Assembly's objections and amendments to Commission proposals will have much greater weight in future if they have to be carried by an absolute majority of the total membership of the Assembly. Like the Assembly, the Commission is basically a federalist-inclined institution, and for that reason it is likely in nearly every case to accept amendments to Commission proposals and to push them up to the Council under the co-operation procedure. That will mean a combination of the Commission and the Assembly against the Council.

I say to the federalist and pro-European Members who somehow want to see us march towards European and economic and monetary union that they are laying up a lot of trouble for the Community in this new procedure. They will set two of the Community institutions against the third in a way that has not emerged so far.

Mr. Forth: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that within what he says about the absolute majority there is a problem for an institution such as a European Parliament in that it has to get the bodies there? Will he accept my word that, from my experience of that institution, it is extremely rare for an absolute majority of Members even to attend, never mind for a majority of them to agree on a measure? Strangely enough, one of the safeguards is precisely the indifference or apathy of the members of that institution. I understand what the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston) is trying to do, but one could make a similar comment about other legislatures. Will the hon. Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Deakins) take that factor into account when considering the point?

Mr. Deakins: I am grateful to the hon. Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth) for his intervention, because he has experience in these matters and I have not. Once this Single European Act has been ratified and passed into law by all the member Governments there will be a major change. The apathy in the European Assembly will not continue for long once there is a prospect of exerting real power over Community institutions.

I should like to turn to amendment No. 13 which is also in my name. The Assembly would be given veto powers not merely over new members, but over new associate members. At the start of our proceedings I raised a point of order to the effect that this was probably an important feature because it imposes a limitation on the royal prerogative. At the moment, in association with other Governments, our Government can make treaties and those matters eventually come to the House of Commons.

The royal prerogative will be substantially affected by the new power given to the Assembly. It would be perfectly possible for the royal prerogative to be exercised in giving power to Ministers to sign a treaty and for all 12 of the appropriate Ministers in the Community to agree, but by a majority the Assembly could say no. That would diminish the royal prerogative. Whatever one thinks about its exercise, perhaps the Minister can tell us if the Queen's consent has been notified to this diminution of an ancient right of the monarch and the Crown and the Queen in Parliament.

We are laying up a lot of trouble for the Community and its further development by giving to the Assembly the power of veto on new members and new associate members. At present, new members and new associate members have to be approved not merely by national Governments, but, certainly in the case of Britain, by Parliament as well.

One can easily foresee a clash between the elected representatives here, who give their assent to the admission of a new member country or to a new associate member following an agreement worked out by the Council of Ministers, and the Assembly, which will be able to claim to represent in some ways the people of Britain. It might arrive at a totally different conclusion. One can see a lot of clashes ahead between directly elected United Kingdom Members in the Assembly and those sitting in this Parliament.

I know where my loyalties lie, and I hope that the loyalties of all hon. Members lie in the same place. In any clash we should put the interests, the views and the decisions of this Parliament over and above decisions taken by the Assembly. There will undoubtedly be some constitutional crises in the years ahead. I do not look forward to that. There will be many troubles in the Community, and we will not wish to burden ourselves with such troubles. That is another reason for opposing this accretion of powers to the European Assembly. In view of the points that I have made, I asked the Chairman if there could be a separate vote on amendment No. 13. Perhaps that can be considered when the time comes to vote.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): I shall be brief, because I understand that we hope to close fairly soon the proceedings on this part of the Bill. Because I shall be brief, I hope that no hon. Member will think that I do not care deeply about what I am saying or that I have not given a lot of thought to my speech.

I am anxious about the proposal to remove the power of veto, because at the time of the referendum the people of Scotland were given a clear pledge that the United Kingdom would retain the power of the veto. We shall be discussing that matter later. At the time of the referendum there was no qualification to that pledge, nor was there any suggestion that this could or would be changed. That is important. Those hon. Members who argue that this will not undermine our national sovereignty will have to answer to the people of the United Kingdom and tell them why at the time of the referendum they stressed the importance of this aspect, while now they are trying to suggest that this is quite a harmless little Bill and will not change things very much. They say that it is all a bit of a bore and do not undertand why we should spend time on it. It is neither a harmless little Bill nor a bit of a bore.

This directly elected body will have its name changed if we accept the Bill. We are led to believe that the reason for the name change, and probably the reason for the retrospective nature of the name change, is that it has called itself a Parliament from the beginning anyway. It is argued that if through use and custom it has called itself a Parliament we should accept that by legislation. I find that argument fascinating. I remind hon. Members that I

am a Scot and a Scottish Conservative. It has been suggested by Opposition Members that we are a beleagured minority.

Mr. Foulkes: An endangered species.

Mr. Walker: We are in one sense, because we are the one party that is opposed to a Scottish Assembly, and hon. Members should note the phrase Scottish Assembly. Opposition Members may laugh, but I do not find it amusing at all. I was a Unionist before I was a Conservative. Unionism and union mean something to me. I have fought on that platform during the whole of my adult life, and that is not a matter for jest. The Union is fundamental to me. The Union of our Parliament and of our Crown is steeped in history and the Scots do not take lightly those who treat it with levity.

Mr. George Robertson: How strong a Unionist was the hon. Gentleman when, in his own city of Perth, the then leader of the Conservative and Unionist party, the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath), made the famous declaration that the Conservative party was in favour of devolution and of a directly elected Assembly for Scotland?

Mr. Walker: The hon. Gentleman must know that I have never embraced the nonsense of so-called devolution. When my then leader espoused it, as he did on the occasion to which the hon. Gentleman referred, he lost me as a friend. My right hon. Friend's place in the Chamber is directly in front of me and he might wonder why I murmur behind his back.

The Scots Conservatives who are opposed to having a Scottish Assembly, in whatever form, realise, recognise and understand that all Assemblies, call them what one will—I take up the remarks of the former leader of the Labour party, the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot), who made a most interesting speech—will attempt to embrace more and more power. All Assemblies will want to do that and we should not be surprised that that is their wish.

Liberal and SDP Members talk about narrowness when someone is not prepared to embrace the European structure and wants to change and improve it by moving to some sort of federalism. Yet these Members are advocating the introduction of an Assembly for Scotland, with all that that means. Indeed, they are giving support to the change in name from Assembly to Parliament. We have heard their spokesman, the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston), explain his reasons for supporting the change. I find it rather odd that the language which he uses when talking about Europe is different from that which he uses when talking about Scotland. There is nothing narrow and national about being a Scot or arguing that we should have a Scottish Assembly, as the hon. Gentleman says. Yet those of us who are opposed to wanting an Assembly in Europe are accused by the hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends of being narrow and national. I have never understood the differentiation between Europe and Scotland. The demand for a Scottish Assembly seems to me to be fairly narrow and national.

Sir Russell Johnston: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that there is no contradiction between arguing for powers that are appropriate at a European level and powers that are appropriate at a Scottish level? Surely the argument is complementary. As we are on this subject, perhaps he will explain what quasi-federalism is. It is something that I have never understood.

Mr. Walker: The issue is what the hon. Gentleman thinks is appropriate and what I think is appropriate in terms of powers. That is where we shall probably differ. There is no need to explore the matter further. I believe in the unitary Parliament of the United Kingdom being the voice of the people of the United Kingdom.

More and more of my constituents are growing increasingly concerned at what we are proposing through this legislation. It can be seen that we are proposing that the Parliament, as it will be called, will have powers that can block the Council's proposals unless the Council disagrees unanimously with the Parliament's view. I would suggest that such unanimity is rather unlikely when there are 12 member states including Italy, which favours extra-parliamentary power and rarely disagrees with the Parliament. My constituents are asking, perfectly properly in my view, "Why is it that we have to move along this route when Europe as presently structured and organised is not working effectively?" My hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) spoke on this issue at some length and I shall not bore the Committee by taking it up again.

I have received a lengthy letter—it runs to about 20 pages—from an elector. It contains many questions, and some of them I cannot answer. I do not know the answers and I am hoping that my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office will be able to provide them. One question is as follows:

> "The solemn Privy Council Oath provides for those taking it to: (a) Be a true and faithful servant of the Crown. (b) Not to countenance any word or deed against the Sovereign, but to withstand the same to the utmost of their power, and to reveal it to the Sovereign. (c) To bear"—

this is the paragraph that bothers me—

> "faith and allegiance to the Crown, and to defend its jurisdiction and powers against all foreign princes, persons, prelates, States or potentates."

Given the royal prerogative and paragraph (c), one wonders whether our Privy Councillors are aware that the Bill will give powers to the European Assembly——

Mr. Foulkes: Potentates.

6.45 pm

Mr. Walker: I am not talking about potentates. If the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) wishes to use that term, he may do so.

I want to hear my hon. Friend the Minister of State give a clear and unequivocal answer to the elector who has gone to enormous trouble to write the letter from which I have quoted. I am staggered by the number of questions that he has asked. I have not repeated them all, because if I were to do so it would take the whole evening. I have selected the question which I have read because I do not know the answer to it. After the Bill is enacted, will Privy Councillors be breaking their oath if at some future date we determine a policy on behalf of the monarch which is overturned by the European Assembly or Parliament?

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will consult his Conservative colleagues in Europe. My hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Central (Mr. Caborn), who was chairman of the British Labour group in Europe, can testify that he led the only

[Mr. Allan Rogers]

group in the Assembly that opposed the extension of the Assembly's powers. When I was a Vice-President of the Assembly, I sat on the Institutional Committee that was chaired by Mauro Ferri. The main Rapporteur was Altiero Spinelli. The Conservative members of that committee sold Britain down the river time and time again. They are doing that constantly in Europe to conform with and to obtain the votes of their lobby in Britain, which is to be found in the farming community in particular.

Mr. Walker: The hon. Gentleman must be aware that I consult my hon. Friends who are members of the European Assembly. The fact that I consult them does not mean that we reach agreement. One of the problems with the present structure in Europe is the difficulty that is experienced in reaching agreement. When we come to matters of constitutional change that are of importance to the United Kingdom, the result very often is a collection of strange bedfellows. I have never been ashamed of the group with which I keep company, whoever and whatever its members may be. I am content that the group is defending our unitary Parliament, the position of our monarch and all the things about which I care deeply.

Mr. Spearing: I shall be as brief as the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker), whose remarks I wish to take up. The hon. Gentleman has hit on one of the central dilemmas. The power of the monarch and of the Crown is affected because legislation which comes direct from Brussels does not pass through the House and does not receive Royal Assent. That means that the Crown is bypassed. It is possible that years ago Privy Councillors operating in this area would have been had under the law of praemunire but often people do not understand what is going on.

The irony is that Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, having opened the conference centre in her name on the other side of Parliament square——

Mr. Foulkes: Elizabeth II of England.

Mr. Spearing: Account should always be taken of Scots susceptibilities, as they were in 1688.

It is ironic that the conference centre is going to be used for many discussions that will not be public. In effect, that will undermine the rights and privileges of this Parliament and of the Crown, especially in the next six months.

Mr. Dykes *rose*——

Mr. Spearing: I must move on——

Mr. Dykes: The hon. Member had to give way because he must understand that his assertion is thoroughly irresponsible. As Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee on the EEC, he must consider carefully before making such reckless and irresponsible statements.

When Britain joined the European Community it was a treaty decision and all such treaty accessions have a limiting effect on our sovereignty. The idea that the monarch's intrinsic, residual powers are in any way reduced by the whole process is thoroughly misleading. All legislation of the Community, either by treaty accession or by direct examination—in this place through directives—is, ipso facto, approved by the House of Commons.

Mr. Spearing: I must apologise to the hon. Gentleman, but that was not the reason why I gave way. He is quite right about my susceptibilities on the matter of representing the Scrutiny Committee. I am sure the hon. Member would agree—the Minister has given me an answer today that a Gymnic series of meetings are taking place in that building. Any Council decisions taken in Brussels—they are discussed informally outside—which are regulations, which he and I study each week, do not require, by legislation, Royal Assent. He is giving his assent to me in that respect, but in that respect the Crown is completely bypassed. I think that is a matter of fact, from which he cannot dissent. In the light of that, I would invite him—I am aware we are in Committee and I am sorry to divert it—to answer that point. If he can deny that the Crown is being bypassed by direct legislation from Brussels, whether Parliament is involved or not, he should say so. I believe that to be the fact. The hon. Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) has not risen, although I would like to debate this with him, so I shall proceed.

Mr. Cash *rose*——

Mr. Spearing: No, I must proceed.

The question we have before us today is whether or not the Assembly/Parliament will have more power. I refer—as a sort of test—to the statement made by the Foreign Secretary on 23 April, 1986:

> "The new co-operation procedure will produce a greater awareness in council and Parliament of each other's views, but it will make no decisive change in the institutional balance because the last word remains with the Council."—[*Official Report*, 23 April 1986; Vol. 96, c. 322.]

That is the text I wish to pursue, because I believe that even the Foreign Secretary is unaware of the difficulties which will ensue. The words which the right hon. and learned Gentleman used were carefully drafted, especially the word "decisive". On narrow grounds—the Minister will know what I mean—the Foreign Secretary is correct because, in theory, the Council may have the last word.

On 7 May, the Minister and I had some discussions about this in a public Select Committee and we had a slight misunderstanding about the matter. The Minister was right because, in procedural terms, the Council does have the final say.

Mrs. Chalker *indicated assent.*

Mr. Spearing: The point is that the Council has a final say in entirely different circumstances. I invite the Minister to intervene at any time and say whether I have got this wrong.

At the moment, the Commission has to take account only of the opinion of the Assembly/Parliament. I call it that for convenience. It does not have to take account of anything it says. In those articles and legislation subject to the new procedure—of course, it is not the whole of the treaty of Rome—the Commission must take account, first of all, of the fact that it can get a majority through the Council and, secondly, that the Assembly may knock it back by an absolute majority. Therefore, before it starts to present its proposals to the Council, the Commission is in a new ball game.

As long as the majority of the Council agrees, the Commission can get legislation through, but it must be sure that the legislation will not be knocked back by a majority of the Assembly. As the parliamentary draftsmen, Whips and civil servants are constrained by the majority in this House, so the draftsmen of the Commission—before it gets going—will have to take account of the new constitution.

Certain legislation is subject to this second round procedure—it has not been described as such, but it is the second round. The answer I received from the Minister today is important as it relates to what constitutes the common position of the Council. Until now, everybody has said that the Council comes to a decision and makes its common position on legislation known.

The Minister stated:

"The Council's common position will be determined by the member states in accordance with the relevant Treaty article as amended by the Single European Act. The common position will be drafted following discussion in the Council. We shall, as now, play our full part in these discussions and in establishing the common position which will be conveyed to the European Parliament by means of a Presidency communication containing the text of the common position."

In other words, the Council's view will not just be on the legislation as such; it will be on the legislation accompanied by a common position. New article 149 means that the European Parliament can propose amendments. Subsection (d) states that the Commission

"shall, within a period of one month, re-examine the proposal on the basis of which the Council adopted its common position, by taking into account the amendments proposed by the European Parliament."

Therefore, the Commission can either change the proposal or, if it wishes, completely adopt it. Many hon. Members have suggested that the latter is the more likely procedure.

Subsection (e) states:

"The Council, acting by a qualified majority, shall adopt the proposal as re-examined by the Commission."

Therefore, if the Assembly or Parliament, by an absolute majority, inserts amendments, which it is entitled to do, and the Commission adopts them, which it is entitled to do, the Council can adopt them by a complete qualifying majority. That means that even two member states cannot block the Council. As the Minister has not interrupted me, I assume that she gives her assent to this procedure.

Mrs. Chalker *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Spearing: The hon. Lady shakes her head; that is signally unfortunate, because I had invited her to interrupt at any stage if I had got it wrong. These are vital matters.

I refer again to the phrase used by the Foreign Secretary:

"it will make no decisive change in the institutional balance" —[*Official Report*, 23 April 1986; Vol. 96, c. 322.]

It might not be decisive in the strict adjectival sense, but it will certainly be a decisive change in the balance. It is true that the Council can assert itself by unanimity, but that is a very different procedure from the present one. What the Foreign Secretary has done — I make no apology for saying so—is what he did many years ago in debate with my right hon. Friend the Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) and the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell), then the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West. In those debates the right hon. and learned Gentleman used phrases which implied one thing but which, on examination, meant something else.

It is clear that the balance of institutional influence and power will be changed, although the constitutional mechanisms for decisions may remain. Any other claim by the Government, the Minister or the Foreign Secretary is misleading the House and the British people. That is not just my view. I conclude by repeating the view of the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs in its conclusions in paragraph 50(ix):

"Although the new 'co-operation procedure' leaves the final decision-taking power with the Council, there is, in our view, little doubt that if the Commission and the Assembly are in accord in respect of any particular item of legislation, the freedom of the Council to adopt a different position will be inevitably circumscribed as a result . . . the new procedures will therefore undoubtedly reduce the ability of individual Member States to pursue their national interests to the point of actually obstructing the progress of new legislation regarded as acceptable by the majority".

It is for those reasons that I support the amendment.

7 pm

Mr. Jonathan Aitken (Thanet, South): I agree with the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) that we are discussing an important change in the balance of power. If this admirable debate has done nothing else, it has convinced the Committee and, I hope, the country that we are discussing matters of considerable significance. We have also flushed out the Government, who have been trying to pass off the Bill as some minor trivial amendment matter.

Only a few weeks ago, on 5 March 1986, my hon. Friend the Minister said, as reported in column 338 of the *Official Report*, that the changes that we are discussing are "modest in their legal scope". On Second Reading, she dismissed the intervention of my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen), who had suggested that the changes meant an enhanced role for the European Parliament. She said:

"That is a dangerous fallacy. That is not the position; life is not a zero sum game."—[*Official Report*, 23 April 1986; Vol. 96, c. 390.]

Whatever that hideous piece of Euro-jargon means, it probably characterises the effort made by some of the other Euro fanatics in the House to imply that we are discussing minute and trivial points.

I rather liked the speech of the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) when he said that the Bill should be renamed the European Concealment of Intentions Bill. However, I could have retorted that his speech might have been renamed the European Recantation of Past Mistakes speech. After all, my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) elicited from him the confession that he had felt it necessary to vote in favour of the Bill that originally set up the European Assembly.

Mr. Foot: It was not the Bill that set up the Assembly, but the Bill that introduced direct elections to it.

Mr. Aitken: It is in any case the legislation that is the father of this present mistake.

In 1978 I was one of that relatively small band of hon. Members who, along with the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell), opposed that original legislation, because I felt in my bones—it did not need the wisdom of Solomon to do so—that it would be only a matter of time before directly elected members of the European Assembly became dissatisfied with its impotent and advisory status, and would come back seeking the red meat of legislative power. This legislation begins to realise those fears. The Bill's provisions mark a significant opening of the door towards legislative power for the European Assembly.

I have three points to make about the new legislative power of the European Assembly. The method is described with the somewhat euphemistic label "the co-operation procedure". It sounds harmless enough, but in reality the

[Mr. Aitken]

co-operation procedure is a Trojan horse which will inflict many a painful defeat on Britain's national interests. It will begin the long-term decline of this Parliament's sovereign powers. The co-operation procedure means that the Council of Ministers will in future have to adopt certain legislation in co-operation with the European Assembly. The European Assembly can amend such legislation, and in order to overrule those amendments the Council of Ministers must reject them unanimously.

It is, of course, obvious that unanimity in the Council of Ministers is most unlikely. Apart from the endemic desire to divide and split within the Council of Ministers, the Italians are great supporters of more power for the European Parliament or Assembly, and rarely disagree with it. My hon. Friend the Member for Clwyd, North-West (Sir A. Meyer) intervened with some philosophical thoughts on why the Italians feel that way. I happen to take a different view, which is that the political heirs of Cavour and Mazzini, who united a rabble of minor states, principalities and duchies less than 150 years ago, when there was no real tradition of democratic assemblies of Parliament, do not feel as some of us do, in our bones, for the traditions of a Parliament that has governed our country since the days of Simon de Montfort.

We care about parliamentary sovereignty. We understand it, and we do not want to see its powers eroded. We do not want to see this House being downgraded to the status of a county council.

Mr. Cash: Some misleading analogies have been drawn between the convergence of the city states and principalities of Germany or Italy and what is going on in any move towards a federal Europe. There is a world of difference between combining nations that each has a separate and deep heritage and combining countries that have a common heritage. There is a world of difference between a pan-European convergence towards federalism and a convergence within each of the existing countries, as happened in the case of Germany or Italy. It is important to emphasise that point.

Mr. Aitken: That is a profound point, and I basically agree with it. In the jargon of the European Parliament or Assembly, it is easy to forget some of the big differences of heritage and tradition. There is a danger that any fears are brushed aside as exaggerations. In this case, it is said that everything will be all right because the Council of Ministers will still have the last word in disputes with the European Parliament or Assembly. Under the Bill, it is technically true that if the almost inevitable squabble occurs, the European Parliament's amendments can be deemed eventually not to have been adopted. It would be a sort of lobster quadrille, with two steps forward and two steps backwards and not much happening.

That is the optimist's view of how small these changes will be. But once the legislation has been enacted the European Assembly or Parliament will have much more muscle. It will be able to put immense pressure on the Council of Ministers to bow to its wishes. It is bound to use that muscle to push its power down the road of greater legislative influence. Indeed, the warning signs have already gone up in big clear letters. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Taunton (Sir E. du Cann) said in his admirable speech, the European Assembly passed a resolution on 16 January 1986 which is worth quoting. It declared that the European Assembly would

> "exploit to the very limit the possibilities offered by the single Act and instructs its Political Affairs Committee to ensure that this is done; reaffirms that it will pursue its endeavours in the spirit of its draft treaty of Union with the aim of a genuine political and economic union between the states of the Community."

There could not be a clearer sign than that.

Amendment No. 3 seeks to remove the new power given in article 8, which enables the European Parliament to veto new members of the Community or new association agreements with third countries. I do not like that power, because it effectively allows it to blackball new candidates for the Common Market. Turkey is a prime candidate for admission to the EEC. A lot of wrangling is already going on. Greece is battling to exclude Turkey, for reasons that have little to do with the interests of the Community. As a result, it is hard for Turkey even to obtain association status, let alone entry to the Common Market. We have moved a long way from the days when Greece tried to seek entry to NATO. There is a nice story that, when Mr. Attlee was in charge of the Cabinet, a long discussion took place. At the end of the discussion Attlee said, "I fought against the Turks myself at Gallipoli — good fighters, rather have them on our side than against us"—and they were in NATO. It will be much worse if this goes through. Already we are hearing talk of a southern alliance of some of the farming states of Portugal, Greece and Spain. They could easily unite in a parliamentary sense to block the entry of Turkey. I am, therefore, against this power being granted.

On the nomenclature, whether we should call the organisation an assembly or change its name to a parliament, I was fascinated by, and agreed with, the rather romantic, almost mystical, musings of the right hon. Member for South Down when he enlarged on the true meaning and nature of a parliament. Coming down to something that we would all understand, when we call ourselves Members of Parliament and with some pride put "MP" after our names, we all know what we are talking about, and our fellow countrymen know what it means, whereas the letters MEP mean almost nothing in terms of clear understanding. I have always thought that the "E" stood for emptiness.

The danger, I believe, is that for the first time we are here giving the possibility of real meaning and real power, and an MEP will be somebody who can do something in terms of legislative power that will change the status of this sovereign Parliament. That is why I am against it.

Mr. Ron Leighton (Newham, North-East): The hon. Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes), who seems to have left the Chamber momentarily, was critical of, and appeared to ridicule, the phrase "a self-recognising entity" when applied to the British people. I think that that is an extremely good description. We all recognise ourselves as being members of a political unit. The proof of that is when there is an election. Sometimes we win elections and sometimes we lose. Losing is painful, but we do not question it. We accept that we are members of a political unit and that we have lost, and we hope that we shall win next time. We accept it, even though we consider that the policies of the party that has defeated us are damaging to

our interests because that is the democratic wish and decision of the political entity to which we belong. It is a question of loyalty.

I wonder whether that loyalty and the recognition of entity could conceivably be transferred to some great amorphous group of a dozen nations if an assembly or parliament not elected by us or removable by us were to carry out policies that we thought were damaging to us. As one hon. Member said, if we take this view, does it mean that we are superior to other nations? Of course it does not. I am certain that the French see themselves as a recognisable entity, but I do not think that the French would transfer those feelings of loyalty to this other body.

The first reason why I wish to support the amendments is that the Single European Act, in its preamble, states:

"the European Parliament, elected by universal suffrage, is an indispensable means of expression"

of the wish of the people of Europe. That is not true. Why should we be invited to support a statement that is apparently untrue? If it were indispensable, people would have voted in the election. What proportion of British people voted in the European Assembly elections? I think it was less than one quarter. I am certain that in Newham many voters have never heard of the so-called European Assembly, they are not interested in it, and did not vote for it. The idea that it is an indispensable means of expression is nonsense.

I do not think that the so-called European Parliament will ever be a focus of the loyalty of the British people. We were invited to give it extra powers. Where will those powers come from? They cannot be conjured out of thin air. If the European Parliament is to have extra powers, they have to come from us. We will have fewer powers in the Westminster Parliament, as will be the case in the other national Parliaments in the Community. That is bad, not because it is taking away powers from us as individuals, but because it is taking away the rights of the people of this country, exercised through us. That is what is being undermined. This institution, Assembly, or so-called Parliament is not elected by us or removable by us. As powers leave us to go to that Assembly, we should become something rather like a county council with limited delegated functions. We would be transferring powers to untried institutions outside this country beyond our control and not answerable to us.

7.15 pm

Our political freedom and liberties will be undermined. Our sovereignty will be damaged. I know that many people think that it is old-fashioned to use the word sovereignty and that it is somehow a reactionary idea. I do not accept that. This country gave sovereignty to all the ex-colonies of the British Empire—it was then held to be a very progressive thing to do. Now we are being asked to give up our own. Sovereignty is the right of people to run their own country in their own way. It is the right to democratic parliamentary self-government. There is nothing reactionary about that. It is the most precious possession that we have. Ask those countries that do not have it and they will testify to how valuable democratic parliamentary self-government is.

Our present liberties and freedoms have been fought for and achieved by the struggles of our forefathers going back to Magna Carta, the Bill of Rights, the Chartists, the Reform Bill and women's suffrage. We have inherited these rights and liberties as Members of this Parliament. We are the custodians of those rights and liberties. We are responsible for handing them on to future generations. We certainly have no mandate to surrender or abandon these freedoms to institutions outside this country, not elected by us and not responsible to us, and I do not think we would be forgiven if we did so.

What we should be doing is dispersing the institutions of government to the regions, bringing them closer to ordinary people, making them more responsible to ordinary people, and encouraging the participation of ordinary people. However, this is a giant stride in the opposite direction, making the institutions more distant, less representative and more inhuman. It would be a severe blow to our parliamentary democracy. I agree that in future, if constituents come to us to complain about this or that, we will have to say, "It is no good coming to us, you must go and see Herr somebody or Senor somebody on the continent because the powers are there." People come here to lobby us. I sometimes feel a little cynical about that. What do they think they are achieving by lobbying us? But it is right and proper that they do so. Think of the situation if they felt that it was not worth coming to the British Parliament. Where would they go?

Matters will be decided, not here in the sovereign Parliament of Westminster, but in Brussels or Strasbourg. Is that healthy or right, or the road we want to go along? I am certain that it is not. It is not a point of view that I support.

Mr. Marlow: I wish to say a few words first about amendment No. 3, which seeks to delete from the Bill the power that will be given to the European Assembly, or Parliament, to veto the application of new members to the European Community. If each and every country, national Government and Parliament in the Community wishes another country to join the European Community, why should the European Assembly, or Parliament, have any status or view on the issue? My hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken) suggested that it would have a black ball power. I think that it might be more sinister than that. It would give the power of blackmail to the European Assembly. It would allow it to say, "Yes, you may all want it, but we do not want it. We will agree to what you want, provided that you give us something that we want." That is why, in a nutshell, I oppose the granting of this power.

We are debating a Bill which the Government said they did not want and which the Prime Minister said was unnecessary. If the House were to accept these amendments, I believe that we should be doing the Government a service. The Government do not want the Bill, and the House does not want the Bill. Let us throw it out.

The Minister of State, my hon. Friend the Member for Wallasey (Mrs. Chalker), will tell the House about the advantages that the Bill will confer. She may be able to persuade the House that it should accept the Bill without these amendments. Let us wait to hear what she has to say. The treaty was ratified by this Government and the other Governments in the Community. I am sure that the Government will accept the will of the House. If the House wishes to delete various aspects of the Bill, I believe that the Government will be quite content for that to happen. The powers that are being taken away are not the powers of the Government, but the powers of this House. Therefore, it is this House that should decide.

[Mr. Marlow]

I take as my text some quotations from the report of the House of Lords Select Committee on the European Communities:

"Any enhancement of the importance of the European Parliament will tend to shift the balance of Parliamentary responsibility from the Member States to Strasbourg . . . the United Kingdom Parliament exercises no control over Community legislation other than through the voice and vote of United Kingdom Ministers in the Council of Ministers . . . any weakening of the power of United Kingdom Ministers is felt equally by the United Kingdom Parliament . . . The powers of the United Kingdom Parliament will be weakened by the Single European Act."

The hon. Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Deakins) referred to the referendum. There was no debate or discussion then about weakening the powers of this House, and there was nothing in the Queen's Speech about bringing before the House a Bill to reduce the powers of this House. There has been no suggestion that because a referendum was held when we joined the Community another referendum should be held on this massive change in the powers of this House compared with the powers of the Assembly. The Government have not put the case before the public. They have not gone to the public, in glorious technicolour, and said, "Yes, there will be a change in the powers of the House of Commons and the powers of your Parliament will be reduced." That has not been said, loud and clear, and it is up to Back Benchers, as the Government are not doing it, to say it.

The most important function of this House is to secure democratic control and accountability. The amendments would secure democratic control. My hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) and the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston), who speaks for the Liberal party on these matters, said that nothing happens in this House, that we control nothing, that this is an elective dictatorship and that this House does not matter, so why should it matter if these powers are given to the European Assembly?

In a previous Session of this Parliament the Government introduced a Bill which abolished the metropolitan counties. We decided that those creatures of this Parliament should be done away with. It was a major Bill and there were major debates upon it. There was a Second Reading, a Committee stage, part of which took place on the Floor of the House, a Report stage and a Third Reading. The Bill went to another place. Major amendments were made to the Bill. It was a major constitutional issue. My right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) looked upon it as the greatest constitutional issue of the day. Where is he now?

We decided, within our powers, to do away with those institutions — those creatures of this House. This Bill takes powers away from both the British people and this House and gives them to the European Assembly. It increases the power, role and significance of the Commission, the European Court of Justice and other countries within the European Community — small countries which have votes, in majority voting, which are beyond the relevance of their size. Is this not a big constitutional issue? If the Local Government Bill was an issue of major constitutional significance, what is this? That Bill took up weeks and months of parliamentary time. This much more significant Bill is expected to go through the House virtually on the nod. The heritage of our people and the power and influence of this nation's democracy are being cast on one side in three or four short parliamentary days.

The right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) waxed eloquent when he told us about the distinction between a Parliament and an Assembly. He pointed out that there is a difference between a Parliament and an Assembly. We know that there is a difference between a Parliament and an Assembly, because when the European Assembly was established the first thing that it sought to do was to call itself a Parliament. It arrogated unto itself a title that had not been given to it, because it knew that that title had greater significance, and by arrogating that title to itself it knew that it would have more power.

The European Assembly, or Parliament, has a very important role to play. European legislation is very complex. It is formulated by the Commission. The Assembly, or Parliament, is co-located with the Commission. It knows the Commissioners and it works alongside the Commission building. During the formulation of Community legislation the Assembly, or Parliament, exercises a valuable and worthwhile influence. That is right and proper. However, the Assembly, or Parliament, also has ambition. If we remember our "Julius Caesar", Brutus and his colleagues "did" Julius Caesar, not because they were worried about his role or about whether he was doing his job, but because he became ambitious. That is what this House should be worried about. We know what has happened in the past. If we pass this Bill, do we know what will happen in the future?

Let us concern ourselves with the democratic control that is exercised by this House. The European constitution is different, complex and developing. We are unaware of so many things that are going on, and so many things are set out in such a way that we are expected and supposed to be unaware of them. People do not want us to know what is happening. They want a fait accompli. They want things to be forced upon us that we cannot control.

How will the Bill, without these amendments, affect our democratic control? First, it will give more power to the Assembly. [HON. MEMBERS: "Get on with it".]. Hon Members on the Opposition Front Bench think that this issue is of such small significance that time is important and that we should wrap up the debate, but this is one of the most significant issues that has been discussed and debated on the Floor of this House. I am sorry that in the position of responsibility that he holds the hon. Member for Motherwell, North (Mr. Hamilton) does not understand that.

Any institution assesses an issue in various ways, as we do — Left versus Right, special interests and regional differences—but the Assembly has another ingredient. It is concerned simply for itself. It is concerned for its own power. The Assembly may be democratically elected, but on certain issues the only decision that it will make will be based on whether it enhances the prestige, reputation, power and significance of the European Assembly. Is that democratic?

7.30 pm

We have already discovered this week that the European Court of Justice can make decisions about social payments made by individual nation states within the Community. We never anticipated that. As we increase the powers of the other institutions within the Community, we

shall also increase the powers of the European Court of Justice. Laws will be made and decisions taken by this politic court, not by our political forum.

The preamble to the Act says that it will:

"transform relations as a whole among their States into a European Union."

This political court will use the preamble in making its decisions, over which we shall have no power, and to enforce them and move us towards European union. As many hon. Members have said, if the powers of the Commission and the Assembly are increased, our Ministers will have their powers reduced.

With regard to majority voting, hon. Members have not noted so far that we shall have 10 votes within the majority voting system, whereas Belgium, Holland, Denmark, Greece, Luxembourg, Portugal and Ireland taken together will have 28 votes. Yet their populations are smaller than ours. Every Irish citizen has five times as many votes in that institution as every British citizen. Is that democracy and fairness? All those small countries together can block measures going through the Community. We cannot do so, with a greater population. We and Germany together, each with our greater populations, cannot block things that they can.

There will be ganging up by the smaller nations, who have always been in favour of federalism, because that is how they achieve influence and power. Those nations will gang up. The institutions of the Community will gang up. What power will our Ministers have then?

My hon. Friend the Minister will be addressing the House very soon. I say to her that our one safeguard is the national veto. My hon. Friend owes it to the House to explain just how secure that veto will be under the new powers. My hon. Friend owes it to the House to tell us what influence the European Court of Justice will have under these arrangements on our national power of veto within the European Community.

We are being asked tonight to give more powers to the European Assembly — that tower of Babel. The only reports that we get from it deal with how its members wish to spend more public money for their personal and private extravagance. We are being asked to give more power to the institutions of the European Community. How have they used that power so far? What has happened to the financial mechanism that was to keep expenditure under control? What has happened to the common agricultural policy, which was taking 60 per cent. of Community expenditure when we joined? We were promised that it would take 40 per cent. of the budget, but now it takes 80 per cent. How can we trust them to make our laws and look after the interests of this country?

This is an important constitutional issue and I hope that hon. Members will support the amendments.

Mrs. Chalker: For the sake of right hon. and hon. Members—I understand the desire of the Committee to have two votes on the amendment — I shall draw together these issues as clearly, factually and speedily as I can. I shall not touch on issues that do not arise from the amendments.

In respect of the co-operation procedure between the European Parliament and the Council of Ministers, which is covered by amendment No. 2, it may help the Committee if I explain again what is involved. There have been many wild and factually incorrect assertions. Therefore, I shall tell the Committee exactly what is involved.

The European Parliament already has the right to be consulted under some 17 articles of the treaty. The Single European Act provides in chapter II for 10 articles — five in the EEC treaty and five new ones — where the procedure will be changed.

The co-operation procedure is designed to enable the Parliament to make its views known, and for the Council to take account of them before positions are set in concrete. The 10 articles to which I have referred are mostly measures affecting the internal market. Under the 10 articles, when a proposal goes to the Council, it will discuss it and adopt a common position. Thereafter, if the European Parliament votes for amendments to the proposal by an absolute majority of all its members, then both the Council and the Commission will have to take account of those amendments.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth) has said, it is highly unlikely that every Member will be there, given the performance of that Parliament to date. There does indeed have to be an absolute majority of all the members. Where the Commission agrees to change its proposal to accommodate the Parliament's amendments, then, as now — and I say this twice over — the Council can further change the Commission's proposal unanimously. It is for the Council to do so acting unanimously.

Where the Council accepts the revised proposal, then, as now, it will vote according to the relevant article of the treaty. That would be done not by unanimity, but by qualified majority. However, if the European Parliament rejects altogether the common position of the Council, which it can do only by absolute majority, the Council can still adopt the proposal unanimously. At present, that is required for many of the Council acts, such as those under article 100.

During the debate, hon. Members on both sides of the Committee have expressed the fear of an alliance between the Commission and the European Parliament, or that the Parliament will reject the Council's common position and that it will then be difficult to achieve the unanimity required to push the proposal through, especially if there is an alliance between one member state and the European Parliament.

Were that to happen, we should be no worse off than we are now with the current requirement for unanimity that some hon. Members wish to retain. In practice, I cannot see that that will be a real risk. For a start, to reject or amend a proposal, the Parliament will have to muster an absolute majority of all its members—260 out of the 518. In practice, very few proposals before the European Parliament command an absolute majority in favour.

Secondly, we are talking about proposals that will have originated with the Commission and on which Parliament will have already given an opinion. Unless the Council has changed the Commission's proposal out of all recognition —which it can do only unanimously under the existing treaty rules — then the Parliament will be looking at a proposal that may already reflect its view. It is much more likely that the Parliament will propose amendments rather than reject proposals altogether. Where it proposes amendments, the position remains as it is now, as I have explained.

However, if the Commission and the Council have laboured hard on a proposal that can command majority support among member states, the Commission will not lightly accept amendments that could destroy its majority

[Mrs. Chalker]

and lead to a proposal lapsing through lack of support. In this context, it is important to remember that the Council is under no obligation whatsoever to accept Parliament's amendments. There is no question of those amendments going through unless the Council votes against them unanimously. They go through only if there is a qualified majority in favour of them. If there is no qualified majority, the proposal will lapse after three months. That applies only under those articles that require a qualified majority.

Mr. Spearing: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Mrs. Chalker: I have been very patient throughout the debate, and I am reaching the end of my remarks.

Mr. Spearing *rose*——

The Temporary Chairman (Sir Michael Shaw): Order. The hon. Lady is not giving way.

Mrs. Chalker: The European Parliament is in a position to influence proposals, and that position is clarified by the Single European Act.

My hon. Friend the Member for Taunton (Sir E. du Cann) asked what would happen in the event of a dispute between the Commission and the Parliament and who would be the arbiter. My right hon. Friend will have appreciated from my account of the co-operation procedure that no arbiter is needed. The Council can take its decision whether or not the Commission and the European Parliament disagree. After one month the Council can act whether or not the Commission has reacted to the opinion of the European Parliament. That is the exact position.

The hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) spoke about the three main thrusts of the debate, although it was very early in the debate. I have written, as hon. Members have already quoted, on the issue of scrutiny; and the Government have, as the hon. Gentleman knows, accepted the recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee on improved arrangements for scrutiny.

Mr. Spearing: I appreciate the careful drafting and words that the hon. Lady has just used. However, I do not think that anything that she has said is incompatible with what I quite carefully said earlier. If she is challenging what I have said, would she say so now or perhaps look at the draft and let me know by letter? The hon. Lady is trying to say that nothing has changed. If it has not changed, why is clause 3(4) telling us that there is more power to the Assembly?

Mrs. Chalker: I will look through the hon. Gentleman's remarks. I have stated the exact position as clearly as I know how. I shall compare his remarks with what I have said, and, if necessary, write to him. I shall be coming to the hon. Gentleman's latter point shortly.

The hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley and other hon. Members were worried about the reduced power of the Council. The power of the Council as the decision-taking body in the Community remains as before. The Council will have the last word on all decisions, and it is in no way bound to accept amendments proposed by the European Parliament. My right hon. Friend the Member for Taunton drew attention to the vote in the European Parliament which he said expressed its determination to exploit the new procedures. That vote was 206 to 63, as one hon. Member commented. To have any proposed amendment considered, the European Parliament would have to do a lot better than that. Thereafter, such proposed amendments will not be accepted unless the Commission adopts them as part of its proposal and unless the Council votes to accept them.

The hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley also talked about the Council of Ministers' power to block. The Council can only change a proposal of the Commission by unanimity. There is no change in that. That is exactly as it is at present. We are talking not about co-decision with the European Parliament, but co-operation in areas where we want to see progress, especially the internal market, which is the subject of our next debate, where the European Parliament has consistently voted for progress. That is what we also are seeking to achieve.

There have been many challenges as to why all this is necessary, and it has been said that it is not necessary. I refer my right hon. and hon. Friends to what was said by my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary to the Foreign Affairs Committee, because that was challenged by the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley. My right hon. and learned Friend made it clear that we had earlier thought progress could be achieved without treaty amendment, but that we had secured our objectives in the limited treaty amendments which we succeeded in negotiating. He said:

"So this is a way of achieving what is necessary for Britain in a . . . good way."

I would go further. Other hon. Members have said that the Prime Minister should not have been involved. It was the Prime Minister who negotiated the changes to the treaty. She commended them to the House as an important step towards enabling this country to realise more fully the benefits of membership of the European Community. I hope that my hon. Friends who were quoting the Prime Minister in their support of these amendments realise that she has taken their concern into account and come to this conclusion at the end of that consideration.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mrs. Chalker: I will not give way.

The Temporary Chairman: Order. It is quite clear that the hon. Lady is not giving way. Hon. Members must resume their seats.

Mrs. Chalker: I am trying to help the Committee, because it wishes to move——

7.45 pm

Mr. Budgen: On a point of order, Sir Michael. Unless we are able to get to our feet to invite my hon. Friend to give way, we have no opportunity——

The Temporary Chairman: Order. As I said before, the hon. Lady clearly is not going to give way and she has indicated as much. Therefore, hon. Members must resume their seats.

Mr. Budgen: Further to that point of order, Sir Michael. Could you tell us how we are to know that my hon. Friend is not giving way? I did not see her give any indication.

The Temporary Chairman: I informed the hon. Gentleman.

Mrs. Chalker: I shall now turn to amendment No. 3, to which a number of hon. Members have spoken. That amendment deals with the question of the European Parliament's power over new accessions.

Mr. Marlow *rose*——

Mrs. Chalker: The opinion of the European Parliament is already required on new accessions. Under the new procedure, new accessions will go to the European Parliament for its assent. The consent of this and every other national Parliament in the Community will still be required for new member states to join the Community. Therefore, there is no change in the role of national Parliaments in approving new accessions.

Sir Edward du Cann: On a point of order, Mr. Leadbitter. I apologise for interrupting my hon. Friend the Minister, but I wonder whether you would give us some assistance. I appreciate that you have only just come into the Chair and did not hear the earlier exchanges. My understanding is that we are in Committee. My understanding of the Committee stage is that it is customary for there to be a good deal of give and take. I know that the Committee wants to make progress, but this is the only opportunity that Back Benchers have of putting questions to my hon. Friend the Minister on matters which are of supreme constitutional importance. We all agree about that. Surely it is in accordance with the best traditions of the House of Commons that if there are doubts the Minister who is replying should give the opportunity for misunderstandings to be rectified. Is that not the normal procedure in Committee?

The Temporary Chairman (Mr. Ted Leadbitter): The Chair recognises the traditions of the House of Commons. Plainly, if the hon. Lady or any right hon. or hon. Member indicates that there is no wish to give way, it gives other hon. Members the right to come back when the hon. Lady or other right hon. or hon. Members sit down. In Committee, the traditions of the House are upheld, and the right hon. Gentleman will rise when the hon. Lady has finished.

Mr. Budgen: On a point of order, Mr. Leadbitter. I hope that I am not making a sexist remark, but sometimes ladies change their minds. If the Chair assumes complete consistency, it does not give them the right to change their minds in a way which is not known to males.

The Temporary Chairman: There is no change of mind. It is traditional in Committee that if a right hon. or hon. Member wishes to rise on the subject matter of the amendment, he is free to do so.

Mrs. Chalker: I do not want to upset my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton South-West (Mr. Budgen). I will give him his sexist remark and give way.

Mr. Budgen: I will wait.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: How can the hon. Lady say that the powers of Parliament to agree to the admission of new members are not changed when this Bill gives the European Assembly the right to veto the decisions of national Parliaments? In other words, even if this Parliament, the French Parliament, the Dutch Parliament and all the others agree to Turkey coming in, if the European Assembly says no, then, under this new Bill, and only under this new Bill, it will not happen. Does the Minister accept that that is the position and that there is a fundamental change in power?

Mrs. Chalker: This Parliament will continue to have its existing role in approving new accessions.

Mr. Taylor: It could be overruled.

Mrs. Chalker: The overruling would be by the national Parliaments of the individual countries. Article 237 deals with the accession of new member states. Article 238 deals with association agreements with third countries or groups of countries. Such agreements would be concluded by the Council under those articles of the EEC treaty. That requires the assent of the European Parliament by an absolute majority of its members. It refers not just to those present and voting; it is the 260. At present, under both articles, the European Parliament is consulted, but the Council has no obligation to act. The consultation still takes place without any obligation. The new articles give the right to approve or disapprove new accessions or association agreements.

The Members of the European Parliament are elected by the member states. They are not elected by some foreign body. They are elected by members of the European Community states. That does not change the power of this Parliament, which still has to continue to approve new accessions.

Mr. Budgen: My hon. Friend has prayed in aid the support of the Prime Minister. Has not the Prime Minister reluctantly agreed to a package, part of which had the disadvantage of having to agree to the Single European Act? I thought that the Prime Minister believed and hoped that the advantage to this country would be a system of firm financial control. It is not possible to consider that package without explaining to the Committee whether, in my hon. Friend's opinion, the advantage of firm financial control has been achieved. Many Conservative Members believe that the package has been entirely disadvantageous. We have the Single European Act, but the hopes of financial control have proved to be nothing but a dream.

Mrs. Chalker: I know how concerned my hon. Friend is about the financial package. I understand his concern because I share it. In budgetary matters we must, and shall, remain within the 1·4 per cent.——

Mr. Cash *rose*——

Mrs. Chalker: I should like to complete my answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West.

My hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) referred to a written answer to a question by my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Treasury. He stated:

"We estimate that the highest rate of VAT contribution for 1986 implied by the Council's Second Reading budget of last December is 1·22 per cent. The actual rates for the year"—

this is the part my hon. Friend did not quote—

"will depend on the outcome of discussions on a new 1986 budget which will begin after the European Court has delivered judgment on the 1986 budget dispute."—[*Official Report*, 23 June 1986; Vol. 100, c. *531*.]

My hon. Friend knows that we are awaiting the judgment of the European Court on the 1986 budget. Until then, it will not be clear exactly what the figures are. That is why my hon. Friend the Minister of State could not give my hon. Friend the definitive and final answer he seemed

[Mrs. Chalker]

to suggest he should. There will not be an increase in that 1·4 per cent. ceiling before 1988. Any change in that ceiling could be achieved only by the unanimous agreement of all member states. I have said, on behalf of the British Government, that that will not change. Therefore, there will not be unanimous agreement of all member states, and the 1·4 per cent. limit will remain until 1988. To change anything in that period would require unanimous agreement.

I can honestly assure my hon. Friends the Members for Southend, East and for Wolverhampton, South-West that, whilst I share their concern about the budgetary position, we are determined to reduce not only agricultural surpluses but the costs in order to manage within the total budget to which we are committed.

Mr. Cash: My hon. Friend and other hon. Members referred to the Prime Minister and her view regarding the concept of federalism. Does my hon. Friend agree that on 5 December 1985 the Prime Minister made it abundantly clear? She said:

"I do not believe in the concept of a united states of Europe, nor do I believe that it would ever be attainable. The whole history is completely different, so I agree with the right hon. Gentleman about that matter. I am constantly saying that I wish that they would talk less about European and political union. The terms are not understood in this country. In so far as they are understood over there, they mean a good deal less than some people over here think they mean.—[*Official Report*, 5 December 1985; Vol. 88, c. 432.]

Mrs. Chalker: My hon. Friend has made a quotation that I intended to use a little later. I am grateful that he has saved me the trouble of doing so. I shall refer to the other amendments, otherwise hon. Members will be——

Mr. Marlow *rose*——

Mrs. Chalker: Mr. Leadbitter, I feel that I have given way as much as other hon. Members wish me to do. What I need to do now is to comment briefly——

Mr. Marlow: Tell us about the——

Mrs. Chalker: My hon. Friend has a very high voice at times. I can hear him over the murmurs of approval for what I have just said.

The benefits of co-operation are to get a better and speedier movement of the things which are necessary, not only for this country but for other countries in the Community. The hon. Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Deakins) spoke about amendment No. 13 concerning association agreements. The Bill, and through it the Single European Act, gives the European Parliament a new opportunity—I have never said otherwise—to play a constructive role regarding association agreements without diminishing the role of the Westminster Parliament or any other national Parliament. It is most unlikely that the European Parliament would wish to hold up association agreements on which the European Parliament had been consulted, because that would damage the relationships which it is constantly seeking to improve.

This has been a somewhat lengthy debate. The problems which many hon. Members see are very much more matters of their imagination than facts.

The hon. Member for Walthamstow spoke of his anxiety regarding amendment No. 45. There is a good reason for drafting the subsection as it is. It is necessary to ensure that former and present Members of the European Parliament who served while the institution was called an Assembly rather than the European Parliament continue to receive the pensions payable to them under the European Assembly (Pay and Pensions) Act 1979, as amended by the Parliamentary Pensions Act 1984. Without subsection (3), which, in the hon. Gentleman's eyes, is retrospective on the day that subsections (1) and (2) come into force, all the references will be to the Parliament, and the previous service of a representative to the Assembly would not count towards his pension. He would then receive a much lower pension. He would not receive the return for which he had contributed. That is the reason for that wording.

8 pm

The hon. Member for Walthamstow asked me about the royal prerogative. There is no change in the exercise of the royal prerogative. Any agreements that now require the approval of the House will continue to require that approval in future. We are talking about agreements not between this country alone and another country, but involving the whole Community, and it makes sense for the European Parliament to be involved. Such agreements will still require the approval of every member state in accordance with its constitutional procedures.

Other hon. Members have raised a number of questions and I have tried to cover them, but, in the light of the debate, I cannot see the fallacy that the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) put before us. The Single European Act adds to the opportunity of the European Parliament to play a constructive role. That is what we have all sought. We have sought to move business faster. Because this involves a change in the powers of the European Parliament, the approval of the House is required in accordance with section 6(1) of the European Assembly Elections Act 1978, which provides:

"No treaty which provides for any increase in the powers of the Assembly shall be ratified by the United Kingdom unless it has been approved by an Act of Parliament."

Those changes do not cut across the rights of national Parliaments. The Westminster Parliament, like any other national Parliament, will still have the last word in assenting to new accessions. National Parliaments still have the last word in the Council of Ministers.

Mr. Rogers: No.

Mrs. Chalker: I know that the hon. Gentleman could not be here for all of the debate. I do not blame him for that. That is no criticism of him.

Mr. Rogers: I was in the Select Committee on the Channel Tunnel Bill.

Mrs. Chalker: The Council of Ministers has the last word.

The subsections which have been debated in the past three and a bit hours bring the term "Parliament", which has been used in official and legal practice, into line with usage since 1962. It would be self-defeating if we were to accept amendment No. 51 or others of the same ilk because we would partially allow in the long title some cases of previous usage to carry on. That would result in confusion. The wording of the Bill has been designed to sweep up all possible references.

I remind the Committee that, in the last and in previous European elections, all parties used the term "European

Parliament". We do not want confusion between the two terms, European Parliament and European Assembly. I very much agree with the comments of the hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) on Second Reading, that it is

"extraordinary that, so long after joining the European Community, we are still arguing about whether the institution should be called an assembly or a parliament." — [*Official Report*, 23 April 1986; Vol. 96, c. 354.]

It is not an argument in which the country as a whole has any interest. The organisation is universally known as the European Parliament. It is directly and democratically elected. It does not make legislation, and there is nothing in the Bill which will cause it to make legislation. It therefore makes sense for the treaty to reflect common usage and to change our law to avoid any confusion.

We have had a long debate on these amendments. It has been useful for right hon. and hon. Members to air their views, but I believe that we should now conclude our deliberations. I advise the Committee that none of the amendments in the group is acceptable to the Government.

Mr. Marlow: I asked my hon. Friend the Minister whether she would address herself to the Luxembourg compromise and the power of the veto. She said that she was capable of changing her mind and answering questions later. Will she give the Committee the security that the veto will continue to exist and that the Luxembourg compromise will be safe? Will she assure the Committee that, if the Luxembourg compromise is tampered with in future, she will bring the Bill before the House for consideration again?

Mr. Budgen: On a point of order, Mr. Leadbitter. I see that a member of the Whips' Office is near you. I hope that you will not allow a vote on this issue until my hon. Friend the Minister has answered the point put forward by my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow). This is a Committee stage. If the Government are not prepared easily and courteously to answer questions put to them, they are bound to suffer the disadvantage that will arise if the Committee does not wish the measure to proceed to a vote. I hope that these points will be very much in your mind when you decide whether to receive the advice from the Whips' Office

The Temporary Chairman: The hon. Member has made an assumption. I understand why he has made it. There is some anxiety to deal with the business before the Committee in a manner approved and accepted by it. I give the assurance that this Chariman will comply wholly and strictly with the Standing Orders that control the Committee. No one will influence my rulings.

Mrs. Chalker: I remind my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) that I said at the beginning that I would concentrate on those amendments that were before the Committee because I believed that that would meet the convenience of the Committee.

The question of the Luxembourg compromise has been raised before, and it is bound to come up in later groups of amendments. The Luxembourg compromise is not a legal rule. It is not affected by the Bill in any way. I therefore believe that we should deal with it in detail at the point at which the matter comes up.

Mr. Bill Walker: I rise because, if I understand what my hon. Friend said, she may deal with my contribution later. She has not referred to my speech or to the direct questions that I put to her.

Question put, That the amendment be made:

The Committee divided: Ayes 132, Noes 202.

Division No. 235] **[8.10 pm**

AYES

Aitken, Jonathan
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Anthony
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'rmline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Buchan, Norman
Budgen, Nick
Caborn, Richard
Campbell, Ian
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Carter-Jones, Lewis
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clelland, David Gordon
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Cox, Thomas *(Tooting)*
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dormand, Jack
Dubs, Alfred
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Edwards, Bob *(W'h'mpt'n SE)*
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Gould, Bryan
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Leighton, Ronald
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
McCartney, Hugh
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKelvey, William
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Robert
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marlow, Antony
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Maxton, John
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Moate, Roger
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Nellist, David
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Neill, Martin
Park, George
Parry, Robert
Pavitt, Laurie
Pike, Peter
Powell, Rt Hon J. E.
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Robertson, George
Rogers, Allan
Ross, Ernest *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Sheerman, Barry
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Mrs R.*(W'hampt'n NE)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C.*(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Torney, Tom
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Wareing, Robert
Welsh, Michael
White, James
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Winnick, David
Woodall, Alec
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Don Dixon and
Mr. Allen Adams.

NOES

Alexander, Richard
Alton, David
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bellingham, Henry
Benyon, William
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Buck, Sir Antony
Burt, Alistair
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Cash, William
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Clegg, Sir Walter
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Corrie, John
Cranborne, Viscount
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Fallon, Michael
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Galley, Roy
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodlad, Alastair
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harvey, Robert
Havers, Rt Hon Sir Michael
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(N'folk SW)*
Hayes, J.
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hickmet, Richard
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hirst, Michael
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irving, Charles
Jackson, Robert
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith
Kennedy, Charles
Key, Robert
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lord, Michael
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
Madel, David
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Marland, Paul
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Meadowcroft, Michael
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Moynihan, Hon C.
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Normanton, Tom
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Oppenheim, Rt Hon Mrs S.
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Pawsey, James
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Rathbone, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rippon, Rt Hon Geoffrey
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shersby, Michael
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Terlezki, Stefan
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thurnham, Peter
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David
Wall, Sir Patrick
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Wilkinson, John
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Gerald Malone and
Mr. Peter Lloyd.

Question accordingly negatived.

Mr. Marlow: I beg to move amendment No. 5, in page 1, line 13, after 'Communities)', insert
'but not Article 15 thereof'.

The Temporary Chairman: With this it will be convenient to discuss the following amendments: No. 6, in page 1, line 13, after 'Communities)', insert
'but not paragraph 1 of Article 16 thereof'.

No. 8, in page 1, line 13, after 'Communities)', insert 'but not Article 19 thereof'.

No. 15, in page 1, line 13, after 'Communities)', insert 'but not Article 13 thereof'.

No. 18, in page 1, line 13, after 'Communities)', insert 'but not paragraph 3 of Article 100A inserted by Article 18 thereof'.

No. 49, in page 1, line 13, after 'Communities)', insert 'but not Article 18 thereof'.

Mr. Marlow: These amendments are to do with the internal market. My hon. Friend the Minister said in the debate on the last group of amendments that there are great benefits for the United Kingdom in freeing the internal market so that we can get some of the advantages for our services, our insurance industry and various other areas of United Kingdom entrepreneurial activity which so far have been baulked by other countries and institutions within the Community. However, the issues before us are somewhat wider than that. Although we all seek the advantages that the Minister hopes for, we must look very carefully at how the Bill approaches the internal market.

The purpose of amendment No. 5, which is in my name, is to delete article 15. Article 15 is by way of being an escape clause. It means that if rules, regulations or directives are introduced into the Community and some countries cannot put up with them, that should be taken into account and they should be exempted from the provisions of Community-wide law and policy. At the back of one's mind one suspects that some countries may be more inclined to seek those derogations than others. Indeed, I believe that the Greeks have not yet introduced the proper system of VAT which they were required to do when they joined the Community several years ago. I should be interested to hear from my hon. Friend the Minister how this article will operate, what points the

Commission will take into account when it makes its decision, and what powers she as a Minister will have on the Council of Ministers to agree or disagree with the Commission's suggestions.

Amendment No. 6, which is in the name of my right hon. Friend the Member for Taunton (Sir E. du Cann), is important because the Bill as drafted allows for changes in the common external tariff by majority vote. At a later stage we in the United Kingdom who largely believe in free trade could find ourselves facing a combination of Governments from other Community countries who, together with the Assembly and Commission, wish to be more protectionist. Therefore, they would be in the majority, and, although we, together with the Germans, might vote against such a policy, we could be outvoted and find our tariffs against the Commonwealth and the rest of the world raised without our being able to do anything about it. That is an important matter and I should be grateful to my hon. Friend the Minister if she could reassure us about it.

Amendment No. 8 deletes the provision for the Commission to draw up a list of national laws which it considers should be changed to secure harmonisation. In 1992, the witching hour, the Commission will assess how far we have moved towards harmonisation of the internal market. Having made its assessment, it will consider various laws and countries and say whether they have been harmonised, what has not been harmonised and what action should be taken. Again, that seems to give power to the Commission. The amendment, which is a probing amendment, seeks to delete that power, and I should be grateful to hear my hon. Friend's views on it.

Amendment No. 18 is of particular interest because it seeks to delete a paragraph from article 18, which inserts new article 100A. Paragraph 3 states:

"The Commission, in its proposals . . . concerning health, safety, environmental protection and consumer protection, will take as a base a high level of protection."

In other words, the Commission will wish to have fairly stringent legislation when it puts forward its proposals on the internal market.

The Government want to lift the burden, cut bureaucracy and make life easier for small businesses, yet this paragraph suggests that life should be made much more difficult and intricate, that there should be more legislation and a high level of protection. We may believe that we have sensible rules, laws and regulations. Other Community countries may, for commercial advantage because they cannot compete with us in various areas, or because of their traditions, their pressure groups or present position, wish to have greater protection. The Commission will tend to move us towards more complex levels of legislation, regulation and bureaucracy.

In the Final Act at the back of the Single European Act articles state on behalf of the United Kingdom that we believe that the burden should not be increased, especially regarding small and medium-sized businesses. When my hon. Friend replies—I see that she is making notes, so I am sure she intends to do so—I should be grateful if she will tell us what the status is of the Final Act compared with paragraph (3) of article 100A. I have a terrible feeling that if the reduction in powers of the Single European Act in the Final Act does not have a great status, we shall be subjected to a great deal of extra burden and bureaucracy.

Mr. George Robertson: I understand the confusion at this stage over this important set of amendments. A person outside the usual audience of these debates would find the goings-on in which we indulge extraordinary.

The amendments deal with further progress towards the internal market, which is at the centre of the British Government's ambitions for the European presidency. Indeed, in evidence to the Foreign Affairs Select Committee, the Foreign Secretary said that that was the central, most important objective of the United Kingdom during our months of presidency, which begins on Tuesday of next week.

On the philosophy of the internal market, we must consider the Dooge committee, which was the grandfather of the European Single Act, most of the provisions of which are about to be put into legislation in this Bill. The Dooge committee was lyrical about progress towards the internal market. It said that the internal market would bring more jobs, greater prosperity and faster growth, and would thus make the Community a reality for its citizens. Those are considerable ambitions, given the nature of Europe's problems today. Nowhere in the Dooge committee's report and in our many debates on these issues has any Government Minister cared to tell us how it is that the internal market—the breaking down of frontiers within the EEC and the establishment of this gigantic new market without barriers to trade—will be reached and assisted in the precise ways advocated by its most enthusiastic supporters.

Earlier this year my hon. Friend the Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) asked the Secretary of State what assessment had been made of the impact of a greater internal market on the United Kingdom economy. The hon. Member for Plymouth, Sutton (Mr. Clark) graced the Treasury Bench briefly during the Minister's reply. His interest may have had more to do with when he would get to dinner than with the intricacies of the Minister's defence, but I suppose we should be glad of the small mercy that he bothered to attend the debate. However, he would more appropriately be located on the Treasury Bench for this debate than he was during the debate on the powers of the European Parliament.

The hon. Gentleman, who is somewhat eccentric in his free trade views, said in a written answer that in general

"removing barriers to trade within the Community should further increase our trade with other member states and reduce costs to business. It should therefore help to stimulate increased efficiency in the use of resources and accordingly encourage growth in the economy."—[*Official Report*, 24 February 1986; Vol. 92, c. *422*.]

That is the simple article of faith that underpins the view that progress towards an internal market will produce more jobs, greater prosperity and faster growth. Nowhere is that more specifically pointed out.

I ask the Minister, as I have asked her predecessor, who has now been elevated to the Cabinet, what effect the internal market will have on the Community. What impact will it have on employment, on the balance of payments, or on import penetration, of which there has been a substantial amount since we became full members of the EEC? What impact will it have on the balance of trade in manufactures, which has so dismally worked to our disadvantage since the Government took office in 1979? What impact will it have on invisible earnings from services, which are usually the major example given by the Government as a sector in which we will benefit?

8.30 pm

There has been no White Paper identifying the benefits to the British economy from the internal market, no assessment of the impact on the economy or the country, no Green Paper, no working document from the National Economic Development Council. We are right to come to the conclusion that either the Government know what will happen, in which case I am sure they would have trumpeted loudly the benefits of the internal market, or, more realistically, they do not know and it is a gamble based on their obsession with deregulation and the free market ideology.

The "internal market" is an expression that is meaningless for 95 per cent., perhaps even 98 per cent., of the country. The Conservative philosophy is that it is the export of Thatcherism. Euro-Thatcherism is what they mean when they talk about the internal market in the EEC. Jobs are supposed to be the priority. Labour Members have, at tedious length, told the Government that jobs in the EEC are the priority. That some 15 million people across the Community are out of work is a tragedy and a disgrace. That should be at the top of the agenda for every European Council. We have said this ad nauseam, but the Government have chosen not to listen. The right hon. and learned Member for Edinburgh, Pentlands (Mr. Rifkind) managed a whole speech about the current state of the European Community without once mentioning the level of unemployment in this country or in the European Community—an achievement which we can only expect added to his chances of promotion to looking after one of the most depressed parts of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Cash: Will the hon. Gentleman accept that when he criticises the Government's approach to the internal market and then says that it does not have anything to do with jobs he is betraying his ignorance of the subject? It is precisely because there are problems with transport and other matters that come within the context of the internal market that we will be able to increase the size of the market and the number of jobs, which I dare say his constituents would like to see.

Mr. Robertson: I am sure that my constituents would like to see jobs a lot more than would the constituents of the hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash). He is talking gobbledegook, and if he cares to listen to the rest of my speech he will see why I believe that simple prattling about jobs is no solution and will not create jobs or utilise the immense resources of the EEC to make sure that jobs are created across the Common Market. Rhetoric about the internal market and reducing barriers does not often of itself create new jobs. The result is a spreading of the misery that Europe faces, rather than any increase in prosperity. I thought that the hon. Gentleman was part of another team for this evening's occasion—he is getting himself into a schizophrenic state. No doubt, as he is tantalised by my arguments, he will come to a different conclusion.

Mr. Nicholas Budgen: We are all independent gentlemen.

Mr. Robertson: We all fit into that category, with the obvious exclusion of the Minister.

The Foreign Secretary has changed his mind since the day when the right hon. and learned Member for Pentlands told us that unemployment was not a problem at the top of the agenda for Europe. In The Hague last week, the Foreign Secretary said:

"Unemployment is a scourge in all our countries. It is our greatest and most urgent social and economic challenge, and one that can only be met with common policies and common determination."

We strongly and passionately agree with that, and we welcome the conversion of the Foreign Secretary. Unemployment faces more than 4 million of his fellow countrymen and another 9 million or 10 million people across the Community. It is a blight on the picture of growth and prosperity, to which so many of the European countries have grown accustomed. It is worse in Britain, and it should be a worthy and necessary objective of the British presidency of the European Community to do something to end the misery and waste of unemployment.

What do the Government mean by this objective? Later in the same speech the Foreign Secretary went on to quote from a document produced by the Department of Employment, in association with the Governments of Italy and Ireland, on employment prospects in the 1990s, in which it

"extolls the virtue of encouraging enterprise and small business, and ending restrictive labour practices."

The Foreign Secretary said:

"We seek an internal market economy unshackled by the remaining protective barriers to trade, services, capital and labour."

Now we begin to see precisely what the Foreign Secretary and his colleagues mean by this progress to an internal market. The same iron shackles of monetarism are to be locked on to Europe. We shall export the manifest failures of monetarist priorities to countries which have already rejected inflation and cuts. While they have thrived and expanded by developing their economies, we have failed.

The Paymaster General is regarded, along with the Minister, as one of the key wets in the Government team. It was he who blew the gaff the day after the Foreign Secretary talked about the European agenda and the presidency and denounced, as the headline said, the "EEC debate as piffle". The Paymaster General is also the Minister for Employment and he

"bluntly described much of the existing agenda as 'piffle . . . We should be talking about the main problem we are all facing, which is unemployment and the need to encourage job creation throughout the Community.'"

To that we would all say, "Hear, hear." However, the great document drawn up with the Italian and Irish Governments has, as *The Guardian* says,

"a pronounced Thatcherite flavour . . . Mr. Clarke acknowledged that the paper was long on strategic aims, and short on detailed proposals."

There is no real surprise in that. The same ideological obsessions are to be the hallmark of the British presidency of the European Community. It will be long on rhetoric about unemployment and on the objectives of pulling down trade barriers and making it easier for lorries to travel between countries, but short on doing anything about it, as the British experience since 1979 shows so demonstrably.

The view of this country on the internal market and where it could and should be differs widely from that of other countries within the Community. The Government say that the Community should be a free trade area of itself and that could produce its own rewards, merits and growth, but experience shows that it will produce even wider disparities.

The President of the European Commission, Mr. Jacques Delors, earlier this year highlighted the philosophical difference between the new presidency of the European Community and the bureaucrats who will be asked to implement it. He said:

"The creation of a vast economic area based on market and business co-operation is inconceivable, I would say unattainable, without some harmonisation of social legislation."

Of course, it was the harmonisation of social legislation which the Paymaster General chose to categorise as being the "piffle" of the European Community's present debate.

A central provision of the Single European Act contained in the Bill agrees with Jacques Delors and not with the Foreign Secretary. The Single European Act contains, in article 18, a new article 100A to the treaty. As the Foreign Affairs Select Committee rightly said, this section has deliberately been entitled in this way to confuse both the British Parliament and the British people. The Minister of State added her signature to that part of the Single European Act which makes it clear that the attainment of the internal market must be accompanied by social and structural responsibilities to the areas which might suffer as a consequence of a drive towards a free market economy.

The Government believe that the protection of goods travelling between countries is far more important than the people who manufacture the goods. Section II of the European Single Act states that unanimity is to be retained only on the rights and interests of employed people. This is intended to protect the Government's standard, regular and continously used veto in areas where improvements in the rights and interests of employed people would have come about.

The Government will continue to deny the British people the benefits of the EEC. The British people will be denied the benefits of employee consultation provisions, participation provisions and parental leave provisions. Our prosperous Community colleagues already possess these benefits, and they already agree on their standard implementation.

The drive for deregulation will see workers' rights being stripped from them solely in the interests of an obsession with creating a gigantic 200-million strong free market. Why is it that this country always gets the worst of the European Community and never the best from its membership?

Mr. Forth: In this context, is the hon. Gentleman prepared to tell the House how he views the benefits of the kind of European regulations which he has just described and the levels of unemployment in the Community as set against the relative freedom of the internal market in the United States and its relative prosperity and low level of unemployment? Will he accept that there might be a causal connection between over-regulation in the EEC and a relatively free market and prosperity and lower unemployment in the United States?

Mr. Robertson: There can be causal relationships in many things. An automatic comparison between the United States of America and its relative prosperity, which has largely come about through larger budget deficits, which I am sure the hon. Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth) would deprecate and deplore, is not easy to make. The prosperity in America has come about through the budget deficits rather than through a lack of bureaucracy. We should not make easy comparisons between prosperous part of the world such as the far east, Japan and the United States of America and the European Community. That does not help the issue.

We could debate that matter, and we may well do so during the course of the debate, but the Government's objective is to be carried out via the Single European Act and is contained in the mechanism and provisions that we are debating. These would allow more majority voting in areas which have already been referred to, but which would deny majority voting in areas where workers' rights are concerned. This is a more relevant subject for discussion this evening.

If there is to be prosperity in Britain or in the European Community, it must be accompanied, as the President of the Commission said, by a considerable social obligation on the rest of the Community to ensure that that growth is accompanied by the protection of rights that have been won with such great difficulty. For example, parental leave will still be subject to the continuing British veto. The House of Lords Select Committee on the European Communities supported the directive on parental leave and suggested that there was no reason to believe that it would increase costs in British industry. It said that there was no reason to believe that it would threaten jobs. Of course employee consultation would not threaten jobs. In fact, that principle lies at the very heart of some countries, such as the Federal Republic of Germany and is at the economic heart of their success.

8.45 pm

The continued British veto would be retained in such areas. However, in many other areas, where we have no idea or measurement of the consequences, the veto would be removed and majority voting introduced. The Government are relentlessly, inexorably and enthusiastically driving towards completion of a complete frontierless internal market by 1992.

The Government have said that there will be no harmonisation of tax or VAT rates as part of the progress towards an internal market. However, that lies at the very heart of the reasons behind the parts of the Single European Act that are being debated tonight. Lord Cockfield — an exile from the Government — is the principal enthusiast for, and believes strongly in, progress towards the internal market. Lord Cockfied is unequivocal and unambiguous in his desire and drive to harmonise tax and VAT rates and to have them eliminated with everything else in the years until 1992.

Mrs. Chalker: Lord Cockfield is not the Government.

Mr. Robertson: The Minister has just said that he is not the Government. He was dispatched from the Government to do the Government's dirty work in Europe. He is still part and parcel of the ideological make-up which runs the Government. He is not alone. The leader of the Conservative group in the European Parliament made it clear when he said:

"It is hard to see how there could be an internal market without a measure of harmonisation in fiscal matters."

Underlying the arguments and the assurances which I know we will receive from the Minister at the end of the debate is an element of internal sabotage within the Conservative party and Conservative thinking which states that the internal market cannot be completed without that degree of fiscal harmonisation.

[Mr. Robertson]

The recent report of the House of Lords Select Committee on the European Communities entitled "Indirect Taxation and the Internal Market" makes it clear that there is no question of the internal market continuing without the harmonisation of indirect taxes. It states:

"The committee believe that there is a good case for approximation of indirect taxes as an end in itself, in the interests of fair competition."

We shall return to that issue later. It lies at the heart of our believing the Government's assurances on the exemptions and exceptions that they have sought to gain from the Luxembourg summit and which are now included in the Single European Act. The Committee will look with grave scepticism on the Government's assurances in 1986 when by 1992 the Government's vehicle, in accelerating towards harmonisation on taxation and fiscal matters, will be way out of control.

Across a whole range of issues the Government have laid down their own exemptions in order to make sure that their ideological brand of internal market is foisted upon Europe. In areas where co-operation between the European nations would make sense and work to our benefit the Government have little or nothing to say, and even less to spend.

Spending has gone out of control within the common agricultural policy — the hon. Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) said that the figures are now in the Vote Office for us all to see — but there has been a 16 per cent. cut in the European budget on technology and research, and these are areas of considerable effect.

I intend to return to the question of the social and regional funds, because article 23 of the Single European Act makes it clear that a strong regional and social fund policy is an integral part of the internal market policy. It would be refreshing to hear from the Government this evening that a commitment to the internal market will also be accompanied by appropriate and adequate resources, especially from the voted agricultural budget, for the social and regional funds. As I did yesterday, I would advise the Minister again not to listen to the fairly narrow views that are sometimes expressed on that count from the Benches behind her.

Of course there will be questions, but the internal market, as the Foreign Secretary has made clear, lies at the heart of the Government's presidential ambitions for the European Community when our presidency starts on Tuesday next week. It is right and proper for the Committee to ask the Government what their intentions are in these areas. Such questions have as yet received inadequate, if any, replies. Britain will not be well served during the presidency of the EC by Ministers of whatever Department unless the British people are given the answers to those questions and are satisfied by them.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: The amendments are rather important. We know from previous discussions that the Government did not want the treaty. When the Minister challenged that, I thought that it was only right to draw the attention of the House to the fact that the Prime Minister, in an excellent exchange on 2 July 1985, said:

"I thought that our proposals, which would not have required treaty amendment, would be better. It is important that the internal market be completed, but I think it can be completed keeping the unanimity rule."—[*Official Report*, 2 July 1985; Vol 82, c. 189.]

That, of course, was the Government's position. They did not want the Act, they did not think that it was necessary, and they thought that legislation could create problems.

Now we have the Act and I have found from previous discussions that there is one thing that the Government use to argue for legislation. They accept that there are many stupid things such as giving more powers to the Assembly, and so on, but they say that the one thing that is good about it is that it will help to complete the internal market. There is no doubt from the Government's point of view that that is the plus factor in this wretched little Act.

We should be a little careful because we should remember that free trade within the Community was the bonus factor that was put forward at the time of our membership. We were told that we would destroy certain of our arrangements with the Commonwealth, that we would lose a certain part of our freedom, but that we should look at all the trade and jobs that would result. Hon. Members may remember Lord Stokes, who was in charge of British Leyland, saying that if only we went into the Common Market we would be able to flood the place with cars and solve our unemployment problems. We know that that has not happened. We heard leading industrialists say that if only we could have freer and better trade within Europe things could be much better. We have seen for ourselves the disastrous consequences. Whereas we always had a surplus in our trade in manufactures with the Common Market in every year before we joined, in every year since we joined we have had a horrendous deficit which last year was £10,000 million.

Before we say that that is the fault of the lazy British workers and hopeless British managers, we should point out that we had a surplus in our trade with the rest of the world of about £6 billion. Obviously, something has gone very wrong in our trade with the Common Market. We have not realised the advantages that were claimed at the time of membership. But now the argument being used is that that is because the market is not free and there are still barriers. It is said that if only through this little Act we can sweep away those barriers it will all come right: there will be more jobs and trade and somehow we shall get the great advantages of this massive internal market. That basically is the argument being used. We are told that we cannot get things through that we want and that if only we can have majority voting we can rush through the hundreds of directives which Lord Cockfield wants before 1992 and then it will all happen. Presumably in the next Parliament, if there is a Conservative Government, things will get better and freer, and there will be more jobs, prosperity and trade.

Mr. Deakins: Did the CBI, representing British industry in 1971 and in 1972 and in the referendum campaign in 1975, make any point about the need for all those further directives and the completion of the internal market? Is it not the fact that, in those days of contact between politicians and industrialists and the electorate, the argument was simply that by joining the Common Market — I think then made up of about 220 million people — British industry would automatically benefit and that has not happened?

Mr. Taylor: Yes. Before we say that it is the fault of the lazy British worker, we should remember that our trade with the rest of the world has got better and better. It is our trade with the EC which has been a disaster. If we use

the CBI's figures, which show that about £10,000 of trade is equal to one job, we are talking here of a loss of 1 million jobs. Those who opposed our membership felt that that was an inevitable consequence, just as Northern Ireland and Scotland have always had more unemployment and depopulation despite all the efforts of the English to pour money into those places. The fact is that in Europe it is rather different. We are out on the periphery, but instead of them pouring money into us we are pouring money into them and throwing away the one advantage that we had of lower food prices and free markets. However, that is irrelevant to this amendment, which is more precise.

Those who were disappointed at the consequences of membership of the EEC to trade, particularly those in industry, bearing in mind the fact that our percentage of the trade of the original six is now almost the same as it was the year before we joined, about 7 per cent., there has been hardly any difference in our share of their trade in manufactures.

We should look carefully at this further measure which will give the Community the power to force through hundreds of directives by majority vote even if it is against the wishes of the British Government, the British Parliament and the British people.

What advantages are claimed for forcing through those directives by majority voting? The first that we are told is that, whereas Britain may not be so good at manufacturing, we are just wonderful at insurance. Some hon. Members who are present are particularly knowledgeable and experienced in insurance and they will be able to tell us something about it. People say that we are not very good at selling goods to Europe but that directives would enable them to sell insurance and banking, and that if they had the freedom to do that those services would make all the difference. They say that those things could be done if the barriers were removed. According to answers I have had from the Government, the directives are in existence. On 14 April I asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when a proposal to allow a free market in insurance was last considered. He told me:

"A number of directives in the insurance field have been approved. Generally, the effect of these directives has been to create a free market for reinsurance and freedom of establishment for both life and non-life insurers. Proposals for a non-life insurance services directive have been submitted by the Commission." — [*Official Report*, 14 April 1986; Vol. 95, c. 239.]

The Commission was awaiting the outcome of four cases before the European Court of Justice.

9 pm

Most of the directives are already in force and form part of the law of Europe. If there is a dreadful failure by the insurance companies to sell insurance in the Common Market, it is not primarily because of a lack of directives. I declare an interest in this matter because I am a director of a most splendid insurance company, Ansvar, which insures only total abstainers. It has had the most wonderful success in selling insurance all over the world to good people who do not drink alcohol, but the one place that has been a total disaster for it is Germany. I should like to tell the Minister privately the sort of problems that we met in Germany despite the existence of this law.

We are told that directives would help with transport and that everything would sort itself out. The Minister should have a word with the hon. Member for Worcestershire, South (Mr. Spicer), the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport. He will tell the Minister about the problems we had in Southend even though the directives are already in place. We ran a successful service from London to Frankfurt. People took a bus from London to Southend, a plane from Southend to Ostend, and a bus from Ostend to Frankfurt.

It was a successful service, and to make sure that we did not upset the Germans we used buses provided by their nationalised bus company. Of course we took quite a lot of that bus company's business and suddenly the Germans told us that, sadly, they were not able to provide us with a nationalised bus any more. We appealed to the Germans and to the Foreign Office and to the ambassador in Bonn and went to the Department of Transport and said that all we wanted was any old bus provided by anyone to carry our passengers from Ostend to Frankfurt.

If the Minister cares to phone Mr. Gareth Evans, the airport director in Southend, he will tell her the story. The Foreign Office was very courteous and so were the people in the ambassador's office in Bonn. Everyone wanted to help, but nothing has happened and we still do not have a bus to take our Southend passengers from Ostend to Frankfurt. That is because, despite the directives already in force, the Germans will not allow any bus provided by any company, whether German, British, Dutch or any other nationality, to carry our passengers. They just say no; there are bureaucratic delays.

Let us look at the inner German trade agreement. The Minister is well aware of the problems there. Our biggest trade deficit is with Germany, and hon. Members will be aware of British workers being put out of jobs because of the massive flow of east European subsidised trade from East Germany to West Germany, thereby gaining access to the EEC. The rule is that those goods cannot be sent out of West Germany unless they contain a certain amount of added value. The Minister must be aware that the rules are blatantly disregarded. I have sent case after case to the Department of Trade giving it clear examples of total breaches of the law, fiddles. The cases are constantly referred to the Commission but nothing happens.

It should not be taken for granted that if we get all these new directives by majority voting everything will be sorted out. The problem with the Common Market relates to the implementation of directives and not the need for more directives. There are plenty of directives already and they do not work. As usual, Britain is the mug in the Common Market because we accept all the rules and the others blatantly and offensively disregard them. Germany and France are the worst culprits. The Germans do not admit it, but the French do.

Mr. Forth: Does my hon. Friend agree that the political motivation behind what we are discussing is that the implementation of the directives, which, as my hon. Friend points out, already exist if we want to use them, will be contingent upon the United Kingdom agreeing to this new political initiative in the EEC? The price that we are asked to pay for the implementation of what we want and what we are told was the original objective of the EEC—an internal market and free trade—is the further political impetus that the Single European Act will provide. Does he not agree that that might be a price worth paying for a genuine internal market?

Mr. Taylor: No, I do not agree. I cannot accept that. The fact is that there has been a problem in getting anyone to provide a bus service from Ostend to Frankfurt. If we were to abolish this Parliament and put all our powers and decision-making processes into the European Parliament, with the only democratic powers exercised in Britain residing with the Southwark and Lambeth borough councils, I still believe, sadly, that there would be no bus service from Ostend to Frankfurt, although the relevant directive would provide for one.

Mr. Spearing: Is the hon. Gentleman telling us that even the relatively non-controversial directives for an internal market do not work? Is it not possible for him, his firm or his constituents to get what appears to be the operation of them? Could he take this matter to the lower tier of the proposed court? If he decided to take that course, does he think that it would be too expensive? Does he think that the law may fall into disrepute because it is not operable?

Mr. Taylor: Anyone who doubts my word should telephone a splendid firm called MAYJEX which has been extremely diligent in chasing Members of Parliament and others in trying to get problems solved that are associated with the dumping of food in Britain from East Germany as a result of the inter-German trade agreement. More dried eggs are dumped in Britain from West Germany than West Germany produces. That is remarkable. In fact, the eggs come from East Germany. Representatives of MAYJEX have been everywhere. They have approached Government Departments and those Departments have contacted the Commission. The Commission has called for reports and the reports have been produced, but nothing has happened. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister of State will not say that additional directives will suddenly cause everything to happen. I suggest that the problem is far more fundamental and difficult and that it will not be solved by introducing more directives.

Mr. Deakins: Is the hon. Gentleman saying that the German Democratic Republic is to be considered part of the internal market? We know that the GDR is not part of the Community, but does the inter-German trade agreement mean that West Germany and East Germany can trade together and that Britain cannot trade with East Germany through West Germany because of the agreement? Is that not unfair?

Mr. Taylor: Of course it is unfair. It is part of the original treaty of Rome. The hon. Gentleman knows well—presumably he merely wants me to announce this—that the inter-German trade agreement is part of the basic treaty. If anyone has any doubt about this, he should remember the discussions that took place on the polluted radioactive foods coming from east Europe. We had to enact some exciting, new and dramatic legislation that stated that we would not import any foodstuffs from Czechoslovakia, Poland, Russia and other east European countries except East Germany. East Germany was omitted from the list even though it is abundantly clear that food from other countries flows from East Germany to West Germany under the inter-German trade agreement. Why was East Germany not included? We know that East Germany is not further away from Chernobyl than other east European countries. There are parts of Czechoslovakia which are much further away from Chernobyl than East Germany. East Germany was excluded because of the inter-German trade agreement.

I asked a Minister a splendid question to which I am still awaiting an answer. I wanted to know how we could tell a Polish pig from an East German pig. To my knowledge, there is no way of identifying the respective pigs. Livestock and goods flow from East Germany into West Germany and the existing rules are not implemented. Unfortunately, there is no effective machinery to ensure that they are. Other nation states act like protectionist nation states.

If there is any doubt about what I am saying, we should remember poor old Lord Stokes who told us to join the Common Market so that the British car industry could have a bonanza and flood the Common Market with cars. In Britain there are plenty of French and German cars on our roads, but we do not see a proportionate number of British cars on the continent. Is it that our cars are unsuited to French, German or Italian roads? I suggest that the answer goes deeper than that. If my hon. Friend the Minister of State thinks that by bringing in new directives we shall suddenly enjoy freer trade and the abolition of trade barriers, I would say that there are sufficient grounds for questioning that.

What will be the effect on the United Kingdom of a flood of new directives? They are not just concerned with tearing down barriers ; when they are implemented, many will have disappointing results for our constituents.

For example, one of the many hundreds of directives which Lord Cockfield wants to shove through—one a day—is for harmonising Ministry of Transport tests for private cars. I wonder whether the Minister has considered this and the consequences on the payment made by our private car owners if they have to adopt the harmonisation of private MOT tests. I suggest that, if implemented, Members will receive many letters from their constituents, but of course there would be nothing we could do about it.

Earlier today I asked a written question of our splendid Home Secretary—someone who is prepared to stand up for Britain at every possible time. I asked my right hon. Friend what discussions he had had about the proposed EEC broadcasting directive. His answer was splendid:

> "The Department has had many discussions with the BBC and the IBA on the European Commission's proposals on broadcasting . . . and we are in close touch with them on the proposed directive. Both broadcasting organisations share the Government's view that a case for Community legislation in this field has not been made out."

When the Single European Act goes through, that can be imposed on the BBC the IBA, and even on the new cash-rich Thames Television, by majority vote. There is a host of new directives which, I can assure the Minister, will be especially unpopular if they are forced on Britain by majority vote. I regard this not as a move towards freer trade but part of the European design, the Foreign Office design, of promoting harmonisation throughout Europe. I believe it has precious little to do with free trade.

What about the other proposal—the majority vote on common external tariffs and trade terms? What exactly does this mean? Does it mean that the tariffs in Europe will be changed up or down by majority vote, although we disagree completely? This is one of the most dangerous parts of the proposal. We are well aware that the protectionist movement within the Common Market is strong and growing. There is no doubt that, instead of

being a movement towards freer trade, the Common Market is becoming more and more of a protectionist influence in the world. We see that especially in agriculture but also in other industries.

Does the Minister think that even if the Single European Act does not achieve free trade in Europe it will contribute to freer trade with the rest of the world? I very much doubt that. The EEC sadly disregards GATT minimum prices in its agricultural policy.

Amendment No. 8 asks the Commission to publish a report specifying all the laws of Great Britain which, in its view, conflict with harmonisation in the Common Market. The Commission wants legislation to ensure that goods move as freely between Rome and London as they do between Birmingham and London. The next amendment we shall deal with concerns tax harmonisation, and I challenge the Minister to say how goods can move between Rome and London as they do between Birmingham and London if VAT and excise duties are not totally harmonised. Of course, as Lord Cockfield has said and others have admitted, it is an inevitable legal consequence of the free internal market.

I am sure that the Minister genuinely believes that these proposals will be a step towards achieving freer trade. I suggest that, instead of having freer trade, which the Minister and all of us want, within the EEC, we will get a whole host of new, nasty directives imposing things on the British people which they do not want and which Parliament does not want. Unfortunately, we will not get the pay-off in freer trade which we all desire.

Sadly, the Common Market is in danger of becoming a nasty, protectionist organisation, disrupting world trade and undermining GATT. This Bill, if nothing else, will move the Common Market a further step towards that. It would be much better to concentrate on finding better, more effective ways of achieving freer trade on the basis of existing directives. Instead of bringing forward new laws, we should, like other member states, respond to non-tariff discrimination by doing the same ourselves.

Some of us have different views about whether it was a good or bad idea to join the Common Market. But even my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) may accept that we have turned out to be real mugs.

Mr. Dykes: I do not accept that.

9.15 pm

Mr. Taylor: If that is so, my hon. Friend should visit some of my friends who used to work in the steel works. He should find out whether they believe that they have been treated in the same way as the Italians, Germans and so on. If my hon. Friend has any doubts about us being the mugs of Europe, he should tell me whether he knows of any German firm that would find difficulty in obtaining a British bus to take people from London to any destination they chose. We see plenty of German buses in London, and no one seems to stop them. He should also telephone Mr. Gareth Evans of Southend airport, the Miracle bus company, or the Under-Secretary of State for Transport and ask them whether I am telling the truth. He should telephone the MAYJEX Company and ask what it thinks of implementing the inner German trade agreement.

Sadly, we are the mugs. We keep the rules, and if there are more rules we shall keep more of them, while the other member states do not keep them at all. Rather than representing an improvement, the Bill represents a move towards greater bureaucracy and harmonisation, and there is no voice in it for Britain.

Mr. J. Enoch Powell: I begin with a confession that may little endear me to either side of the Committee. I have a deep-rooted prejudice in favour of freedom of trade. I am sorry about that, and apologise for it, but it is so deep as to be ineluctable. I cannot help believing that benefits for all concerned, inside and outside the nation, are likely to flow from freedom of trade.

Unfortunately, the EEC—despite its earlier legends—has nothing to do with freedom of trade. I need not labour the fact that externally it not only has nothing to do with freedom of trade but has disastrously interfered with trade relations between its member states and the rest of the outside world. Many, even of those who were in favour of it years ago, increasingly wonder whether the damage done by its external restrictions on trade outweighs whatever advantages accrue from the internal free market.

Mr. Spearing: Theoretical free market.

Mr. Powell: Indeed it is theoretical.

The internal free trade of the EEC is procured by compulsion and by an attempt to enforce similar regulations, practices and laws on all the participant countries. One of the beautiful advantages of free trade is that one does not have to interfere with anyone else to enjoy it. Freedom of trade between the citizens of two countries enables the inhabitants of them both to follow their own customs, ways and stupidities and to have their own forms of taxation and of internal restriction, yet they are still able to take the consequences without imposing them on anyone else.

Therefore, internal free trade within the EEC does not need compulsion, and is not even achievable by compulsion. How is the paradox resolved that the internal free market has to be striven for by a growing series of directives, compulsions and enforced harmonisation. In this group of amendments, we are considering how that enforcement could be more speedily and readily achieved. The answer is that the EEC is not about freedom of trade. Despite its name, it is about not economics but politics.

There is a long tradition to that effect in central Europe. There is a long tradition of a Zollverein. In the middle of the last century it was not an instrument intended to bring about the economic freedom, liberation or advancement of the countries party to it, but an instrument of mediatisation. It was an instrument of growing pressure upon the minor states of central Europe to be joined in a political union under the leadership of Prussia. It was par excellence a political measure.

Through all these enactments, through all the basic principles of the Common Market, we discern this meaning of the free market. This is a free market that is to be based upon common political institutions and upon the enforcement of common institutions and laws as a process leading towards, so it is imagined, political unification. It is about political unification and not about the benefits of free trade. Indeed, it is about compulsion and not about freedom. It is not really surprising in the end, if we look at the nature of this institution which we joined in 1973, that we should find that the United Kingdom, when it set out to try to secure greater reciprocity in freedom of trade in various respects, ended

[Mr. Powell]

up by being confronted and obliged to comply with a new regime for the enforcement of common regulations upon itself as well as upon the other members.

The hon. Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) is of course right when he says that in the end politics gets its way. A book has been published recently by an American, a former Minister in the Reagan Administration, under the name "The Triumph of Politics" in which he describes his originally innocent discovery that, whatever were the economic professions of the Government that he served, politics had its way in the end. That has been beautifully illustrated by the point of the hon. Member for Southend, East, that in this institution which professes to aim at the political uniting of the former, the ex-nations of central Europe, the nations are there alive and real, seeking their internal advantage, seeking their separate advantage, under cover of enforcement upon others of regulations that they think will be advantageous to themselves.

It is a remarkable example that we were reminded of by the hon. Member for Southend, East that, of course, the Common Market has an open window to the East because the German motivation of German reunification and the ability of Germany to hold the Common Market to ransom from its earlier inception enforces that upon the rest of the members of the Community, and makes an absurdity of their attempts at control. Not only are we pursuing a political objective, therefore, but we are pursuing a political objective which in the end, after all the grief and struggle, will be found to be a will-o'-the-wisp and a mirage.

I do not know whether I am getting agreement from the hon. Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes)—no, I am not.

Mr. Dykes: I, like so many other people, am worried by the right hon. Gentleman's sheer hysteria.

Mr. Powell: As they say, I am within the judgment of the House. It was my disappointed expectation that I could trade off with the Member for Harrow, East my acceptance with him that the motivation of the European Economic Community is political union with the recognition on his part that that political union is itself a mirage and a will-o'-the wisp. That is where the hysteria arises — in mistaking the unattainable for a solid, political objective which one can obtain by enforcing upon unwilling populations what, if they were free to do so, they would reject.

Mr. Cash: Is it not right that at the time of the European Communities original accession in 1972 the right hon. Gentleman said:

"I come to speak to you as a European among Europeans."?

Perhaps he will recall that expression. But of course what he meant by that is not necessarily the same as some other people.

Mr. Powell: I think that the hon. Member is referring to my personal crusade in the early months of 1971 when, as best I could, in four of the languages of the Community, I sought to explain to them that the British did not really mean this, could not really entertain the objectives that were professed by the European Economic Community and, if they did not want a great disappointment, they should not mistake British humbug for genuine British intention because it was not within the comprehension or within the capabilities of the British people genuinely to enter into the submergence of their institutions and their identity and their nationality into a European amalgam. I am obliged to the hon. Member for reminding me of that sub-heroic episode.

Sir Anthony Meyer: As a prophet, the right hon. Gentleman is very often right. He invariably prophesies the worst, and the worst usually happens. He referred to Germany maintaining a window to the East, but does he recognise that in the view of other EEC members this country maintains a window to the West, because of the special relationship that a great many people claim we have with the United States and the very special relationship we have with, for example, New Zealand?

Mr. Powell: I think that the hon. Gentleman would have difficulty in maintaining that the United Kingdom has trade privileges outside the Community that are similar to those that have been accorded to the Federal Republic of Germany. However, I concede that the hon. Gentleman has rumbled my prophetic method. One of the advantages of being a cursing prophet rather than a blessing prophet is that things generally go wrong and therefore one is likely to turn out to be right all along.

Mrs. Chalker *indicated assent.*

Mr. Powell: I am glad to have the Minister's agreement. This is a subject upon which ministerial confirmation is perhaps better than the reinforcement that one could have from any other quarter.

I want to address a number of inquiries to the hon. Lady arising out of the amendments that we are making to the original treaty by virtue of some of the articles of the Single European Act that are involved in these amendments. The first is article 16. My question relates to the new article 28, which article 16 writes into the treaty. I must admit that this is a matter of inquisitiveness on my part. The main object of the amendment is to substitute qualified majority for that unanimous decision which, as the hon. Member for Southend, East reminded the Committee, the Government originally thought would be adequate for the achievement of their economic objectives.

What puzzles me is that the opportunity was taken to make another alteration. The original article referred to

"Any independent alteration or suspension of duties".

Now we are correcting that and writing in instead:

"Any autonomous alteration or suspension of duties".

I should be most interested to know whether the hon. Lady could obtain information in good time about the particular virtue of substituting "autonomous" for "independent". Was there some linguistic imperialism at work in the recesses and corridors of the European Economic Community that preferred one adjective rather than the other? I hope that it is not troubling the hon. Lady too much to satisfy my curiosity on that point.

Mr. Marlow: The right hon. Gentleman has great experience of legal and parliamentary texts. Although the article to which he has just referred relates to the common customs tariff, as discussions are taking place with regard to taking measures against South Africa, would it be possible, if the majority of Community members were in

favour of changing the tariffs for various items from South Africa, for them to use majority voting to impose that decision on the United Kingdom?

Mr. Powell: The Minister will no doubt deal with that point when she is kind and courteous enough to reply to my less significant query.

One has to read article 18 together with article 19. Remembering that we are writing this article into the law of the United Kingdom by enacting it in this Bill, I inquire what it requires. The operative words of paragraph 1 of new article 100A are:

"The Council shall . . . adopt the measures for the approximation of the provisions . . . which have as their object the establishment and functioning of the internal market."

9.30 pm

Now, "shall" and "will" are an eternal torment for foreigners attempting to cope with the English language, and not all members of the component nations of the United Kingdom use "shall" and "will" in the same way. Nevertheless, it is reasonable to expect that there should be some precise meaning in any formulation that is going to be mandatory upon the citizens of the United Kingdom by virtue of being enacted in an Act of Parliament.

Article 28, with which we were just dealing, says:

"Any autonomous alteration . . . shall be decided by the Council acting by a qualified majority".

I think I know what that means: that if the Council wants to decide upon an alteration it shall do it by qualified majority. That, I think, is the meaning of "shall" in new article 28.

But I find great difficulty in interpreting in the same way the word "shall" in new article 100A. The natural meaning of the expression "the Council shall" adopt certain measures is precisely that the Council shall adopt and is under an obligation to adopt certain measures. My suspicion that that might be the case is strengthened by what little I can understand of the remainder of the new article. If that can be taken as too abject a confession of nescience I draw attention to the remarkable words that, by the way, they are enacting as part of the law of the United Kingdom:

"The Commission . . . will take as a base a high level of protection."

That is not the sort of language that parliamentary draftsmen are apt to dish up to Ministers who hope to get their Bills through the House of Commons and is a reminder of the strange combination of compulsion and vagueness that characterises the administration of the European Economic Community, whereby we are told here in this House and in this country, "You have enacted this. It is part of the law of the United Kingdom. This is what you are about to do by virtue of the international and legal obligations which you have undertaken". Yet, at the same time, when one reads it, one finds that it is deliberately so drafted as to be absolutely full of holes and let-outs. I see that the hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) wishes to help me.

Mr. Cash: Would my right hon. Friend agree that there are distinct differences in the interpretation of Community law when compared to domestic municipal law, which we have in the United Kingdom? Would he agree that it is precisely because of the width of the scope of the European treaty and the rules of interpretation having regard to, say, article 2 of the treaty of Rome against the background of the general objective of the treaty, that we have to look with great care, although not necessarily be unduly critical, at the meaning of the preamble and its inclusion in the Bill?

Mr. Powell: That will no doubt entertain and amuse us later in the debate, if it is so unreasonably protracted that we reach the question of a preamble, which is interesting in its own right.

I thought that the hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) was going to remind me and the Committee that this very vagueness with which the law of the Community tends to be drawn is one of the reasons why the power and scope of the European Court of Justice is from the British point of view so exorbitant. They have to interpret a kind of law that is so drafted as to give to its interpretation by the court a width and a scope that is quite incompatible with our notions of law and judicial interpretation.

Mr. Deakins: On the sub-paragraph of new article 100A from which the right hon. Gentleman quoted the words "high level of protection", is it not extraordinary that Ministers should have approved so vague a word as "high", which could mean almost anything, particularly when it is not quantified? Will that not create many more problems in the evolution of the internal market, let alone in what the European Court of Justice will think of problems that are referred to it, if something more specific is not put into the Bill? If Ministers had devoted rather more time to the matter, they could have put in words that would at least have meant something positive and would not have been capable of such easy misinterpretation.

Mr. Powell: It would be interesting to know, perhaps we may be enlightened, whether Ministers would have preferred a tighter drafting of some of these provisions. I must say that I find it difficult to understand how even those who have spent less than 36 years wrestling with the draftmanship of British Bills and statutes could bring themselves to put their signature to documents, which are to be made part of the law of the United Kingdom by the operation in which we are engaged tonight, which contain such vague and almost meaningless expressions as these.

Mr. Deakins: I have just discovered in the Community's annual report for 1985 the following phrase written by the Commission:

"The Commission also ensured that its texts"—

that is, the texts put to Ministers for approval—

"were sufficiently general not to contain excessively precise clauses on the development of new policies."

Mr. Powell: I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on his discovery. I hope that it will be given even greater publicity than the proceedings of this Committee might attract. He seems to have got hold of a gem, and it is something which could feature on bureaucratic desks inside and outside the European Community.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: The right hon. Gentleman has obviously been studying the wording, and therefore may I ask whether he has seen the article which allows a member state to apply for exemption from all these measures if it considers itself to be less well developed? Has he found an appropriate definition of "less well developed"?

Mr. Powell: I am almost overwhelmed by the illustrative examples of my general thesis which are being offered from both sides of the Committee. Certainly, article 18 is a happy hunting ground for those who are

[Mr. Powell]

looking for vague formulations and uninterpretable generalisations which we ought to refuse, as a matter of principle, to allow to be made part of the law of the United Kingdom.

I am sorry that I have allowed myself to be diverted by the delights along the way, but I shall now return to the precise question I want to ask the Minister. I want to ask whether the word "shall" in paragraph 1 of new article 100A is mandatory. Is it a statement that it is the duty of the Council to do this, in which case the nature of its duty depends on the definition at the end of that paragraph, or does it mean that it can do so if it wishes? It is a rather important distinction and I do not think that we should part with these amendments without knowing the answer.

Mr. Spearing: I should like to address the right hon. Gentleman before he sits down, because it might be helpful to take it in sequence. Has the right hon. Gentleman realised that if the programme of enforced harmonisation required under this treaty is not completed under article 100A, article 100B takes over where the Commission appears to impose the laws of one nation upon another. Therefore, there is a continuing constraint and duty on the Council to obtain that harmonisation by majority voting. That is, no doubt, the constraint of "shall".

Mr. Powell: I am tempted by the intervention of the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing), perhaps due to old lexicographical habits, to go just to the extent of pointing out that the word "shall" also appears in the new article 100B. In that article it must be mandatory. Surely it means that the Commission jolly well must. That inspires me with fear that in article 100A the word "shall" means that the Council jolly well must. I hope that that is something on which we shall receive clarification before the end of the debate.

Mr. Dykes: Tonight, as always, when these issues are discussed in Committee and generally, a form of enthusiastic constitutional madness takes over. I use the word "constitutional" in its lightest sense. As our parliamentary colleagues get drawn into the semantic investigation of tiny words in clauses, they forget that they are complacent and over-reverent members of a Parliament which churns out a monumental amount of legislation every year. The legislation is ill-digested, unexamined, not properly examined. Through our tremendous rituals, usually on a three-line whip, hon. Members vote on the legislation without having had a chance to examine it properly. There is a vast quantity of undigested and ill-digestible legislation. We have that reputation among all objective observers.

I do not complain too much about that, because there is a good side to this robust Parliament — the manifestation of the will to legislate. However, we all know the adverse consequences of that. When we consider the procedure by which legislation is drafted and examined in the European Community, before it reaches the equivalent of our Second Reading stage — I say that in the colloquial sense; not literally—how can we say that our processes are infinitely superior?

Mr. Cash *rose*—

Mr. Dykes: My hon. Friend has made many interventions. I do not intend to give way. He should exercise a little patience. If I thought that he would make a short intervention, I would willingly give way, but at the moment I have my doubts. I may give way to him later, but not at the moment. I hope that he will forgive me.

The way in which the Community legislates is seen by more and more objective observers as a better way of legislating. A better legislative result is obtained than that achieved under our system, which is a repetitive nightmare of huge quantities of controversial legislation enacted and then repealed a year or two afterwards by the alternative adversarial political reform that is elected on a minority vote — not even on a built-in, genuine majority of the population.

Mr. Marlow *rose*—

Mr. Dykes: I shall not give way.

The idea that such a system is wonderful, sacred and marvellous and that the system of continental countries — our friends and allies—which are working together to create a European Community is not is myopic and absurd. The public know it. They are tempted less and less by the false blandishments of that reactionary, old-fashioned and out-of-date argument. That attitude is partly responsible for the decline of this country. That worries me and others who want to see the European Community develop in a robust, positive and, indeed—I refer to the tremendous delays that have been seen in the past—rapid way. That is why the amendments must be resisted by the Committee.

The creation of an internal market — whatever its relationship to the concessions made at the time of the latest summit agreements which form the basis of the Single European Act—is long overdue. The Committee should be a party to its creation as soon as possible. Such legislation is difficult to create. How different it would have been — I follow the remarks of the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) — if we had accepted the invitation of our European friends to join the Community and the Common Market at the beginning instead of coming in too late, when we are less able to change things. We should have joined the European Community at the beginning when we could have forged many of its manifestations and structures in the way we wanted as the island power entering the continent of Europe.

The internal market is long overdue. Vast benefits will accrue to all the member states from its creation. The sooner that it is created properly the better. I reject the monstrous canard that is repeated on such occasions— that it is the wicked foreigners doing us down; that we are the only virtuous, honest and rule-obeying members of the European Community. That is utter nonsense. If we are endowed with the ability to use a foreign language when we visit other countries, we can easily get our ears bent by the many stories from business men who have tried to come to this country with their projects and have been frustrated by the internal national bureaucracy. That happens in all the countries as the common market in commercial and industrial terms is created.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: Can my hon. Friend help me to get a German bus?

9.45 pm

Mr. Dykes: We all have examples of different problems. As a German speaker, I should love to see the Germans'

reply in the file of my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor). Perhaps he would be kind enough to let me have it so that I can read what the Germans have said.

Mr. Taylor: Will my hon. Friend help me in my campaign?

Mr. Dykes: I shall not give way at the moment. I am referring to what he said from a sedentary position. There are many similar examples.

Recently, during a visit to the National Assembly, I listened to a debate during which references were made to the development of trade in Britain by French companies. Similar assertions were made then.

Mr. Taylor: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Dykes: I hope that my hon. Friend will forgive me for not giving way, because of the time.

It would have been useful if I had been able to stay longer to listen to the French complaints and try to assist them. That is the spirit in which all politicians of the member states work in creating a healthier economy.

Mr. Taylor: Is there not a danger that those who do not know my hon. Friend may think that he is a trifle arrogant? My right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary and the Secretary of State for Transport have been trying for six months to get a German bus for Southend. There is a danger in my hon. Friend saying that he might be able to resolve the matter—I hope that he will—because those who do not know him may consider his remarks are a little arrogant.

Mr. Dykes: I was referring to the many examples in general terms. As my hon. Friend was shouting out about a bus, I thought that I would use it as an example. My hon. Friend may be right. There are many other examples in all the member states.

It has been asserted, justifiably, that an examination of the number of rules laid down and the number of times they have been breached by member states shows that we do not come at the top of the list. There are restrictive practices in all member countries. The essential aim in creating the internal market—I wish the Government every success in their efforts—is to get away from our difficulties and barriers, not to use them as part of a philosophical argument of resistance to the whole idea. That is the mental disease of the anti-marketeers in the Committee. They do not have a genuine wish to see the creation of a common market.

There are misapprehensions about the way in which the United Kingdom has succeeded, or not succeeded, as a member of this still rudimentary, primitive and under-developed internal market system, in terms of services and the provision of goods. It is difficult for us to separate out, in philosophical and technical operational terms, the internal demand management policies of any national Administration and the arrival of a new member in the market. I think that it is reasonable to assert that we have done well with respect to the net addition to our physical exports to other European countries and with respect to some aspects of our invisible exports to some European countries.

I have frequently quarrelled with the internal application of the Government's demand-deflation policy since 1979. Have that policy and excessive adherence to monetarism, which became unfathomable as time went on, meant that our economy has been too weak and too small to take advantage of the opportunities in the larger market? Admittedly, we have done well with a certain number of increasingly rather esoteric products, but we have not done well with motor cars, as my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East said. Why? Is it a combination of union misbehaviour, weak management and poor marketing policy? Is it also the fact that the United Kingdom is, par excellence, the country that invests less than all advanced countries with equivalent populations?

The figures for investment in new assets, both public and private, for research and development and for reinvestment from our own creative internal resources fill me with a certain terror and anxiety for the future. That syndrome appears to be persistent.

Mr. Marlow: On a point of order, Sir Paul. I wonder whether you could direct the Committee's attention to the amendment to which my hon. Friend speaks?

The Second Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means (Sir Paul Dean): I was beginning to listen a little anxiously to the hon. Gentleman who is straying into some of the later amendments. The amendments under discussion deal with the internal market.

Mr. Dykes: Obviously, Sir Paul, I shall follow your guidance. I was referring to amendment No. 5 and those grouped with it. I had to develop the argument about the state of the United Kingdom's economy and its investment weakness to relate it to the creation of the internal market.

Success or failure will be determined not only by the creation of the market and other markets in the world, but by the internal actions of the Governments. That is why the amendments should be resisted and why the articles are so important in the Single European Act.

Will the Minister assure me that in future we shall increasingly have the essential, qualified majority voting for all decisions taken by the Finance Council and by the equivalent of our economic Ministers' councils, at whatever level, for the reflation of the various member states' economies to get away from a prolonged period of deflation, not only in this country, which has remained weaker than the other large powers in the Community, but in the other countries, including France and Germany? With the introduction of the Single European Act, that can be done from now on. That could be the more hopeful aspect of what this European legislation can create, if the will is shown not by a curmudgeonly, nervous member state, feeling that it is half a failure or half a success only, and therefore unable to exert the political will to co-operate with our fellow member states, without providing a lead for the creation of a dynamic European economy.

Mr. Roger Moate (Faversham): I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) will accept a genuine expression of sympathy from me. I suspect that his ideological attachment to and his adoration and love for all things European has stopped him from enjoying the debate so far, and the masterly speech given by the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell). I am sorry for him because he seems so bored with controversial politics in the United Kingdom. He said how much he regretted the type of controversial legislation that we have introduced into this Parliament, sometimes to repeal it later. One can only conclude that my hon. Friend wants supranational laws passed on a greater scale

[Mr. Roger Moate]

to put our activities into the perspective of a minor role. He regrets the legislation that he has been supporting in the Lobbies in recent years, and looks forward to the time when legislation will be done on a grander, broader scale, without the precise detail into which we enter. He looks forward to the day when the great Euro-ideals which he espouses will be accepted readily and easily by all hon. Members, without any chance to quarrel. I am sorry for him if he is bored by our debates, especially by our constitutional arguments, which others may view as significant changes.

Sir Russell Johnston: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman would extend a little of his sympathy to me, too? Given that controversial issues are introduced and that part of the argument against a Single European Act is that it would reduce our capacity to defend our national interest, does he not agree that the national interest varies according to which party is in power, and that there is no abstract definition of it whatever?

Mr. Moate: That is determined by the British people and the Parliament at the time. Indeed, the definition of the national interest will change from time to time, but at least it is determined by the British Parliament or the British people through their Parliament. The hon. Gentleman makes well and clearly the point that the capacity of each nation to defend its interests is reduced by this proposition. However, my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East is bored by these trivial debates. It is all too tedious for him. Why do we not just accept the splendid Acts rather than debate them at some length?

Sir Anthony Meyer: It is common ground that this country is uniquely well governed, in an exceptionally efficient system. My hon. Friend has to square that with the fact that France and Germany, which were beaten to their knees in 1945, have living standards appreciably above ours, which has probably nothing to do with the political system.

The Second Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means: Order. We are now straying from the subject of the debate, which is the internal market.

Mr. Moate: I thank you for making the point much better than I would have, Sir Paul. It is out of order, but my hon. Friend's point is not even relevant to the debate.

This brief debate on the extension or completion of the internal market is the reason for the Bill. The only reason that we have it before us is that it was the price that the Government were prepared to pay for the completion of the internal market. One would not think so from the fairly thinly attended debate or from the rather abstract discussion that we have had, but if it were not for the Government's wish to make progress in this direction, we should not be debating the Act. I do not believe that it is worth paying the price of the constitutional sacrifice that we are making for the contents of the Bill. What is supposed to lead us to the completion of the internal market is naive expectation elevated into statute form. It is pure optimism translated into legislation.

If one wants evidence of that, one has only to look through the Final Act and at our experience. I ask my hon. Friend the Minister to address one point. What specific obligations will this Bill place on other member states for the removal of obstacles to trade? We can well see that there could be majority voting on a number of issues, but there are so many exemptions that I suspect that, in practice, the completion of the internal market will make little progress. If we were talking about a Bill that put into precise form the removal of certain obstacles, we would be talking about something worth while, but we are not. We are talking about a whole range of proposals that wrap up the introduction of qualified majority voting on a number of issues. That is not the same thing as laying obligations on member states.

I make it clear that I am a great believer in the principles of free trade. I am not sure whether free trade is a principle, but it is in the interests of the country and pragmatically we should welcome it. I would warmly welcome the removal of as many tariff and non-tariff barriers and obstacles to capital movements and insurance sales throughout the Community as possible. However, we can achieve all that without joining the EEC. The EEC was essentially a protectionist device. It is not a free trade area, which is a concept that would have been warmly welcomed by the vast majority of people. This new proposition does virtually nothing to take away the Community's protectionist nature.

I would warmly welcome freer trade, but I do not welcome the imposition of compulsory harmonisation of those obstacles that are deemed by bureaucrats to be in the way of free trade. Free trade between nations is different from compulsory harmonisation of all the nations concerned. That is what we are being told: in many areas where we might object, we shall be compelled to accept majority voting. In many of those areas there could be considerable reaction in the House and throughout Britain.

I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will also consider the practical example given by my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) on broadcasting. That is a classic example of one of the hundreds of smaller matters where harmonisation might be required, although I am sceptical about whether this will happen against the express wishes of the Government. Why should we do that? What does it have to do with the completion of the internal market?

It being Ten o'clock, THE SECOND DEPUTY CHAIRMAN *left the Chair to report Progress and ask leave to sit again.*

Committee report Progress.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting, the European Communities (Amendment) Bill may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.—*[Mr. Neubert.]*

Mr. Moate: I should be grateful if my hon. Friend the Minister would consider some of the practical illustrations that have been given, including broadcasting and the MOT. They are the tip of the iceberg of hundreds of regulations that might be unwelcome to the House and to the country and that we might be forced to accept. We are being asked to pay a constitutional price for naive expectations.

My hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East and others talk about the great period of our Presidency. It is surprising how quickly a Presidency can come and go, with nothing remaining as a souvenir of that great period of

grandeur. I forecast that that will happen this time. The completion of and progress towards the internal market is a pious hope and it is folly to pay a constitutional price for it.

Mr. Budgen: Does my hon. Friend suggest that the Minister should explain to the House the constitutional advantages of the Presidency? I agree that, in recent weeks, we have heard much about the exciting possibilities that will be open to the United Kingdom during our Presidency. It would be most reassuring if my hon. Friend the Minister could explain the advantages.

Mr. Moate: I suspect that that, too, strays rather wide of the completion of the internal market and the amendments that we are discussing. Perhaps it is one of the few benefits of being a member of the Community. For a few months, we shall have the illusion of granduer, with a range of Ministers being given the wonderful title of "President".

What have we gained so far? If we have not gained very much, why not? Hon. Members have mentioned insurance. We do not need a new Act statutorily to remove insurance barriers, but so far every move has been so incredibly timid as to be of almost no benefit to Britain. I suspect that exactly the same will prevail in the future, because most of the European internal national insurance arrangements are so nationalistic that no amount of naive hope in the Foreign Office will alter them. For many years, those countries will still maintain a completely different tradition of internal regulation of insurance and there will be almost nil benefit to the United Kingdom.

The same applies to many other areas, including the freedom of capital movements. The Minister will accept that one of the Government's most dramatic moves when they came to office was to sweep away all restraints on capital movement and to free exchange controls. That reduces this type of naive little gesture into insignificance. When one introduces into an Act of this kind the good intention of freeing capital movements but then says that less well developed countries can be exempted, that nullifies the object of the operation. Any country in difficulties will claim that exemption. We know that to be so. We know that if Spain, Greece, Portugal, or, indeed, any other member state gets into difficulties, all these pious hopes will be reduced to nothing. We shall not get those free movements of capital, goods or services if any one of the member states at any moment deems that they do not want them.

However, I believe that Britain will continue to try to stick to those rules, even though many member states find ways round them. That is broadly why we are so unwise to take the step that we are doing. We generally adhere to the rules, because, basically, we want those rules to work. We want freer trade. But when it comes to protecting our national interest, we are not as good at it as other countries and, generally speaking, we lose. Therefore, we are paying a high price in constitutional terms for an empty piece of expectation on the completion of the internal market. Ultimately, I hope that the Bill will be rejected, but certainly these amendments need to be supported.

Mr. Spearing: The hon. Member for Faversham (Mr. Moate) has done the House a service in pointing out one of the fundamental differences between free trade, be it across the world or between nations such as Germany or Italy in their earlier development, and what we have before us today, and, indeed, the philosophy behind the so-called internal market and its authorising government. He has helped us to understand, as has the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell), that we are not just talking about the economics but about the political power that requires there to be this equivalence of law over the whole area and, indeed, the range of law which is required.

One of the differences in that concept is the need to exercise legislative authority. Whereas free trade can be relatively easy by means of an international treaty, the imposition of common laws, requiring a theoretical perfect market which penetrates into almost every nook and cranny of technical, industrial, social and economic life, is different. It is the latter with which the so-called internal market is concerned, not only in its legal proliferation but in its institutions of origin — the Commission, the Council, and now the so-called Parliament.

In producing that situation, we have an enormous proliferation of paper. If we are to increase the scope and range of the internal market, as Lord Cockfield and the Government want — indeed the Minister talks about "progress" — we shall be lost in a sea of paper. Already, the proliferation of treaties, articles, regulations and their alarming cross-references are almost beyond belief. When people are kind enough to come to me occasionally for some advice or information on these matters I frequently have to tell them that I am now unable to keep up. The fact that I have some assistance from the Clerks at the House shows just how serious the position has become. I daresay that the Minister, who has other responsibilities as well, will come to that position fairly soon.

What happens when we come to the second round of discussion in legislation, when we have the position shown in the diagram which we were talking about earlier in relation to the place of the Council and the Commission? In place of the existing five boxes, there are 13 combinations. In making these laws the mind will begin to boggle, because each one of these steps can be knocked around like a tennis ball or a ball on a pin table before it becomes law. The amount of paper work, both in genesis and in legislation related to the internal market, is almost beyond belief.

I have a feeling that in future years it will be difficult for anybody to try to understand what we are doing in this debate. Power will either flow or will disappear into the sea of paper and people will ask what Parliament was doing in passing these laws about the internal market. They will find great difficulty in understanding the matter because they will need to have five documents: the informal selection sheet, the amendment sheet, the Bill, the European Single Act and the treaty of Rome. Even with those documents and even if they are fairly adept at dealing with them and their inter-relationships, this debate will not be very meaningful.

Because each group of amendments is so wide in its scope, each of these debates, of which this is the second, provides enough scope for a Second Reading. That is why many of the speeches have not been precise about the texts of any of the matters that are before the House. I do not say that by way of complaint: it is a consequence of the nature of the material before us. That material highlights the fact that we are not properly doing our job, even with the time we are taking. I say that not because I want to use up time as some hon. Members might suspect, but for you, Sir Paul, to bear this in mind in relation to any matters on the closure in these groups.

[Mr. Spearing]

I do not intend to proceed to the scope of a Second Reading speech, but to what I regard as proper Committee work. Committee work is much easier upstairs, where we have desks and tables, than it is in the House. Although I make no complaint about that, I propose to revert to the atmosphere that more often prevails upstairs, because I shall go in detail into some of the text on the internal market. Do I detect a little disappointment from the Treasury Minister? One day people may look at these two days of debate and say that gentlemen of England now abed might well be here. If power goes from this place it may not worry the Whips or the Government, but it will worry the people of Britain.

Mr. Deakins: Does my hon. Friend recall that in 1972 the European Communities Bill spent a large amount of time in the House? Many hon. Members took part in those debates and all sides of the argument were advanced. This Bill cannot be said to be in the same league as the 1972 Bill, but it is a major constitutional Bill and the most important that we have had in the House since 1972. To think that it can be disposed of easily seems to be an over-optimistic view.

Mr. Spearing: I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Deakins) in some ways. This Bill and the European Single Act treaty — I shall keep on calling it that because it is not an Act in our sense of the word — may be less important in some ways than the European Communities Act 1972 and the debates leading up to it, but in other ways it might turn out to be of even more importance because it may reinforce and accelerate a good deal of what happened subsequent to that Royal Assent to the Bill without the public and without even our colleagues in Parliament knowing.

As several of my hon. Friends will remember, we debated that important 1972 Bill for one or two days a week for one or two months. Not only were we able properly to prepare, but we could catch up with what had gone before. At that time we had a different set up to that which exists now and the Department and the Minister could prepare for the debates and reply to correspondence. We were able to have questions in the House and other debates. This Bill will not give us that opportunity. Perhaps you will bear that in mind, Sir Paul, if there is any tendency to expedite matters.

10.15 pm

Sir Russell Johnston: If this Bill is so constitutionally important, why is the House not crammed with hon. Members anxious to speak?

Mr. Spearing: I am glad to be able to reply to that. The hon. Gentleman may not have taken my point on the proliferation of documents. One big difference between the 1972 Bill and this one is that in 1972 people had some idea of what the legislation was about and of its significance. There was at least some national understanding. But there is virtually nothing in this Bill's explanatory memorandum that would give the casual reader an understanding of the contents of the Bill or of the Single European Act.

The Government have only published the Single European Act as it stands. Only a Select Committee has given an as it stands, and as it will be, version. The Government have not published a White Paper telling us what it does. The Single European Act treaty was not susceptible to the procedures of the European Select Committee on legislation. Because of that, and because alliance Members, who are very much in favour of the legislation, have not participated much in the debate, other than to say that they are in favour of it, general knowledge of the Bill is far less than its importance demands——

The Second Deputy Chairman: Order. I know that the hon. Gentleman is dealing with an intervention, but he is now making a Second Reading speech. However, I am sure that he is about to come to the internal market.

Mr. Spearing: Yes, indeed. I said as much at the beginning of my speech. Perhaps I was making too lengthy a response to the intervention, although I wanted to state the truth of the political situation.

At present, the internal market is regulated under the existing articles of the treaty of Rome. Article 100 is the current regulating article. It says that the Council shall, acting unanimously on a proposal from the Commission, issue directives for the approximation of such provisions as laid down by law, legislation or administrative action in member states as directly affecting the establishment or functioning of the Common Market.

Article 100 was inserted to cover those instances when the treaty of Rome did not specifically provide power for the approximation of such laws. It was a sort of Henry VIII clause, saying that in order to complete the Common Market, article 100 was to be used. It was quite controversial, because we frequently got legislation under article 100 which pushed at the limits of the vires of the EEC, particularly in technical harmonisation and the environment. That is one reason why both of those topics are now under the European common Act included in the specific treaty vires of the EEC. Thus we are talking about not only greater speed of legislation and adjusted majorities but wider vires as well, all at once. The Single European Act changes the unanimity rule entrenched in article 100 to majority voting under article 100A. That is the article that will take over. I shall talk about the countries involved in the qualified majority shortly but as we go through these matters I will ask the Minister some questions which I hope she will answer either at the end of the debate or conceivably on clause stand part.

My first point relates to Article 99 of the treaty of Rome and Article 17 of the Single European Act which states that, despite article 100A, matters relating to:

"turnover taxes, excise duties and other forms of indirect taxation"

shall remain unanimous. That is important, because the Government have made great play — understandably so — by stating that "Oh yes, it is majority for many things, but on these matters we retain unanimity". I think that that will be welcomed by all hon. Members even perhaps by the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston).

As I understand it, there are directives relating to VAT which have already passed into EEC legislation and which do not require anything to do with the Single European Act but which require us to harmonise our VAT provisions, irrespective of article 100A in the Treaty. It is suspected that the hapless Chancellor has already had to abide by those directives in harmonising the excise duties on alcohol or perhaps even requiring VAT on buildings.

The Second Deputy Chairman: The hon. Gentleman is dealing with the next amendment, which refers to fiscal harmonisation. We are now dealing with the internal market, which is a separate matter.

Mr. Spearing: I apologise because I did not realise the scope of these did not go back to Article 99 and I shall now proceed with Article 100. Line 3 of Article 100A states:

"the following provisions shall apply for the achievement of the objectives set out in Article 8A."

I have studied these documents fairly frequently over the past few days and I cannot find an Article 8A of the Single European Act there is just an Article 8. I have studied the treaty of Rome and I cannot find an Article 8A there either. At some stage in the debate perhaps we can have an answer from the Minister as to what objectives are found in Article 8A and where it is.

Mr. J. Enoch Powell: If the hon. Gentleman tries page 8 of the Single European Act he may find it at the bottom of the page.

Mr. Spearing: I am very grateful to the right hon. Gentleman. I see the point. What has happened is that there is a new Article 8A which will be put into the treaty of Rome and it is not the existing article. It should really say Article 8A applies to the new measures. I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman. It illustrates the difficult maze which we are in. Perhaps I have not been as efficient as the right hon. Gentleman. If we are finding this difficult I fancy it is an answer for the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber.

I now proceed to the point I raised with the right hon. Member for South Down at the end of his speech. That is the political compulsion on the Council of Ministers that it should complete as many of these harmonisation proposals as possible well before 1992. I will not deal at great length with the 300 regulations which Lord Cockfield has waiting in the wings. He has laid them out in the appendix to his voluminous report. We are aware that they will be implemented under Article 100A in due course. I shall refer in a moment to some of the regulations which will be implemented early on.

What is the effect of Article 100B? We are aware that, after 1992, the Commission, as stated in Article 100B, together with each member state, has to draw up an inventory of national laws and regulations which, under Article 100A, have not been harmonised. In other words, before 1992 comes those of the 300 regulations, or others which have been invented by them, not actually past into law will be collated. After that date, the Commission presents the package to the Council of Ministers and the Council—I quote from the provisions of article 100—

"acting in accordance with the provisions of Article 100A".

That no doubt means qualified majority, and I ask the Minister to confirm that. This is another piece of cross-reference that we must get sorted out. The article continues:

"may decide that the provisions in force in a Member State must be recognised as being equivalent to those applied by another Member State."

The word "may" is slightly misleading. If I read the provision correctly, the Council can read the inventory and say, "Germany has a good system there, and that should be the system for the entire EEC." By a qualified majority, if that is obtained, that becomes the law for the entire EEC.

This sounds improbable at first because of the draconian nature of the approach, but as I read the words of the treaty, that is what is likely to occur.

Mr. J. Enoch Powell *rose*

Mr. Spearing: The right hon. Gentleman may wish to correct me.

Mr. Powell: I wonder whether the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) is correct in his interpretation of the second part of the first paragraph of new article 100B in article 19 of the Single European Act. It appears to say that having made a list of non-conforming national laws, there is permission to fudge by saying, "It is all right after all. It is 1992 and we shall regard the national laws as if they conform." It is one of the methods of pretending. It is a you-may-fudge-in-1992 provision. Perhaps my suspicions are ill-founded, but I have received a sort of nod from the Treasury Bench which seems to indicate that it is possible that there is permission to fudge in 1992. I can quite understand the hon. Member for Newham, South being unable to credit that intelligent adults should purport to pass legislation of this sort even in the form of a treaty.

Mr. Spearing: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman. If I may revert to some of my earlier remarks, this is good Committee work. I am not sure that we can be at all certain from reading the words of the supranational draft legislation which of the several fascinating and equally bizarre solutions is the correct one. The right hon. Gentleman may be right and I shall be happy to give way if the Minister of State wishes to intervene to put us out of our misery. I rather doubt, however, that his solution is correct, and I shall suggest why. If it is correct, all the national states will play for time. They will say that they do not want to reach any conclusions under article 100A, except where there is a majority to push one through. They will wait, because the fudge under article 100B, which is the right hon. Gentleman's solution, is more preferable as they will be able to continue with their own national laws. If that is so, let the Minister say. If on the other hand, the effect of article 100B is the more draconian and perhaps even more startling solution which I have suggested, from a first, third or fifth reading of article 100B, let us know. We are not having ministerial speeches before ministerial replies, although in good Committee work we usually do, but I shall be glad to give way to the Minister if she can tell us which solution is correct. I would suggest that this is a matter of some substance. It may save the Committee and the House of Commons some time if we are able to clear up the issue straight away.

Mrs. Chalker: I am happy to help right hon. and hon. Members on this issue, which I can see has caused a great deal of heart searching if not head scratching. I shall explain what article 100B provides. As the hon. Gentleman said, it provides that in 1992 the Commission will draw up an inventory of national laws which would be harmonised by the end of 1992 under article 100A and which have not been so harmonised. It is then up to the Council to decide be qualified majority on the extent, if any, to which such provisions should be mutually recognised as equivalent.

On page 25 the hon. Gentleman will find a declaration that links with the Commission's obligation under article 8C, which he will find on page 9. He will find that is to take account of the special difficulties that face particular economies.

10.30 pm

The right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) was almost correct, but not quite, and I can only too well understand why. There has to be a specific decision made by the Council, but the new article would not mean the Council could decide that the standards in any one particular member state would be those adopted by all other member states; would rather enable the Council to decide that member states should give mutual recognition to each other's standards in a particular area in order to allow the free circulation of goods. They would not be applying their own countries' standards on goods from other countries. It would require anyway a specific Council decision in each case. That would remove the worry of the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) and, I hope, clarifies the matter for the right hon. Member for South Down.

Mr. Spearing: I am grateful for that ministerial intervention. This is as a Committee should be.

The Minister has said that what will occur is not of the solutions apprehended by the right hon. Member for South Down and by me, but something in between. The Council by a majority, I understand, may say that any two or more member states may voluntarily regard each other's national arrangements as mutally applicable and accept them, so that will become the basis on which the internal market operates as between those named members. I presume that it does not, therefore, apply outside the two or more members mutually recognising the outstanding arrangements. I note that the Minister nods. I am glad that I have it right.

Mrs. Chalker: Subject to some clarification.

Mr. Spearing: This will be different for every area, of course. There cold be different arrangements for nuts and for bolts, and different arrangements for motor cars and farm tractors, because the regulation will operate in a multiple way. My mind begins to boggle even further at the complications that will arise.

I pass to the question of the operation of the qualified majority. Earlier we were talking about qualified majority as though it would cause some problems. I suggest that qualified majority in the nature of this internal market will cause some problems, but not perhaps in the way that Members expect. No one has so far mentioned the way in which the qualified majority will work.

In the Select Committee we got down to work on this, and discovered that in the Council there will be 76 votes. Of this, 54 constitute the qualified majority. Thus one needs 23 votes to stop something going through. As each of the big four have only 10 votes each, it means that if Britain and France together, or Britain and Germany together, or France and Germany together disagree with a proposal in this very important area, they can be outvoted by the rest. It means also that the big two need another country to join them. Therefore, it would be any of the big four, plus either Belgium or the Netherlands, who have five votes each, or Denmark or Ireland, who have three votes each, who could prevent an agreement. In Community support politics, the power usually lies with those who can prevent rather than obtain an agreement, and a small number can prevent an agreement from being reached. A qualified majority is much more difficult to obtain.

Mr. Marlow: In earlier debates attention was drawn to majority voting. Is the hon. Gentleman aware of the fact that if one adds together Belgium, Holland, Greece, Luxembourg, Denmark and Portugal, the population of those countries is less than the population of the United Kingdom or of the Federal Republic of Germany, yet those countries have 28 votes, whereas the United Kingdom and the Federal Republic of Germany have only 10 votes each? Is that acceptable when we are contemplating the introduction of large-scale majority voting?

Mr. Spearing: The hon. Gentleman has pointed to one of the difficulties. The consequences of these mathematics have not been examined. There has been a great deal of abstract politicising, but the practical matters to which he referred will be important.

I point out another practical matter — the Mediterranean countries. Their votes amount to 2[illegible]. Therefore, for a blocking 23, not all of them need to participate. It is not just a question of blocking. It is a question of getting something through. To take again the big four, if Italy, France, Germany and the United Kingdom want to get something through, they cannot do it on their own. They need another 14 votes, in addition to their 40. A great deal of mathematical work will therefore have to be done inside the enlarged Council on this question. That does not mean that things will not move quickly. they may indeed move quickly, because there may be majorities for certain issues. During this important debate on the structure of the internal market it is important to put the votes on the record, because they will be significant.

Mr. Cash: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that there are circumstances in which the voting arrangements could be very much in our favour? We may benefit from the opportunities presented by the voting system. In order to ensure that we benefit from it, it is important to ensure that scrutiny is effective and that the necessary changes to the scrutiny arrangements to which my hon. Friend the Minister of State referred are effective in order to ensure that we have proper control over what goes on? Therefore, my hon. Friend is right to say that the terms of the understanding that was entered into between the Government of the day, the House and the British people is to some extent being renaged upon by these arrangements.

Mr. Spearing: I agree with the hon. Gentleman. The Scrutiny Committee published a second special report, to which reference has already been made. There is universal agreement that arrangements of that kind would be helpful to all. I do not want to go into that matter in too great detail, but it so happens that my next point is related to it. The House must be aware of the debate on the harmonisation of the internal market. There will be a great deal of lobbying, not least from commercial firms.

Mr. Leighton: It is said that one arrangement might help us and that another arrangement might not help us, but were we not told during the referendum campaign that we could not lose, that nothing could be done against our will and that we should have a veto?

Mr. Spearing: The referendum related to the Luxembourg veto, but here we are deliberately giving away a treaty veto, which in my view is even more important.

I was talking about the notice that we would get. I have been able to get a copy of regulation 11019/1985, published in Brussels on 3 December 1985. That is a report by the Presidency on the subject of the:

"Rolling Presidency Action Programme for the completion of the Internal Market."

So it is very much on what we are discussing.

I was surprised to see this document, which reached me by regular channels although not those of the Scrutiny Committee. I was surprised to read its contents, which I shall describe to the House, because the document was not available through channels open to the Scrutiny Committee. It had not been published in Brussels and the Scrutiny Committee terms of reference refer only to documents published for submission to the Council.

Nevertheless, the document was available, although not the Scrutiny Committee and therefore not to the House. I draw the attention of the House to the list of harmonisation proposals in the appendix. There are many action programmes for this year, some of which have been published in a report. I have seen it in an answer to me today. There are about 100 of them.

The document deals in Annex II with items for discussion at the Ecofin Council. I draw to the attention of the House matters that are now under discussion at the Ecofin Council is relation to future harmonisation. First, there is a proposal:

"concerning the harmonisation of income taxation provisions with respect to freedom of movement for workers within the Community."

I can only interpret that, Sir Paul, as a proposal that will harmonise income tax as a means of ensuring freedom of movement of workers.

Were the British people to be told—I hope that the Minister will deal with this in her reply — that discussions were going on in Brussels about the harmonisation of income tax throughout the Community, subject to majority voting, I think that they would be surprised. We would have been surprised in the House.

The document says:

"Excise duties: Proposal for a Council decision providing for a standstill ensuring no introduction of new excise duties which give rise to border formalities.

The Second Deputy Chairman: Order. I am sorry to interrupt the hon. Gentleman, but I am afraid that he is straying again into the realms of amendment No. 7, which will be the subject of our next debate.

Mr. Spearing: I shall have to accept your ruling, Sir Paul. I was quoting, if I can get clarification from you, from a document from the European Presidency entitled "Rolling Presidency Action Programme for the completion of the Internal Market." I can place the document on the Table if you so wish, Sir Paul.

I should have thought that, although there may be an overlap with our debates on amendment No. 7 because of the harmonisation of excise duties and other taxes on alcohol and so on, or indeed on income tax, those are part of the internal market as well as excise.

The Second Deputy Chairman: Order. I understand the hon. Gentleman's point. Of course the internal market is mentioned in articles 17 and 99 in relation to the harmonisation of taxes, or fiscal harmonisation, but it would make for a tidier debate if we were to deploy those arguments in the next debate.

Mr. Spearing: I assure you, Sir Paul, that I was not going to enlarge on these programmes individually, or indeed at all. I was merely reading out the list in the document. I hope that my final quotation in the series will not transgress the rules of the House.

The list continues in number seven:

"Proposal concerning the harmonisation of the structure of excises on mineral oils."

I suppose that that does transgress the rules, so I shall leave the matter there.

All of these matters concern the internal market and show the extent and depth to which we are already involved in discussions. I ask the Minister why the Scrutiny Committee of the House has not had a sight of that document. The hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) has constantly and rightly emphasised that we must get early warning of legislative proposals. Here is an EEC document which we have not had in the House and, although it is contained in an answer to a question from me today, it is not available in the Vote Office.

10.45 pm

The hon. Lady and the Government have constantly said that they are justifying the approval of a reduction in the voting power of the Ministers to a majority on the ground that they wish to make progress in that area. Asked about that in the Select Committee, the hon. Lady resorted to the fundamental belief that any reduction to barriers to trade was a good thing in itself. I would remind the Committee that in command 4715 which was published in 1971 the then Government, talking about the calculation of the effects of these tariff changes on the balance of trade, said in paragraph 45 that they were:

"confident that this effect will be positive and substantial, as it has been for the Community."

We know, because the hon. Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) mentioned it earlier, that in terms of balance of trade the effects are substantial to the extent of £10 billion a year on manufactured goods, according to the hon. Member for Southend, East, and at least £8·2 billion according to the Government's own official figures in Cmnd. 9781. Therefore the effects have been substantial but negative. I shall ask the Minister a direct question yet again. If the harmonisation so far has resulted in such a diminution of the advantages to Great Britain or the United Kingdom, how does she think that further slight reductions in the barriers to trade and increasing communality of the internal market will reverse those figures? Will they be slowed down to a speed slower than they are growing already? It appears that the reason for going into the Common Market would be that there would be the reverse effect than that which has occurred. Therefore, when the hon. Lady says progress across the board, whatever it be, she must provide some justification other than that single word.

Mr. Bill Walker: Earlier this evening the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) drew the Committee's attention to the imprecise nature of the articles we are debating tonight with regard to the internal market. He drew attention in a manner which provoked a reaction from my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes), who suggested that the legislation that we deal with in the House of Commons — what he described as controversial legislation — was less productive and useful than the type of legislation we are discussing in these articles. I find that quite offensive, and I hope that he does not object to my saying so.

We spend many hours in Committee dealing with law. I refer particularly to Scots law, which deals with matters that affect the citizens and electorate in Scotland. Scots law, both civil and criminal, impinges on aspects that are affected by what we are discussing in these articles, and anyone who thinks that it does not has never been in business, otherwise he would realise how often it does.

Sir Russell Johnston: I dare say that that is what happened tonight with the Scottish Standing Committee on Legal Aid Bills. The Government chopped the Committee when they were just about defeated.

Mr. Walker: That is right.

The Second Deputy Chairman: Order. Will the hon. Member stick to the Bill and to the amendment?

Mr. Walker: That may have been a type of Exocet missile designed to hit me, because I should possibly have been present in the Committee. Knowing the arrangements of the House of Commons, as you do, Sir Paul, you will realise that I would not have been in the Chamber had it not been agreed by the Whip that I could be here. I have no knowledge of any events taking place in the Committee, and I shall not comment, other than to say that if I had been present in the Committee I probably would have made some contribution, as I am trying to do in this Chamber. *[Interruption.]* Is the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes)——

The Second Deputy Chairman: Order. I allowed the hon. Member to have a little say in response, but we must get back to the amendment. We are not considering a Bill which may be before another Committee.

Mr. Walker: I am sorry, Sir Paul. I did not hear what the hon. Member for Cumnock, Carrick and Coon Valley said, as he attempted to intervene from a sedentary position. I have no idea whether he was referring to the speech I am making on the articles or being his usual flippant and frivolous self and was referring to something quite different.

Mr. Foulkes: I was merely trying to help you, Sir Paul, by getting the hon. Member for Tayside, North—I can get his constituency right, even though he called me the Member for Coon Valley; he dare not visit my constituency again — back on the subject. There is a wealth of important matters regarding the internal market, such as life assurance and speed limits, with which the Minister could deal from her previous experience in running our transport service, if the hon. Member would just get on with it.

Mr. Walker: From that intervention, Sir Paul, you will realise that it is the last time I shall invite the hon. Gentleman's children to ride my children's ponies.

I do not think that the Government's motives in terms of the articles are suspect in any way. The Government say that the articles are necessary if the internal market is to function effectively. They will allow freer trade between the member states of the Community. If our experience showed that there was a need to introduce compulsory harmonisation, I should think that the Committee would be sympathetic. However, we have seen the barriers that exist against insurance finance and capital. Scotland has a great interest in those areas. More importantly, there are the barriers that have been put up against our major export product — whisky.

Our experience to date has shown that attempts to introduce harmonisation and to make the existing articles under the treaty of Rome work — I believe that the articles are adequate — have not worked.

My constituency is not simply affected by the barriers placed on the export of whisky. Under the existing articles it should be possible to stop the dumping — as my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) said — of products from Europe, especially from eastern Europe. Holland exports raspberry pulp. However the raspberries are grown in eastern Europe. The Dutch export to other member states, and especially to the United Kingdom, more raspberries in the form of pulp than they grow. It should be possible to prevent this under the existing articles of the treaty of Rome. It is not helping the free market. Over the past five years, there has been a continuous battle to prevent this dumping.

My constituents and I are concerned that more articles will be included in the treaty which are imprecise, as shown by the right hon. Member for South Down. This is not the type of legislation to which we are accustomed. The provisions have deliberately been left vague. Those who wish to cheat can use them to do so and those who wish to implement them will be uncertain about their powers. I hope that we shall carefully consider what is meant by qualified majority voting and the possible problems that will arise.

I look forward to the comments of my hon. Friend the Minister on my concerns. There is no doubt that all the aspects of concern which I have mentioned could and should have been dealt with under the existing articles of the treaty of Rome. Why do we need all these new articles which the amendments are designed to remove? Are we falling into the trap of having more legislation for legislation's sake?

The European court makes its judgments on political grounds, not the precise nature of the law, as we in Britain understand it. In view of that and "qualified majority" voting, are we not entering into a minefield where, instead of the internal market developing in the wa that the Government and most hon. Members would wish — towards a system of free trade—we have a bureaucracy which works its way through mountains of paper and produces little, and most certainly not free trade?

Mr. Deakins: We are debating the internal market. I have not yet heard a right hon. or hon. Member define precisely what that is. The listener outside or the person reading *Hansard* might get the impression that we enjoyed a certain state of affairs in relationships with the Community, which was not currently an internal market. But, hey presto, this legislation and the Single European Act come along and we are to be given a single internal market. That is far from the facts.

We do "enjoy"— if that is the right word — the benefits of an internal market within the Community. That is what all the propaganda in 1971-72 and 1975 from the CBI and other institutions on behalf of British industry was about. We were told, "We need to join Europe", in the first case, and "We need to stay in Europe," in the 1975 referendum campaign, to get the benefit of the vast home market of 220 million people. We are now being told that is not enough and that we must further develop the internal market. We are entitled to look at Britain's experience until now in the internal market before the Committee decides whether it is worth going on to complete the process. Part 3 of the 14th report in 1984-85 of the House of Lords Select Committee on the European Communities, House of Lords Paper 226, on "European Union" is entitled "The Internal Market". One must be grateful to their Lordships for having defined the internal market so succinctly in a way that has not been done in this debate. Paragraph 28 states:

"Put simply, it should be as easy for a British company to find a market for its goods, services or capital, or for an individual to find work, in France, Denmark or Italy as it is for a Scottish company or individual to do so in England."

That may inspire a few horse laughs from Scottish people who are unemployed and wish to travel south of the border. I regret to say that Dr. Johnson's famous remark about the most enjoyable sight for a Scotsman being the high road to England no longer applies in terms of employment. A Scottish person would have to come very far south to stand any chance of finding employment, and even then he might be unable to obtain adequate housing.

11 pm

Their Lordships continued:

"Of course, there will always be problems created by distance, regional preferences and language . . . But they should not be aggravated by man-made barriers, of which the most obvious are tariffs, quotas and immigration restrictions . . . The wider the home market in which European industry can develop, the better equipped will it be to cope effectively in the world market. This simple truth . . . is a fundamental reason why completion of the internal market must not be delayed."

I would not take the entire Committee with me — not even Opposition Members — if I said that that is neither a simple nor a self-evident truth. Experience has belied that statement

Paragraph 4 of the report states:

"The creation and maintenance of a genuinely free internal market for all forms of economic activity crossing the frontiers of sovereign states necessarily involves some incursion into the domain of national sovereignty."

There we have the sovereignty issue once again.

The Government's attitude to the internal market is complacent, as is their attitude to the completion of the internal market as set out in the Single European Act, which will be put into British law by this Bill. They seem to be oblivious to, and certainly ignore, the industrial decline of Britain. Their views are a triumph of hope over the experience of the past 14 years.

The Government's attitude was summarised in a reply that I received on 20 May from the Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. I asked him:

"What advantages will be available to United Kingdom industry when the European Economic Community market is completed"—

that is the purpose of this part of the Bill—

"and to what extent does he envisage that United Kingdom industry may derive relatively greater benefits than industry in other EEC countries."

That is the crux of the matter. It is not a question whether there will be more benefits generally, but whether we shall do relatively better than others. The Minister replied:

"Completion of a unified liberal"

I do not know where that term comes from, but it is in his answer—

Sir Russell Johnston: It is a good term.

Mr. Deakins: It has only a small "l". It states:

"Completion of a unified liberal internal market in the Community will benefit British industry through removal of barriers to trade with other member states and is one important condition for the creation of a European industrial capability which could compete effectively on world markets"

whatever that may mean. I have not come across that expression before, and it needs rather more precise definition than it has been given so far.

The answer continues:

"The precise balance of advantage may of course vary from sector to sector depending upon the United Kingdom's competitive position in each, but we"

the Government—

"believe that there should be clear net benefits for United Kingdom business as a whole." — [*Official Report*, 22 May 1986; Vol. 98, c. *162*.]

I hope that I have not robbed the Minister of something that she intended to say when she replied to the debate. That appears to be the Government's attitude.

When we discuss the internal market, the Government always say, "We are doing very well. Our export percentage is increasing and we hope, not necessarily to improve our manufacturing performance, although we hope that we can, to rely on the service sector as our salvation, because there are tremendous barriers to our services." One accepts that entirely. Therefore, the Government are pressing ahead quickly with the completion of the internal market, have been willing to make sacrifices of sovereignty, and to make concessions to Community institutions and the Community federalists because they believe that Britain will gain advantages from the completion of the internal market.

I hope to show that those advantages must rest entirely in the service sector. The hon. Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) speaks with some authority on matters to do with the service sector. I believe that he has connections in the City, and knows much about these issues. It would have been helpful to have the benefit of his advice as to how the service sector will take advantage of the internal market, once it is completed.

The Government are extremely complacent. What is the Common Market's attitude towards completion of the internal market? I shall refer to a Presidency report to the council, dated 9 December 1985. It is entitled, "Rolling Presidency Action Programme for the Completion of the Internal Market". In the first annex, the report says that a number of areas have been identified for adoption in the course of 1986. I shall not weary the Committee by going through all the areas. However, there are pages of them, ranging from the control of goods to the removal of physical barriers. For example, the report refers to the

"Duty-free admission of fuel contained in the fuel tanks of commercial motor vehicles".

Other areas include veterinary and, I think, psycho-sanitary controls. However, I am not sure, as the text says, phytosantary controls. Paragraph 10 involves

"Production and trade in medicated feeding stuffs."

[Mr. Deakins]

There is nothing wrong with any of that. However, another section is rather ill-advisedly headlined, "Control of Individuals". Paragraph 29 refers to the

"sixth directive relative to exemptions in international travel increased to 400 ecu."

I think that that has something to do with duty-free allowances. However, I shall not weary the Committee with the rest of that passage.

There is then a section on the free movement of goods, with several directives or proposals in the pipeline. We then come to central proposals concerning the approximation of laws. I shall not go into that, because it will be raised during our next debate.

There is then a section on food law. I shall just quote paragraph 41:

"General directive on food additives (in part modification of existing directives)".

That is to come up as well under the internal market. There is then a passage on pharmaceuticals and high technology medicines. In this instance, the opinion of the European Assembly is awaited on proposals in that sector.

I shall not weary the Committee by listing those things that will probably come about as a result of the Presidency's intention to complete the internal market. Indeed, on 1 July, we become president.

I come, instead, to the passage entitled,

"Free movement for Labour and the Professions."

Sir Russell Johnston: The hon. Gentleman cited food additives, but does he not agree that the introduction of harmonising regulations on food additives has been of great benefit to the people of this country?

Mr. Deakins: I do not for a moment deny the truth of that. But I do not wish to anticipate any remarks that I may make in a later debate on the clause concerning the environment. I shall then go into the issue in more detail, and will ask whether Community action is necessarily the proper way of going about genuine international co-operation. I shall not be tempted from my chosen path, however, even if it is for the benefit of the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston).

Under the heading of "The Free Movement of Labour in the Professions", which is part of the programme for completion of the internal market, there are proposals for a council directive on specific training in general medical practice. I am not sure about the implications of that. Perhaps the Minister will tell us whether that means Community directives about the content of medical education in Britain. There is also a proposal for a directive to faciliate freedom and to provide services in insurance other than life insurance. I am sure that that appeals to the Government, and one can only applaud it, provided that there are appropriate regulations.

Transport is also part of the internal market. I had not realised that before, but I am quoting from an official Community document, so it must be so. In paragraph 88, there is a reference to maritime transport. British merchant seamen and the British shipping industry face the chilling words:

"freedom to provide services in the sea transport sector."

I speak as a complete lay person on this matter. If this is to mean greater competition in coastal shipping, that might or might not be of benefit to Britain. I am assuming that as the Government are in favour of the completion of the internal market, there will be a net benefit. I stress that it has to be a net benefit, because there is no point in gaining benefits across the Channel in the rest of the Community if we are to have more disadvantages on this side of the Channel.

There are then sections on taxation and tax harmonisation, all of which will be considered in the next debate. All this is in the Community rolling action programme, and that is what we shall be approving in principle. I am not saying that we shall be approving every item, because they will have to come before the Economic and Social Council, and there must be Commission proposals to the Council, to Finance, Transport and Environment Ministers and goodness knows what else. A programme of secondary legislation will be coming before the Committee chaired with such distinction by my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing), in the next few years, to complete the process of the internal market by 1992.

Mr. Spearing: Is it not clear that the Government's philosophy, as described by the Minister, is that they will agree to all this because they agree that integration of the internal market will be good for Britain in the round and so, although it is nasty medicine, it is better to be taken because the gain to Britain will be better in the end? Is that not what the Minister said, and does it not show that there will not be many noes from British Ministers to any of these proposals?

Mr. Deakins: We can look forward to the Minister's reply. I understand that the hon. Lady is—I hesitate to say "in difficulties", because she is a competent Minister—in a difficult position. She has to answer debates over the whole range of Government policy, and all Departments are involved in the provisions of the Single European Act. My heart goes out to her, and I am not trying to make her task any more difficult. I imagine that she will be advised during these debates by at least one official from the relevant Departments concerned, and that as we are on the internal market, one assumes that officials from the Department of Trade and Industry, and perhaps from the Treasury, are here.

I am not sure whether the Committee is aware of the fact that the Government may be having some second thoughts about the completion of the internal market. They are dedicated to the principles but are not so certain about the actual mechanisms. I have a quotation from that excellent publication *Agence Europe* of 20 January 1986, No. 4242 page 3, which refers to the Economy Finance Council

"agreement on the mandate of the group studying the suppression of fiscal boundaries and on the EEC position with regard to export credits."

The second part is not relevant to this debate, but the first part, about fiscal boundaries, is. It refers to the "Economy and Finance Council", which I assume means the Economic and Finance Council, and says that it

"has quickly adopted the decisions which were on its agenda, namely: a mandate for the ad hoc group whose task it is to study the abolition of fiscal boundaries within the context of the creation of the unified economic area by 1992."

I draw the attention of the Committee to the words used in this official resolution of the Economic and Finance Council, on which a British Minister must have been represented, in referring to the internal market as a "unified economic area". I hope that the Minister will be able to tell us whether there is a difference, and if so of what that difference consists. I suspect that this is again a

problem of translation, but one would have thought that as our Government are so keen on the internal market, they would have made sure that the words "internal market", when translated into or out of the Community languages, meant the same thing."

I am a little puzzled by the use of the words "unified economic area". The report from *Agence Europe* contains the text of the decision:

"The Council, following on from its decision of principle taken on December 9 last to set up an ad hoc group, has entrusted this group, comprising chiefs of fiscal administration or other personnel representatives of the Finance Ministers, with the task of examining, on the basis of the third part of the 'White Paper' of the commission,"

that is, the White Paper on the completion of the internal market—

"what measures are necessary to ensure the establishment and the workings of the Internal Market before the end of the year 1992. It is understood that other measures, different from those proposed by the Commission, can be introduced into this study."

11.15 pm

This ad hoc group will not merely work within a remit given it by the Council, with parameters and limits on the subjects and measures it can discuss for completing the internal market; it will also be able to consider other measures and proposals no doubt from outside bodies or individuals which will then go into the melting pot and be put to Ministers in due course for consideration by the EEC Council and then by the House.

The adopted decision continues:

"The Group will report back regularly to the ECOFIN Council, by way of the Committee of Permanent Representatives, the first occasion being at its meeting on March 10 1986."

There has already been at least one meeting of this ad hoc group and a report back to the ECOFIN Council. I wonder what happened at that Council meeting. On this occasion, according to *Agence Europe*,

"Several delegations have indicated in the minutes their concerns or their wishes concerning the work of this group. In particular, Denmark and France insist that the budgetary implications are duly examined."

I confess that we have heard nothing from the Government about the budgetary implications of completing the internal market. By "budgetary", Denmark and France may have been referring to the EEC budget. However, they might have meant—I would like the Minister to clarify this point—there own national budgets. I can see that the Minister is shaking her head, so I assume that they were referring to the EEC budget. If they are referring to the EEC budget, the House and its Committees should consider the matter. If the completion of the internal market is to have budgetary implications over and above the other strains in the financing of the Common Market, then heaven help us. I wonder whether Her Majesty's Government are aware of the budgetary implications. Presumably they will be adverse rather than beneficial.

The report mentioned other delegations:

"Ireland and Greece request that the problems of the least well off be taken into consideration, in the perspective of the economic cohesion of the Community."

I will not detain the Committee with that issue, because that matter will come up again in the debate on regional policy when we discuss structual funds. Although I have not pursued that line here, it is relevant to the internal market.

If we are to benefit from the internal market being completed by 1992, the sceptics—I am horrified by the thought of an internal market by 1992—have every right to look back at the internal market that has existed since 1 January 1973 or after the transitional period January 1978, and consider that eight-year period or the 13-year period, and see how this country has benefited. I need hardly mention to the Committee that the impact of the internal market so far has been pretty disastrous for Britain. Other factors have been at work, but no one can deny that the internal market which was so much prized by the CBI, the Institute of Directors and almost all the economists with a few honourable exceptions in 1971-72, has not lived up to expectations.

We are therefore entitled to ask the Minister—if my facts are correct—why should we believe that our expectations of the completion of the internal market by 1992 will make any difference in the trend of the past eight to 10 years in our trading relationships with the Community?

Let me give the Committee a few examples. The EEC's share of our exports—I am sure that the Minister will be making this point—has increased from 33 per cent. in 1970 to 49 per cent. in 1985. We have done well on exports. It sounds impressive. But we should also bear in mind that one quarter of our exports in 1985 was occasioned by North sea oil. There was no North sea oil in the figure that I have quoted for 1970.

What really matters for the future of Britain is trade in manufactures. Here the increase in the share of exports from Britain to the EEC is some 32 to 42 per cent. quite a creditable performance. No one is denying that our exporters have gone into the market with a fair amount of vigour.

But the other side of the coin is the increase in our imports from the EEC. They have gone up from 35 per cent. to 54 per cent. That is almost twice as large an increase. In other words, the net benefit has been to the other Community countries, not to the United Kingdom. We are now in the position that for every £100-worth of goods that we export to the EEC, we import £143-worth. We should look sceptically at the internal market.

Indeed, other EEC Governments, not merely our own, are putting a lot of emphasis on the internal market. They are also putting it on competition from outside the Community to explain the disappointed expectations of the consumers, taxpayers and people who live in the Common Market countries. They are now trying to divert attention from the failure of the Common Market to deliver the goods, metaphorically—indeed, literally in some cases—and jobs, by a propaganda war against the Japanese. But the EEC deficit with Japan is insignificant compared with the British deficit with the rest of the EEC. We have Ministers calling for tough measures against Japan, but we never hear Ministers talking about the need for any measures to deal with that, although I do understand that they would be illegal.

Let me give the Committee a few examples. It is right that the Committee should be aware, when considering whether to proceed by approving steps towards the completion of the internal market by 1992, what has happened during the incomplete internal market of the past eight to 12 years.

Let us consider the number of jobs lost in some of our major industries. In the cotton industry 155,000 people were employed in 1970. In December 1985 that was down

[Mr. Deakins]

to 39,000. Most of that time we have been in the Common Market and we have had the advantages of the larger home market and the incomplete internal market. The number of people employed in the wool trade is down from 136,000 in 1970 to 41,000 in December 1985. The hosiery industry—I am giving the largest examples—is down from 136,000 to 82,000—not quite such a big drop but still substantial in an industry which one would have expected would have done better in the Common Market than outside.

The carpet industry is down from 46,000 employees in 1970 to 16,000 in December 1985 and the man-made fibres industry is down from 55,000 employees in 1970 to 14,000 in December 1985. What hope is there that those figures will increase as a result of the completion of the internal market? Yet we have a Government who at least pay lip service to the need to increase employment in Britain and reduce unemployment.

I challenge the Minister to say in what way the completion of the internal market will reverse those figures of jobs lost since 1970, many of which have been lost since 1 January 1973.

I have no wish to bore the Committee, but let me give some facts which need to go on the record and which we need to take into account as a Committee when deciding whether to support the amendments. The iron and steel industry employed 448,000 people in 1970 and in December 1985 was down to 146,000 people. The coal industry employed 371,000 people in the earlier year and 197,000 people in 1985.

The motor vehicle industry was to have been the boom industry. I remember Lord Stokes and others telling us in those grand days that we had to go into the Common Market or the British motor industry would not survive. We are in the Common Market, and not so long ago the Government were considering, I think unwisely, but some people would disagree, selling off the British motor industry because it had got into such a disastrous state that it could no longer sustain itself. That is rather unfair to the remaining bit of the British motor industry, but, be that as it may, that industry wanted to go into the Common Market. When it was privately owned it spent lots of money in 1971-72 and in the referendum campaign of 1975 persuading the public that there would be a boom in the British motor industry and success for it in the Common Market, yet employment has dropped from 538,000 to 281,000 in 15 years. No doubt the figures for road and rail vehicles include buses and trucks, and employment there fell from 65,000 to 39,000.

I need hardly worry the Committee by talking about the shipbuilding industry, because it was the subject of recent debates. The fall in employment in that industry has been catastrophic, and even the figures that I have for December 1985 are woefully out of date. Mechanical engineering is the foundation of our technology and manufacturing, and employment in that industry has dropped from 1,074,000 in 1970 to 782,000 in December 1985. In chemicals we were supposed to be leading the charge into Europe with ICI and firms like that, but employment there is down from 373,000 to 246,000. Aerospace is another high-tech industry and not one of the smokestack industries, yet employment there is down from 234,000 to 153,000.

Mr. Marlow The hon. Gentleman is going through a sort of catalogue of employment in the various industries. We are talking about the balance of trade, and not necessarily about the balance of employment. Throughout the European Community there have been improvements and increases in productivity. The Committee would be interested to hear from the hon. Gentleman what has happened to output in the industries that he has mentioned. There have been massive increases in productivity, particularly since 1979 when this Government came to power. It would be useful to have that information from the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Deakins: I do not deny for one moment the force of the main point made by the hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) that there have been increases in productivity, but there are two ways of ensuring increases in productivity, and the Government have taken the wrong course. If we continue towards an internal market in 1992, they will continue to take the wrong course—if we are unfortunate enough to have the present Government returned to power.

Productivity can be increased by reducing the work force and maintaining output, or it can be improved by maintaining the work force and increasing output. Surely the second is infinitely preferable to the first. This Government have been reducing the work force and not even maintaining the output. I shall come to that in a moment.

Mr. Bill Walker: I agree with the hon. Gentleman that one should maintain one's work force and increase output. The debate is about markets. It is customers that keep jobs in being and create jobs. The problem is that all the promises that were made about the opportunities that would be in the Common Market because of the massive increase in customers have not materialised. This debate is about why they have not materialised. That is why we should consider carefully what we are doing, to ensure that we do not make the situation even worse.

Mr. Deakins: I agree with the hon. Gentleman and later in my speech I shall come to his point about the deficiencies in British industry. At this stage I am anxious to ensure that the Committee has the facts upon which it can base a judgment whether the completion of the internal market by 1992 is a good thing for Britain and the British people.

We are here to legislate for our people and not for anyone else, and certainly not for the people in western Europe. They have their own Parliaments to look after their interests and it is not up to us to do that. We have to represent and look after the interests of the people who sent us here, regardless of their politics.

I shall now turn to the overall situation. In 1970 we had a small surplus on the trade balance in manufactures with the original six countries of the EEC. Our total deficit with the EEC is now running at an annual rate—I stress annual rate because we have figures only for the first three months of this year—of £12,000 million. This is a disaster story. The hon. Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) said earlier that our trade with the rest of the world has been relatively better. In fact, it has done much better. In 1970 our trade balance in manufactures with the rest of the world outside the EEC was a plus of £1·7 billion, and currently, at an annual rate, using the first three months of the year and grossing them up, it is running at £3·7

billion. We have improved our industrial and trade performance with the rest of the world, but our performance with the Common Market has been a disaster.

11.30 pm

The internal market is entirely unbalanced. The balance of trade in specific industries is disastrous. The Government are fond of using something that is called the export-import ratio, and I can give the figures for some of our major industries. I shall deal first with the share of our imports that is held by the other Common Market countries. In plastics they have 78 per cent. of our market, and in other chemicals they have 67 per cent. In textiles they have 67 per cent. — so much for the multi-fibre arrangement and that being a protection for our textile industry. The job losses in our textile and clothing industries have come not as a result of Third world imports but as a consequence of imports from the rest of the Common Market. Conservative Members may say that that is a good thing — that is up to them — but I do not think that it is.

The Community share of our imports of iron and steel was 72 per cent. In paper it was 35 per cent. In metal manufactures, the most basic element in manufacturing industry, the share of the other members of the Community was 59 per cent. They have 43 per cent. of our imports in manufacturing materials. As for road vehicles, they have 79 per cent. of our market. They have 25 per cent. of other transport equipment. Office equipment is supposed to be one of the new areas of technology in which we are supposed to be buzzing ahead, but the rest of the Community has 43 per cent. of our market. As for simpler products, it has 71 per cent. of our furniture market, 68 per cent. of the footwear market and 43 per cent. of the clothing market. It has 54 per cent. of all manufactures. That is a pretty disastrous picture. I shall not weary the Committee by quoting the export-import ratios, but they show an equally bad picture. If anybody doubts that, I shall be happy to quote the figures.

Mr. Marlow: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman wants to look at the picture objectively. It has been said from the Government Front Bench—I think that it is the fact—that we have oil from the North sea, a commodity which we are exporting. That means that we are exporting fewer manufactures. The fact that we have oil in the North sea has an effect on our currency, which in a way makes us less competitive than we would otherwise be. Would the hon. Gentleman like to stitch these factors into his argument? If he does so, he might have a slightly different assessment of the situation.

Mr. Deakins: I am not sure when the hon. Gentleman is an economist, but I am not. I would hate to be drawn into something which, although relevant to the internal market, would take me beyond the brief that I have prepared for myself. I am not an expert and I am not at all certain what is the balance of advantage of the internal market so far in respect of North sea oil, for example. It would be possible to argue with the Government about their depletion policy.

The hon. Gentleman challenged me earlier to produce figures on output. He said that we are becoming more productive and that one would expect employment to fall, but I would not expect it to fall as disastrously as it has. I have some figures on output which I shall quote briefly. Steel is basic to manufacturing capacity. In 1979 we produced 28·3 million tonnes, and in 1985, 15·7 million tonnes. That was a fall of 45 per cent. Spain is now a member of the Community, but it was not in 1979, when it produced 7·4 million tonnes of steel. In 1985 it produced 14·9 million tonnes. In 1970 Italy was producing just over 17 million tonnes, and it is now producing 23 million tonnes. France, which was producing 23 million tonnes, has reduced its output to 18·8 million tonnes. The Belgian figure has fallen from 12·9 million tonnes to 10·7 million, and in West Germany production has gone down from 45 million tonnes to 40·3 million.

Those figures do not mean much without considering the percentages that they represent. Britain's steel production has fallen by 45 per cent. The next highest loss occurred in France, where production fell by 21 per cent. — bad perhaps, but by no means so disastrous as the fall in our rate of steel production. In Belgium it fell by 15 per cent., while in West Germany, our main industrial competitor in the world, steel production fell by only 10 per cent. Spain, while outside the Common Market, managed to increase its steel production by 92 per cent. and Italy, a member of the EEC, increased production in steel by 57 per cent.

How is it possible, if burdens are supposed to be shared by the members of the Community under Commission guidelines and injunctions, that that should have been the state of affairs? Let us not forget that under the European Steel and Coal Community, there is no veto; the Luxembourg compromise does not apply. There is majority voting. Because of the lack of a veto, we have not been able to protect our steel industry.

I confess that I do not have the answer to the obvious counter-question: why have other Community countries been better able to protect their steel industries? Ministers must answer that question if they wish to claim that regardless of what went before, we shall do better when the internal market is completed by 1992.

Motor car production is an interesting story. We recall what Lord Stokes said in 1970 and 1971. I do not believe in capital punishment, but he should have been taken out and shot at dawn. In view of the poor performance of British Leyland over the years, one can say, "Pour encourager les autres," as was said of Admiral Byng in the mid-18th century. A more disastrous entrepreneur it would be difficult to imagine — *[Interruption.]* I am thinking of ancient times. One might mention Sir Bernard Docker, who was largely responsible for the decline of the British motorcycle industry—from a world market share of 95 per cent. in 1946 to virtually nil within 20 years. They are the sort of people who will be leading us into what we are told will be a wonderful internal market that will completed by 1992.

To consider car production, we must take a different base year and compare 1972 with 1984, roughly equivalent to our time in the Common Market. In 1972, United Kingdom production totalled 1·9 million cars. It is now down to 900,000, a fall of over 50 per cent.

Mr. Marlow: If car production has increased in France, Germany and Italy and has reduced in the United Kingdom since we have been in the EEC, is it fair to blame the Common Market for that? Could it be that those other countries have produced better cars more efficiently and that they have not been bogged down by the sort of trade

[Mr. Marlow]

union legislation that was introduced by Labour Administrations here, with the appalling industrial relations that followed?

Mr. Deakins: I accept the hon. Gentleman's major thesis, which is that not all the disasters I have catalogued and I have more of them to relate have been entirely the fault of the Common Market. I am simply asking how, if that has been our performance so far in the internal market incomplete though it is, and we have been in it for 13 years the Minister can say confidently, as she no doubt will, that there will be a beneficial impact on all the factors involved as a result of the internal market being completed. It cannot be logical for the Minister to argue from that standpoint. She will have to address the arguments from a totally different premise.

To take up the hon. Gentleman's point, he is wrong, according to the figures that I have, on car production. Spanish car production has increased in the 12 years from 1972 to 1984 by 92 per cent. German car production is up marginally 8 per cent., but ours is down over 50 per cent. Belgian car production has fallen by a mere 5 per cent. and French by 9 per cent.; and the poor old Italians have gone from 1·7 million to 1·4 million, a fall of about 17 per cent., which is not very satisfactory. None of these is remotely comparable with the fall in British car production. There must be special factors at work in the British economy that should make the Committee sceptical about the chances of our being able to take advantage for the benefit of the people we represent in the completion of the internal market by 1992.

Those are all the figures that I wish to give the Committee on manufacturing output and jobs. Even on our trade with the other countries of the EEC, we have done extremely badly compared with other countries in the Community. I could quote various answers—I will not weary the Committee with them—to show how bad relatively our trade performance in manufactured goods has been compared with our competitors in the Common Market.

Ministers have been cunning in the last few years when challenged on our poor trade performance as against that of the rest of the Common Market and said that our exports have gone up and, moreover, the total share of our trade with other Community countries has gone up substantially, as though in itself that was a good thing. The civil servants who provide Ministers with that sort of brief deserve a kick in the bottom, if not worse, because that is an entirely irrational argument. There are no premises for it, and it does not lead to any conclusion—certainly not to the conclusions that Ministers seek to draw.

It does not matter with which part of the world our trade is conducted. What matters is the total amount of our trade and the net balance of our trade. If we did all our trade with the United States of America and none with the rest of the world, that would be an unbalanced picture—and, indeed, it is very unlikely—but, provided we had a good trade balance, the country would be in a good trading position. The more trade that we do with the European Community, the worse our trading becomes, from which I draw the conclusion that the Government are marching in entirely the wrong direction. Our trade balance with the Community is going downhill steadily. Regardless of what the Government do—and regardless of what even a Labour Government are likely to be able to do under Common Market rules and regulations, because we will not necessarily reverse that decline—our trade balance will get worse. Eventually we will end up by doing 80 or 90 per cent. of our total trade with the rest of the Community in this vast internal market, yet we will be having trade deficits of £20 billion or £30 billion a year. How can that be a good thing to do more and more trading in a vast internal market, yet do worse at it?

It is how one conducts trade, not with whom one trades, that matters and, above all, the overall trade performance, not the areas of the world with which one trades.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: I wonder whether the hon. Gentleman is being too optimistic about our trade with the Common Market. Has he seen the recent figures which indicate that our share of the market of the original six manufacturing countries is now 7 per cent., and it was 6·1 per cent. before we joined the Common Market? Does he accept that the substantial increase in our trade with the EEC is simply because the Common Market now is twice the size that it was when we started?

Mr. Deakins: I think that the hon. Gentleman's logic is irrefutable. It is not for me to provide the answer. That ought to come from the Government, and that is what we are considering.

The counter-argument I still await any evidence, and I have been giving counter-evidence to persuade the Committee to vote for these amendments or, indeed, for one of them must come from the Government and be based on different premises and figures to show that we have done well and can do better. I should like to know what they are. I read *Hansard* every weekend, and the figures are not in there. To prove, as I have done, that we have done disastrously badly and then to be told, "Forget all that; we will do marvellously well in future", as the Minister's reply that I read out earlier showed, is whistling in the dark. It is not merely over-optimistic; it is absolutely foolish to adopt that attitude.

One of the features of the internal market is free capital movement, upon which my party holds certain views. Britain's investment performance in the Common Market has not been at all good. There has been a much greater outflow of funds from Britain to the rest of the Community than there has been from the rest of the Community to Britain. I do not know whether that reflects upon the economy or the Government. When there was a Labour Government, it would have been possible to say that the capitalists in the rest of the Common Market did not like investing in a so-called socialist Britain—which it was not—or in a so called socialist Government, or Labour Government. One would have expected that trend to have been reversed after seven years of a Conservative Government, but that is far from the case.

11.45 pm

The figures are absolutely devastating. The total inward investment, excluding oil, from the rest of the EEC was £80·7 million in the three years 1970, 1971 and 1972. In the years since 1973, when we joined the Community, total inward investment, excluding oil, from the rest of the Community was £800 million. But what about the figures of outward investment? Compared with the £80 million of inward investment, there was an outflow, before we entered the EEC, of £371 million. That represents investment by the British people in the EEC. Over the 12

years since we joined the EEC that figure has grown larger and larger. In fact, £2·5 billion have been invested in the rest of the Community. The balance of investments has therefore grown worse since we entered the Common Market.

I ask the Minister of State to tell the House how that trend will be reversed. Is there to be even more liberalisation of capital movement? Other factors will be at work that will make it more difficult for any Government of this country to move investment in the direction that they wish.

Since May 1979, our unemployment rate has tripled. Only one other country in the Common Market has suffered such a serious rate of decline. That is Greece, which was not in the Common Market in 1973. Unemployment in the other EEC countries has certainly increased, but by nowhere near so fast a rate. Within the Community, Britain is a special case, yet by promoting the concept of a free internal market, free from all barriers and a free, unified economic area by 1992, the Minister is ignoring completely Britain's experience and the attitude of British industry. She is being over-optimistic.

I shall not weary the Committee by referring to the disaster of our membership on jobs, output, trade and investment. When we try to justify the Bill and the completion of the internal market we shall have to tell the British people something different from what they were told in the 1975 referendum campaign. What were they told by the "Britain in Europe, Yes" campaign? The House will recall that there were three factions: yes, no and, in the middle, the Labour Government who said, "On the whole, yes." The referendum voted in favour of entry by a majority of two to one.

What did the "Britain in Europe, Yes" campaign say? It said, under a bold headline:

"Staying in protects our jobs."

I saw posters all over the country during the campaign that showed a group of ardent, young apprentices, and the caption on the posters was "Jobs for the boys."

We know some of the boys who got jobs as a result of our entry into the Common Market. There were not many of them. One or two of them are still Members of the House. The jobs that were referred to then were not those jobs.

The British people were told in 1975 that staying in would protect their jobs. What else were they told? They were told that we could get advantages from the Community market and the immediate effect on trade, industrial production, investment prospects and hence on jobs if we went out of the market would be disastrous.

The effect of staying in has been disastrous. I am not attributing all our ills to membership of the EEC, but a great proportion of them. That was what people were told about the EEC by its ardent advocates.

What were people told by the British Labour Government in 1975? Well, there is "The New Deal". There was, said the Government of the time to the British people:

"a threat to employment in Britain from the movement in the Common Market towards an Economic and Monetary Union."

We shall be debating that subject some time later in our proceedings. The "New Deal" said:

"This could have forced us to accept fixed exchange rates for the pound, restricting industrial growth and so putting jobs at risk. This threat has been removed."

The Labour Government did not tell people that there were other, more real threats from remaining in the Common Market at that time; those threats have been borne out by the evidence that I have supplied to the Committee.

I turn now to the deficiencies of British industry. I am not just lambasting British industry here, because industries in other countries can also be inefficient. The trouble is that our industry happens to be much more inefficient than most of the others. I start by talking about management attitudes. These have been criticised even by the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath). He talked about the need to change management attitudes. The right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup said, towards the end of his term of office as Prime Minister of this great country, that we have done everything that British industry has asked us to do, everything, yet we do not get the performance that we are entitled to expect. That was said soon after we had joined the Common Market.

I could regale the Committee for hours, although I promise not to do so, Sir Paul, with my experiences as a junior Minister for five years in a Labour Government and horror stories of British industry from around the world. If I was challenged to do so, I would be very happy to oblige. Some of the stories are very amusing, but I do not wish to detain the Committee with relatively minor matters that are incidental to my main theme.

There are many stories and I shall give one example although this is not just to show that one swallow is the harbinger of summer. The story shows a typical management attitude. A British firm received an inquiry from a buyer in Yugoslavia for a certain product. The management eventually two weeks later wrote back to the potential buyer in Yugoslavia saying that they made the thing he was after—it does not really matter what it was — but that in order to obtain it they would have to contact their agent in Brussels who had the mandate or licence to market the goods in western and central Europe.

Needless to say, the Yugoslavian buyer did not contact the agent in Brussels, because the day after he had sent his inquiry to firms in France and Germany they had sent sales representatives to his home town and factory in Yugoslavia, while the British were still sending letters and considering their attitude.

There is a horror story of British business firms even in the 1970s answering trade inquiries from Latin America and sending the letters, would you believe it, by seamail not airmail. I could go on but I will not. There are plenty of similar stories.

The attitude of British management, which I blame not exclusively but largely for all this, was summarised by no friend of mine but a friend, I would think, of Tory Members. In the mid-1970s a bunch of capitalists, the German chamber of commerce in Britain, published a report. It was a nine-hour wonder, because it was so embarrassing that it was dropped by the press and the Government like a hot brick. The report said, in effect —do not forget that the German chamber of commerce is no friend of the Labour party or of British trade unions or necessarily Britain — that the basic trouble with British industry is that British management treats its workers like dirt. Those were the precise words. There was a feeble comment from the Confederation of British Industry and then the whole thing was dropped. One

[Mr. Deakins]

would not have been able to read any reference to it in the popular press and only on inside pages of the so-called serious newspapers.

There are many deficiencies in British industry, which I will not go into, connected with the class and education system in this country. Even if we complete this internal market, our trade and manufacturing performance will continue to deteriorate until we have swept aside the bulk of management in British industry at every level. It is either incompetent, or unable to take advantage of opportunities when they arise. I exempt from that management in our major multinational companies and in a few key industries.

Mr. Marlow: I wonder whether the hon. Gentleman thinks that it would help to improve the attitudes, activities, ambitions and effectiveness of that management if a Labour Government, of which he would like to become a member, were to impose upon it swingeing levels of penal private taxation.

Mr. Deakins: I fear that if I followed the hon. Gentleman in that remark, although I am happy to take issue with him, I would be straying outside the rules of order. I am sticking completely to the internal market.

Just in case right hon. and hon. Members think that I have it in for British industry, I have to say that industries in other countries are also inefficient. The trouble is that the are less inefficient than we are. I shall tell the Committee four horror stories about United States industry just to show that it is not only our own industry that suffers. I shall quote from a recent publication of the Hunger project:

"Some American firms that have ventured abroad have made costly blunders out of ignorance. 'The Chevrolet Nova'"—

a motor car—

"did not sell in Latin America. When spoken 'No va' means 'it doesn't go' in Spanish."

The Second Deputy Chairman: Order. I am finding it difficult to relate this to the subject of the amendments, which is the internal market.

Mr. Deakins: I shall certainly stop there. I was seeking to show that I was not being unfair in criticising just British industry for its performance and potential performance in the Common Market because some of the strictures I have made could equally apply to industries in other countries.

I turn to the impact of the internal market on this country as a whole not merely on our trade, investment or employment and so on. What will be the impact on our regional policy? That is a matter which concerns many people, not just Opposition Members but Tory Members. What will the completion of the internal market — freedom of capital movement—do to investment? Many of us live in the prosperous south-east, although parts of inner London are rather like an outpost of the north stuck down in the middle of the prosperous south. The north-south dividing line is the Bristol-Wash line which is becoming more and more like the Himalayan mountains. What will the completion of the internal market do to the north-side divide? Contact with industrialists has already convinced me—I did not need much convincing—that the combined effects of the development of a third London airport at Stansted, the completion of the M25 ring road and the prospect of the Channel tunnel will make the south-east of England even more of a magnet for British industry. The north-south divide will get worse, and our industrial decline will accelerate.

12 midnight

I turn, finally, to the impact [HON MEMBERS: "Oh".] I am trying to truncate my remarks. If the Committee feels that I am being unfair, I shall quote from the report by the Select Committee of the House of Lords on Overseas Trade. The report, in its conclusions, analyses the reason why our manufacturing trade has been so bad, and why our industrial performance has been so poor. That is directly relevant to the issue of whether we should vote for a Bill which will speed up the creation of the complete internal market. House of Lords report No. 238, 1984-85 Session it attracted some notoriety at the time commented on the deficit and the balance of trade in manufactures. The report concluded that that was brought about by

"poor export performance"

that is not surprising

"and high import penetration".

I should have thought that those were blinding statements of the obvious; however, it is nice to have it in writing

"across a wide spectrum of manufacturing industry".

Paragraph .3, chapter 7, states:

"In the long term the Committee single out poor investment, poor cost competitiveness and 'cultural' factors as the principal determinants".

The Committee then considered remedies. I wonder whether the Government accept those remedies. I have not seen a reply by the Government in the House of Lords. Perhaps they have not bothered to reply. I do not know how they treat reports by Select Committees in the other place. They are pretty cavalier in their attitude towards reports by House of Commons Committees. When the Government reply, they tend to dismiss most of the recommendations. *[Interruption.]* I have been a member of Select Committees every year that I have been a Back Bencher. I have been on Select Committees for 11 years. With the exception of the Committee on which I currently serve, the Select Committee on Public Accounts, the performance of Governments—it may apply to Labour Governments; I do not make any party political point—in replying to Select Committee reports has been deplorable. A lot of hard work goes into their recommendations.

Mr. Leighton: I am certain that the Minister is immaculate in that respect, but perhaps her reputation is besmirched by some of her colleagues. Is my hon. Friend aware that, in respect of a Select Committee with which I am connected, a press conference was held to issue a report, and reporters went along to the conference with a press release in their pockets rubbishing the report? That happened before the report was even published.

Mr. Deakins: My hon. Friend has made his point. Had he sought to catch your eye, Sir Paul, he may have made the point in a slightly different way and brought it within the rules of order.

I should like to know from the Minister what the Government think about the recommendations of the House of Lords Select Committee. Paragraph .5 of that important report states:

"The Committee believe that urgent action is required now to revive manufacturing and stimulate trade in manufactured goods because"

we come to the crux of the Government's arguments for completion of the internal market—

"service industry cannot substitute for manufacturing because many services are dependent on manufacturing and only 20 per cent. of services are tradeable overseas".

How does the Minister like that? The report continues:

"there is no reason to expect any automatic resurgence of manufacturing and trade when the North Sea oil surplus declines because the decline in manufacturing and in the trade balance in manufactures was not the inevitable consequence of the advent of North Sea oil and because the effect of North Sea oil on the exchange rate movements is uncertain . . . new industries and new products usually grow out of long established activities and require a long time scale for development".

The target of 1992 should be a long enough time scale for anyone contemplating entering the vast new market which is dangled before us. The report continues:

"lost markets will be difficult to regain . . . lost manufacturing capacity will take a long time to restore".

What does the Minister have to say about those criticisms? The summary states:

"Unless the climate is changed"

in the United Kingdom—

"so that steps can be taken to enlarge the manufacturing base, combat import penetration and stimulate the export of manufactured goods, as oil revenues diminish the country will experience adverse effects"

That is nothing to do with completion of the internal market. The Select Committee was not contemplating that prospect. The Minister will, of course, tell hon. Members that completion of the internal market will enable us to overcome all the deficiencies mentioned in the report. the Committee referred to

"a contraction of manufacturing to the point where the successful continuation of much of manufacturing activity is put at risk . . . an irreplaceable ? . . of GDP . . . an adverse balance of payments of such proportions that severely deflationary measures will be needed . . . lower tax revenue for public spending"—

that is not directly relevant to this subject—

"higher unemployment, with little prospect of reducing it".

Is the Minister going to tell us that there is a big prospect of reducing unemployment if she is allowed to have her way and the internal market is allowed to be completed? Those are the criticisms of the House of Lords Select Committee in a widely trumpeted report.

I should like now to address my remarks through the Committee to the party which I have the honour to represent. If the Bill is passed and the internal market completed, it will be difficult, if not impossible, to achieve a number of the remedies which the Labour party has for the deficiencies in British manufacturing, trade and investment. Recently, my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) said that the internal market depends on the complete liberalisation of capital movements. He said that we wish to ensure that capital is brought back into Britain from the rest of the Community and from the outside world. To be directly relevant, I shall concentrate on capital from the rest of the Community. How will it be possible to bring back capital from the rest of the Community when, under new article 70(1), capital is being completely liberalised? In the report last year by the Presidency of the Commission to the European Assembly, the President said:

"The following fields and measures were considered to be of high priority".

One measure was

"liberalisation of capital movements."

What does the Common Market have in store for us? On 23 May 1986, an article in the *Financial Times* referred to the President of the Commission unveiling a

"scheme to lift all EEC capital movement controls".

How will my party react to that? Once we are in the complete internal market, how will we cope with our plans for capital movements? There are Commission communications to the Council about liberalisation not merely of taxation but of capital movements. We were told that the process would be speeded up. I shall not weary the Committee by reading out the *Agence Europe* report. Had I time, I should have done so for the Committee's benefit, so that hon. Members could hear from the horse's mouth what is in prospect for this country.

I shall address my points to the Committee, but they are specifically directed at my right hon. Friends on the Labour Front Bench, who are in charge of these matters, rather than those of my colleagues who are sitting in the Chamber. The Labour party says, and will be saying to the British people, at the next election the following things. It says that it will curb imports, but curbing imports from the rest of the EEC is impossible by virtue of articles 12, 30, 101 and 102 of the treaty of Rome. It says that it will encourage British industry through the selective use of public purchasing. Selective use of public purchasing is not merely forbidden by a number of articles in the present treaty of Rome but will be made impossible by the completion of the internal market. That must give the Government some cause for concern. I am not sure what their view is. All public purchasing will have to be put out to competitive tender among all the firms in the EEC. There cannot be any behind-the-stage deals, tenders just to one's friends or contracts for British firms. It must all come out in the open. That is the type of competition which some right hon. and hon. Members may welcome. Good luck to them; that is their philosophy. I shall not argue the point with them now. I am merely pointing out the policies of the next Labour Government. We shall certainly have such a Government after the next general election—[HON. MEMBERS: "Rubbish."] I hope that we shall. I do not want to provoke hon. Members. That Government will not be able to do some of the things that we want to do. The selective use of public purchasing is outlawed by several articles of the treaty of Rome and would be made impossible by the completion of the internal market by 1992.

The Labour party will insist that multinational companies source more of their United Kingdom markets from British production. Even the Government have tried to do that in talks with Vauxhall, General Motors and other multinationals in the motor car industry. But that is illegal under articles 7, 30, 92, 101 and 102 of the treaty of Rome, as well as being completely incompatible with the concept of a free internal market by 1992, which the Minister will be recommending to the Committee—I do not know on what grounds—when she replies to the debate.

The Labour party says that it will promote innovation through a flexible package of loans and equity assistance, but that is not permitted by several articles of the treaty of Rome and would not be permitted by the completion of the internal market in 1992. What will we do then? The Labour party says that it will provide sustained financial support to industry through a national investment bank.

[Mr. Deakins]

That is a good idea, but it will be impossible under similar articles of the treaty of Rome and once the internal market is completed by 1992.

The Labour party will extend public enterprise through agreements with key firms. All these are good ideas and I support them wholeheartedly. Indeed, during the next general election, I shall be putting them to the British people on the doorsteps of my constituency and elsewhere. But although we tell the British people that we wish to do those things, we shall be prevented from doing them by the rules and regulations of the Common Market and by the completion of the internal market by 1992. The making of agreements with key firms is already illegal under some articles of the treaty of Rome.

The Labour party says that it will negotiate on investment with firms in key sectors, but that is illegal under articles of the treaty of Rome and will be impossible when the internal market is completed. The party says that it will ask institutions to invest more of their funds in Britain, but, as I said earlier in relation to capital movements, that will be impossible. We shall be saying all those things to the British people between now and the next general election.

The Labour party will have a tough policy on takeovers and mergers. I wholeheartedly support that, but how does it square with article 85 of the treaty of Rome and what is in store for us after the completion of the internal market by 1992? Unless we change our relationship with the Common Market and unless we defeat this attempt to complete the internal market by 1992, it will be extremely difficult—I put it no higher than that—for a Labour Government to carry out the guts of their economic, industrial and financial policies.

Mr. Marlow: The hon. Gentleman could go a little further. He has set out what the industrial policies of the Labour party will be. Could he say what the policies of the Labour party will be towards the Common Market?

Mr. Deakins: That would take me outside the scope of the debate, so I shall not be tempted. I have put before the Committee matters which are on the public record. They are part of the Labour party's jobs and industry campaign on television and in leaflets, so I am not giving away any secrets. I would not do that to the party. We are publicising all those matters.

My question to the Labour party is, will we be able to do those excellent things if Britain is still in the Common Market by the time we get a Labour Government and if the internal market is on the way to being completed? That is my major reason for opposing the completion of the internal market. Nothing in our trade, industrial or manufacturing performance will alter during the next seven or eight years. Some Conservative Members agree with much of what I have said about the performance of British manufacturing industry. I wonder where the Minister will find hope and on what premise she will base her argument in reply to the debate, which will be that the completion of the internal market will be good for British industry, manufacturing, services, trade and the British people. The evidence that I have put before the Committee shows that it will not be. However, I am prepared to be shot down by statistics from the Minister. I look forward with great interest to her reply.

Mr. Tim Sainsbury (Lords Commissioner to the Treasury): I beg to move, That the Chairman do report Progress and ask leave to sit again.

Mr. Marlow: Can the motion be debated?

Question put and agreed to.

Committee report Progress; to sit again this day.

ADJOURNMENT

Resolved,

That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Sainsbury.]*

Adjourned accordingly at sixteen minutes past Twelve o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 27 June 1986

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Orders of the Day

European Communities (Amendment) Bill

Considered in Committee [Progress, 26 June]

[MR. ERNEST ARMSTRONG *in the Chair*]

9.36 am

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): On a point of order, Mr. Armstrong. I should like your advice. As you probably remember, in the early hours of this morning, the Government sought to report progress. When a Government Whip or Minister seeks to report progress, is it in order for that issue to be debated, or is it in order only if the motion is moved by a Back Bencher? This morning, when the Minister or Whip sought to report progress, I rose immediately to my feet because I was well aware that the House wanted to debate this important issue. I know that the Government are concerned to get the business, but I know that many hon. Members wished to continue the debate. When I rose to my feet, the motion had been moved but no debate took place. Is it possible for a debate to ensue only when a Back Bencher asks to report progress?

The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): The motion to report progress is debatable.

Sir Edward du Cann (Taunton): On a point of order, Mr. Armstrong. I wonder whether it would be for the convenience of the Committee if we were to ask for a statement about the Government's intentions in relation to the allocation of time for the remainder of this measure. A number of us find ourselves in some difficulty. We had, I thought, a clear understanding with the Government that time would be given yesterday for the Committee stage, and again today. Now we see that there is an arrangement between the usual channels for the Third Reading to be taken late on Tuesday.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): There has been no arrangement.

Sir Edward du Cann: It is on the Whip that the Third Reading will be taken on Tuesday.

Yesterday, of the nine groups of amendments for discussion, only one was completed, and one is still being debated. It is felt by many of us, as my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) has just remarked, that this measure is of the greatest constitutional importance, and it is obviously necessary that a full allocation of time be given to discuss it. However, arbitrarily it seems to me, and certainly without any discussion with my hon. Friends on the Back Benches, the Government curtailed the discussion this morning. That put us in some difficulty, because there is then an obligation upon us, if we are to complete our business today, to do it in very much less time than we had anticipated would be available to us.

There has been no time wasting or filibustering on these Benches. There has, instead, been a strong expression of opinion about what is an extremely significant measure. In these circumstances, and because the Government have curtailed discussion, there is an obligation on them to provide adequate time for our continuing discussions, and I hope that we shall have an announcement this morning to that effect.

The First Deputy Chairman: The Government Front Bench will have heard what the right hon. Gentleman has said. It is not a matter for me.

Mr. Spearing: I shall not pursue that point, Mr. Armstrong, but it might be convenient if the Government would let us know whether they wish to pursue the business motion of which notice has been given before the usual time of moving it.

I wish to raise two separate points of order, and I hope that it will be possible for the Minister to comment on them. The first arises from the ruling of the Chairman of Ways and Means yesterday as reported in *Hansard* at column 487. I raised the issue of the memorandum from the Minister of State, Treasury relating to the proposal for the European budget to rise to the 1·4 per cent. VAT ceiling. Quite properly, and with the help of the House, the Minister referred to that in her reply. In doing so, she gave us a great deal of additional information relating to the Government's attitude to that proposal and what would happen on 16 and 17 July when the proposal reached the Council of Ministers. The Minister looks a little puzzled. I merely want to ask her whether she will convey to the Chancellor of the Exchequer the fact that for purposes of scrutiny the House and the public will need a supplementary memorandum to the inadequate one already tabled to enable the House and the Scrutiny Committee to do their job in that respect. Will she give an assurance——

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. The hon. Gentleman is raising a point of order with me, but I have not heard anything yet which is in my jurisdiction.

Mr. Spearing: I have not concluded my point of order. It arises from yesterday's ruling by the Chairman of Ways and Means relating to this important matter.

Mr. Michael Foot (Blaenau Gwent): Further to the point of order of the right hon. Member for Taunton (Sir E. du Cann), Mr. Armstrong. May I suggest how the House could be assisted by the Leader of the House, who is present, obviously for the purpose of seeing that the business is embarked on properly. I have no complaint against the Government reporting progress last night; that was obviously the right course for them to take. Those in charge of Government business at that time took into account the fact that there had been much more extensive debate on these questions than the Government may have

[Mr. Michael Foot]

thought likely. That being the case, the only way to solve some of these problems is for the Government to take that into acount.

Would it be possible for us to have a statement from the Leader of the House about his intentions regarding the motion on the Order Paper which is to be moved at 2.30 pm? If we wait until then to discover what the Government's intentions are, it will be extremely inconvenient for many hon. Members, especially as this arises from a matter which occurred only late last night.

In the interests of the Chair and the House generally, would it not be desirable for the Leader of the House to make a statement about the motion which might influence our discussions later today? I do not know whether the motion is tabled as a type of sanction—I know that that is not the type of filthy language which the Leader of the House would like to be used at this time—but there is an element of sanction in it because if the proceedings do not go as fast as the Government wish they may move that motion. However, if the Government have the same experience in today's debate as they had last night, they will come to the conclusion, properly, at 2.30 pm to report progress and ask leave to sit again. They made that decision wisely last night and it will be perfectly open to them to do so today at 2.30 pm. I ask the Leader of the House to assist the Committee by saying that he will adopt at 2.30 pm the same wisdom as someone did on his advice late last night.

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen): I find almost irresistible the attractions of any proposal by the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot). He knows perfectly well that I am anxious to get started and have a good, robust, constructive debate. The progress that we make must in a sense determine the attitude at 2.30 pm.

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): Further to that point of order, Mr. Armstrong. Would it be possible for you to appeal to the Leader of the House——

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. The Leader of the House has heard the exchanges. If the point of order is on the same point, given the judgment of the Leader of the House, we should move on.

Mr. Marlow: On a point of order, Mr. Armstrong. As I said to you on a previous point of order, I rose to speak last night when the Whips proposed that we should report progress. I wished to debate the issue because it was most important——

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. I was not present last night, and if the hon. Gentleman failed to catch the Chairman's eye it is not a matter to be discussed this morning. I call Mr. Dennis Skinner.

Mr. Marlow: Further to that point of order, Mr. Armstrong. Many hon. Members want the issues to be debated properly——

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. I called Mr. Dennis Skinner. I shall come back to the hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow).

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): On a point of order, Mr. Armstrong. Since you were not present last night, may I explain that the Government obviously were in great difficulty in keeping at least 100 hon. Members in the House to move a closure successfully? The Whips were running round the building and on to the Terraces trying to get Tories out of bars, and it became apparent around midnight — *[Interruption.]* It is perfectly true. The Government suddenly realised that they could not close the debate in which my hon. Friend the Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Deakins) was speaking at the time, especially as they knew that several other formidable Back Benchers were prepared to take part in a debate of momentous consequence for the British Isles and its people.

For that reason, the Government decided, arbitrarily and without any consultation with Back Benchers or through the usual channels, to get rid of nine hours debating time between the hours of midnight and 9.30 am. They forfeited of their own accord nine hours of debating time. Now they have the cheek to tell my right hon. and hon. Friends today that they must rush through this extremely important matter, which gives tremendous power to the European Community and removes power from the British people, by 2.30 pm. Since you, Mr. Armstrong, and your mates must sit in the Chair throughout these proceedings, you have a duty to ensure that power is not handed over from the Government to the Common Market. Indeed, the power of the Speaker is also marginally affected by handing over power to the Common Market. You, Mr. Armstrong, together with Mr. Speaker and the rest, have a vested interest in ensuring that the matter is properly debated, that more time is allocated, and that we do not debate Third Reading on Tuesday but continue the debate at 2.30 pm today.

The First Deputy Chairman: I appreciate the hon. Gentleman's concern for the occupants of the Chair, but I remind the Committee that the motion to report progress was carried last night. I must act on that.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: On a point of order, Mr. Armstrong. In view of our obligations to the staff of the House, as well as to ourselves, would you consider it fair for you as Chairman to ask the Leader of the House to give some indicaton to us of what progress he thinks would be reasonable——

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. The Leader of the House has been present throughout these proceedings and he has made a statement to the Committee. We are talking in debating time, and I think we should move on.

Mr. Marlow: On a point of order, Mr. Armstrong. Have you any status in the decision to move the business motion at 2·30 pm? Can you decide whether it should be moved or must it be put before the House if the Government wish to move it? As hon. Members have said, many of us wish to debate the issue properly at a time when hon. Members are present to debate it and when we do not have commitments elsewhere. As you are aware, this is a major constitutional issue and it would be completely inappropriate——

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. The hon. Gentleman is not raising a matter for decision by me. I can either accept or refuse a motion to report progress, but we shall decide that when we arrive at the appropriate time. We must not look too far ahead. We should get on with the debate.

Mr. Spearing: This is my second point of order, Mr. Armstrong. May I preface it by assuring you that I did not wish to trespass upon the rules of order. Therefore, for your assistance, may I make a preliminary inquiry?

When we are in Committee upstairs—where we have a more orderly and timely debate—it is possible for hon. Members to raise with the Chair undertakings which Ministers have given and then pursue them at the next sitting of the Committee. Yesterday, as reported at column 532 of the *Official Report*, the Minister graciously gave me an undertaking. Since you thought, Mr. Armstrong, that my inquiry relating to a ruling of the Chair—which I should have thought would be taken upstairs in Committee as a proper point of order—was not a proper point of order, is it now in order for me to raise a point of order on the first two lines of column 532, which relate to an undertaking, or half an undertaking, which the Minister gave yesterday and which is now germane to our future business?

The First Deputy Chairman: That is not a matter of order. The Minister said that she would write to the hon. Gentleman if there was some disagreement on the matter.

Mr. Spearing: On a point of order, Mr. Armstrong. I hope that the Minister will provide that information before the clause stand part debate. That is a point of order. I hope that the Minister will agree to do that.

Clause 1

EXTENDED MEANING OF "THE TREATIES" AND "THE COMMUNITY TREATIES".

Amendment No. 5 proposed [26 June], in page 1, line 13, after 'Communities)' insert 'but not Article 15 thereof' —*[Mr. Marlow.]*

Question again proposed, That the amendment be made.

Mr. Foot: I rise to continue the debate that was curtailed last night. Before the Leader of the House departs, I should like to emphasise that I am not complaining about the Government's actions last night. That was a perfectly proper way to proceed, assuming that they did not thereby seek to deprive us of time that would otherwise have been available for debate. Knowing the Leader of the House as well as I do, I do not imagine for a moment that he wanted to curtail the time for debate. He has just said that he wishes to see the fullest and most proper debate on this matter.

I remember some of the full debates in which the right hon. Gentleman has been involved, and I do not suppose for a moment that he intends to invoke the strange procedure involved in moving the motion tabled for 2.30 pm. I am not saying that this has not been done before, and I have no doubt that there are precedents for most things in the House. No doubt the right hon. Gentleman will have some of his most skilful minions examining the precedents. However, it is not convenient for the general conduct of the business of the House that we should have to wait until 2.30 pm to know the Government's intentions on how we are to proceed.

To wait that length of time will cause inconvenience to Ministers and others. We know that this afternoon the Government will have the greatest difficulty in producing 100 Members without Ministers being in the House. How many ministerial appointments will have to be cancelled today if the Leader of the House insists on keeping the matter open until 2.30 pm?

The Leader of the House does not have to state the Government's intentions now. He can do that at 11 o'clock, or he could inform the Minister who is in charge of the Bill about the Government's general intentions. I hope that the Minister will have a say in the matter. I am sure that the hon. Lady could give the Government excellent advice on this as on other matters. I only wish the Government would take her advice more frequently.

I hope that the Leader of the House will not try to move the motion at 2.30 pm, as that would be an infringement of courtesy. Over the weekend I hope that he will consider the proposal that we made at the beginning of the debate before there was any lengthy discussion. My right hon. Friend the Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock) made the point yesterday, when the business statement was announced, that it was improper to have the Third Reading of the Bill taken late at night next week. We protested about that. If that was wrong at 3.30 yesterday afternoon, it is even more wrong now. Much larger debates have arisen over this subject than people had foretold. This has happened frequently in the history of this House. The House can adapt itself to that and I hope that the Leader of the House will consider these matters, rather than move the motion on the Order Paper at 2.30 pm, because if he were to do so it would be an improper use of such a power and could make our previous debates unsatisfactory.

I hope that by 11 o'clock this morning the Leader of the House will give us an opportunity to hear the Government's intentions.

Mr. Marlow: Hon. Members may have a certain amount of sympathy with the Government wanting to extend the business beyond 2.30 pm today if they had not curtailed the business last night. However, having curtailed the business last night——

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. The hon. Gentleman's point is not relevant to the debate.

Mr. Foot: I understand the point expressed by the hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow). However, I do not regard the Government's actions as ungenerous. Usually when the Government move to report progress at such an hour they are recognising that there has been so much debate that there must be another time for it to proceed. When such a motion is generally accepted by the House, it is understood that the Government will not come forward the following day and cut the time. If that was not understood, the hon. Member for Northampton, North would rightly have a grievance about losing the time for the debate.

Some of us thought that we could have debated the matter fully yesterday. However, we did not think that that would best serve the House. We assumed that the Government, having moved to report progress, would return and allow adequate time to discuss the matter. I have said enough now to emphasise how important I believe it is for the future decent conduct of this business for the Government to tell us that they will not try to abbreviate the debate at 2.30 pm and thereby deprive us of a proper opportunity to debate the matter.

It is only right that I should state immediately how much of a debt the Opposition and the House owe to the

[Mr. Foot]

Minister of State for dealing with these matters. As we have read, she has had a strenuous week in other respects. The Government could not deal with this crisis or the South African crisis without calling on her services. She has performed her duties with great skill and courtesy throughout and I hope that her influence will be used to ensure that there is no abbreviation of the debate of which she has been the master—or should I say the mistress?

That compliment is genuine. All of us have appreciated the way in which the hon. Lady has dealt with the matter. After all, she was the only Government Minister to deal with the issue. It was extremely ungallant of the Government to leave her alone. Perhaps she insisted on being left alone, and I can understand that, knowing her companions at the Foreign Office as I do. Perhaps the hon. Lady said that if she was capable of dealing with Mr. Tambo, she was capable of dealing with the House of Commons. None the less, it was very ungallant of the Government to leave the hon. Lady to deal with this matter without any support or possibility of relief. I hope that she will not be left in the same situation today, even though the Opposition much prefer her to deal with these issues, rather than any other Minister of whom we can think.

Towards the end of our proceedings yesterday, my hon. Friend the Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Deakins) made a remarkable speech. He established in greater detail than had been presented to the House before the estimate on trade grounds — and the estimate in relation to the "internal economy", in the words of the hon. Member for Northampton, North who moved the amendment, of the consequences of our entry into the Common Market in 1975. My hon. Friend described the consequences for our economy in manufacturing industry and employment. He especially referred to the effect upon different industries. All of us can remember how we were assured that entry into the Common Market was required to ensure that we sustained trade and employment. But the Government went even further than that and, along with others who campaigned for British entry into the Common Market, claimed not only that by entering the larger market would we protect our trade but that such a step was necessary to protect our employment.

10 am

The last 10 minutes of the speech made by my hon. Friend last night were devoted to emphasising how the Bill, if it were passed in these terms, could affect the future actions of a new Labour Government. He described what action would be available to a new Labour Government and how those actions might be impaired, or at any rate governed in some respect, by the measures that we take now. Everything that my hon. Friend said on that matter is of great importance. I am not asking my hon. Friend the Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) to answer all the detailed matters, but I do ask that the leaders of the Labour party should consider carefully the list of items that he mentioned, some aspect of which others have taken up, and consider how we will deal with them.

It makes a difference whether the Bill is passed. That is one reason why we are opposing it. We think that that is a proper way to deal with it. It does not mean that the matter could never return in future, but if by some misadventure the Bill is passed, it is all the more beholden upon my right hon. Friends, not necessarily now, but in future weeks and months, to consider the complications and extra burdens that a new Labour Government would have to undertake and what releases we would have from the shackles which we shall fix upon ourselves if we pass the measure today. My hon. Friend's speech was of great importance in that regard, quite apart from his survey of what has happened over the past 11 years since we entered the Market.

Mr. Spearing: Is not the position even more serious than that? Is not the whole thrust of the debate on the internal market that the Government have stated unequivocally that they wish to see what they call "progress" and are throwing away a treaty veto in order to achieve it? Is it not the case that any legislation with which they agree and vote to accept will make citizens of the United Kingdom and the House subject to it, and that any future Government, who may not think that that is "progress" and who may wish to change it, will not be able to do so because of the treaty obligation? Does that not interfere with the freedom of the British people?

Mr. Foot: It does. It is one of the intrinsic difficulties of membership of the EC that some of us who have opposed entry into it have always seen. It takes away from the House of Commons and the British people some of the rights which they have assumed to be theirs from the whole of their history and transfers the decisions elsewhere.

One of the complaints that we made earlier was that in future that transfer is to be made on a larger basis than it has been even over the past 10 or 11 years. One of the major aspects that govern the Bill, as well as partly governing the clause, is the abrogation of or injury to Britain's power to exercise a veto against actions which we think are injurious to us in some form or another. That touches on what my hon. Friend said.

I advise all hon. Members to study my hon. Friend's speech carefully. He listed the series of injuries done to Britain's trade and economy over the past 11 years. He is not claiming that all those injuries and inflictions that we have had to suffer were due to entry into the Common Market—of course not—but we were told that entry into the Common Market would be a safeguard against many of them. Instead of that, it has intensified them.

As the hon. Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) so often emphasises, it is strange that we should be proposing to enlarge those powers at the very moment when the institution shows every sign of being bankrupt. That would be a strange way to proceed. Even so, what is the answer to my hon. Friend's case? How is it that none of the undertakings, advantages and expectations for trade, industry and employment has been fulfilled?

In particular, I emphasise the undertaking which I remember most vividly in the referendum campaign. Posters appeared in my constituency, as they did in most others, advertising "Jobs for the boys in Europe". I think that it was the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) who said that only one boy got a job, and he was here yesterday—the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Jenkins). When the Government moved to report progress yesterday, they abolished his Adjournment debate. Perhaps that was the motive behind their abrupt action, or perhaps it was only a by-product. But "Jobs for the boys in Europe" was intended to have a quite different

meaning. In my constituency those are not matters of flippancy, because jobs for the boys—the girls, too, I am glad to say—is the most urgent question of all.

That poster was a sign that if we went into the Common Market jobs would be provided for the boys and girls on a scale that would not otherwise be possible. That was perhaps the first full display of the use of the kind of publicity methods that we have had in modern times. A few years later the Conservative party machine adopted similar methods in the 1979 election. Anyone who looks back at the publicity methods that were adopted during the referendum campaign will see—I am giving only one example—how the whole weight of modern publicity was brought to bear upon the British public to persuade them that if they went in they would have a range of protections, and that if they did not go in the disadvantages would be enormous. That case was presented with every power of publicity at the command of the great rich resources which those who campaigned for entry had at their disposal.

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East): I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for giving way. He has just described the Community as bankrupt. Is that not perhaps the wrong word to use in the context of a budget that does not have a debt ratio, unlike those of the member states? For example, is he aware that the aggregate deficits of the member states exceed £100 billion, because they can raise debt? The Community budget does not have that power, so it is the only virtuous budget in Europe in that sense, because it has no debt ratio. That aggregate deficit of all the member states is probably about five times the size of the Community budget.

Mr. Foot: If the hon. Gentleman's susceptibilities are injured by the word "bankrupt", I am happy to change it. Even the hon. Gentleman will agree that the economic and financial condition of the Common Market is pretty parlous. It is certainly not what would have been expected by those who thought that the Common Market was operating in the highly successful way that we were told at the time of the referendum. Many hopes have been disappointed.

In particular, the proposition that something successful would be done to deal with the appallingly wasteful, useless and ungenerous common agricultural policy has not been realised. So far from that happening, the CAP has got into deeper and deeper straits and we have present examples of how that has happened. The hon. Gentleman passionately believes in the Market and has put his case powerfully over this period, but even he would agree that the Common Market presents great new problems. This is a strange moment for us to be deciding to go in deeper still.

To return to the question of my hon. Friend the Member for Walthamstow, why has that happened? One of the protections which some devised—it was not solely of British devising—to try to deal with the changes, which were an essential part of the campaign during the referendum, was that on every occasion emphasis was placed both on the power of veto, which was there under our provisions for entry, and on how the House of Commons could recover anything that we had forfeited if we so wished. Those matters were emphasised in every possible way precisely because the Government and those who backed entry believed that it was highly necessary to assure the British public that those rights would be retained. Other people had some understanding of this as well.

Sometimes I think that the Government ought to take some lessons from the French. The French discovered, perhaps a little earlier than we did, that the old treaty of Rome form of the Common Market held real dangers for national sovereignty and for the choice that they wanted to keep in their own hands. For that reason, following the pressure, or imagination—whatever we like to call it—of President de Gaulle the Luxembourg compromise was invented. It was invented by President de Gaulle for much the same reason as Voltaire said he had to reinvent God. The French are good at such contrivances, and at times they are necessary.

The French have lessons to teach us in these matters. All their philosophers are politicians, and most of their politicians are philosophers. They would never let the national interest of France lapse into the hands of mere lawyers, as we often do. Therefore, when there was a crisis in the Common Market which seemed to impair the right of the French Government to exercise their hold on affairs in the way that they thought was necessary, the Luxembourg compromise was invented. It had to be invented to protect what people thought was there before, but about which there had been great dispute.

Nobody knows better than the hon. Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) that there has always been a dispute about what is intended in the Market. Is it intended that it should proceed to economic and European union, to a federal state of some form? The hon. Gentleman supports that proposition, but when we went into the Common Market denials were made from every quarter that that was the intention.

The background to the Bill is that in some of the other countries many of the people who pressed for this kind of measure favour an advance to a form of European union and a much greater abrogation of national rights than we have previously accepted. At times the Prime Minister and other Ministers have taken sanctuary in the Luxembourg compromise. If they want to see it changed and to see a departure from all its protections of tradition and custom, they ought to have a proper debate in the country and generally about the advantages of that change. A major change like that should not be pushed through in some kind of disguise in a Bill of this nature, especially when the accumulated evidence of almost every economic prophecy about what would happen and what would be available to us if we went into the Market has been destroyed by practice.

Some of us used to think, and used to be so instructed at school, that Conservative Governments were pragmatic and liked to move step by step and not to take adventures in unknown courses. My hon. Friend the Member for Walthamstow told the Committee yesterday of the injury that we have sustained under the system that has been inflicted on the British economy. I am not saying that the Common Market is the sole cause of the injury, but the Market did not provide any protection against it, though the claim made on its behalf was that it would do so. In the light of that experience, the Government have come forward with a Bill which makes it look as though we have not learnt a single lesson from all our experience and should proceed to give even greater powers to a new European Community.

[Mr. Foot]

We are told that there are some disputes between the Minister of State's Department and the Prime Minister. The hon. Lady shakes her head. The Prime Minister did not want the Bill either. She gave a number of undertakings to the House about her attitude on this matter. If the right hon. Lady had had the question taken out of its content and put to her at any time whether she wanted to depart from the Luxembourg compromise and to undermine the veto that had previously been exercised, I am sure that she would have told us about it on numerous occasions.

10.15 am

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): I agree with the right hon. Gentleman. If we take it that that is the case, can he speculate on what it is that has persuaded my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister to change her mind and to allow herself and her Government to be persuaded to agree to this further step in European integration? It would be helpful to the Committee if we heard from the right hon. Gentleman on that matter.

Mr. Foot: That is a question that should be addressed to the Minister of State. She is much more in the mind of the Prime Minister than I am. A short time ago I asked whether there was any difference between her and the Prime Minister on this subject, and she vehemently shook her head. I took that to mean that she was in absolute agreement with the Prime Minister on this matter. The hon. Lady will have to explain to the House why the Government have departed from the clear indications that the Prime Minister gave on this subject.

Sir Anthony Meyer (Clwyd, North-West): Whatever may be the Prime Minister's enthusiasm for this Single European Act as it stands, one thing is absolutely clear. It is that her passion throughout the affair is to achieve the completion of the internal market. The article which the right hon. Gentleman seeks to delete is the one above all which helps Britain to attain that objective.

Mr. Foot: I understand the point made by the hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West (Sir A. Meyer). If I did not say so earlier, I should like to make it clear now that one of the reasons why some of us thought it was so unwise to go into the Common Market under the conditions that we were offered was that it combined, uniquely, two disadvantages for this country—a highly protectionist agricultural system and a free trade industrial system. Anything devised to suit Britain would have gone in the opposite direction, because we have lengthy industrial experience of what is necessary to sustain our industry, even at times of great world depression.

Usually we have had to resort to some form of protection for industry, but over the years we devised a system of agriculture that suited us admirably and could be carried through at some, although not very heavy, expense to the taxpayer. That expense was certainly not greater than the expense that has to be borne now. I do not think that the hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West accurately reflects the attitude of the Prime Minister on these matters. I presume that at some stage even she realised how dangerous it was to go into the Market with those two factors against us. They were bound to be against us and are the main reason for the appalling figures recited to the House yesterday. We went into an institution, an apparatus, an economic arrangement, which was contrary to the interests of this nation. The more that is illustrated, the more necessary it becomes to cling to the veto.

Mr. Spearing: Is not the hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West (Sir A. Meyer) mistaken about the internal market? Article 100 of the treaty of Rome is an adequate instrument for the completion of the internal market, but it requires unanimity, and that is a guarantee. The Bill destroys unanimity on the creation of the internal market. The hon. Gentleman agrees with me. Can my right hon. Friend, with his knowledge of history and of the House, tell me of any Bill being brought before the Parliament of the United Kingdom which the Government and all their supporters did not want to bring before the House? That undoubted fact, which my right hon. Friend has already adequately illustrated, shows the real political power of the European Community on the lines that we were talking about yesterday. The real power of the Community over the House is that it has required an unwilling Government to bring this wretched Bill before us.

Mr. Foot: My hon. Friend has made some powerful additons to the argument that I am seeking to make. The Government did not want to introduce the Bill, or at any rate sections of the Government did not want to do so. The Minister of State says that she is in absolute agreement with the Prime Minister. Neither she nor the Prime Minister wanted to bring in the Bill.

Mr. Marlow: I am a little concerned, because I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Clwyd, North-West (Sir A. Meyer) is a powerful advocate. I do not want the right hon. Gentleman to be misled or to follow my hon. Friend the Member for Clwyd, North-West, who is obviously concerned about the internal market. The Prime Minister has always been of the opinion that we must go ahead with the internal market. Despite that, she said that the Bill was unnecessary, so she was going to get what she wanted without the Bill. Despite, therefore, what my hon. Friend the Member for Clwyd, North-West said, the Bill is irrelevant. The Prime Minister does not think that the Bill is necessary.

Mr. Foot: I concur with the hon. Gentleman. Perhaps the Minister of State will read out the works of the Prime Minister. We shall then be able to judge whether they apply to this very different situation.

Until a few months ago the Government said that the Bill was unnecessary and that they did not want to go through all the travail, so they handed over the matter to the Foreign Secretary and said, "As you were able to get the original Bill through without anybody understanding it, why do you not produce this one?". Therefore, the Foreign Secretary drafted the Bill. We can see his fingermarks all over it. He is the most skilled draftsman that we know. He produced a Bill whose explanatory memorandum creates even more confusion. Usually an explanatory memorandum assists poor, benighted creatures like right hon. and hon. Members who cannot understand legal language, but in my opinion this is not the best and most explicit of explanatory memoranda.

The Foreign Secretary's speech made it clear that the Government want to minimise its impact, and some of us were deceived into thinking that it was a minor Bill, but

the more we look at it, the more far-reaching it becomes. The Foreign Secretary introduced a Bill to alter the European Communities Act 1972. That Act took us into the Common Market and led to the application of different forms of law from those that had hitherto applied here. The first amendment to the Act was accompanied by EEC documents and the Government said that they would push it through, as though it were a trivial matter.

I hope that the Minister of State is now convinced — she has heard the whole debate, which is more than can be said of any other Member or supporter of the Government — and that she will tell the Government that the House of Commons does not want the Bill. The more we examine it, the more we think the Prime Minister's judgment was correct and that she should have stuck to it even more solidly than she did originally. We do not want the Minister of State to be put in the undignified position of defending an indefensible Bill. Therefore, I ask her to go back to the Cabinet, where I hope she will have as much sway on this topic as she so obviously has on many others.

Several Hon. Members *rose*

The First Deputy Chairman: Mr. Ron Leighton.

Mr. Marlow *rose*

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. The hon. Gentleman moved the amendment. I should have thought that he would wait until the Minister had replied before he spoke again. As the hon. Gentleman knows, the selection of speakers is really a matter for the Chair.

Mr. Marlow: On a point of order, Mr. Armstrong. I moved the amendment very briefly. I know that my hon. Friend the Minister of State will want to reply fully to all the points that have been made. There are various points that I wish to make that I did not make originally, and I am sure that my hon. Friend would prefer to hear them before she replies to the debate.

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. The selection of speakers is a matter for the Chair.

Mr. Ron Leighton (Newham, North-East): This debate on the internal market is the most important debate on the economic side of the argument. The political arguments are more important, but the internal market is the essence of the Bill. Therefore, it is right and proper that it should be thoroughly scrutinised.

The reason for moving away from unanimity and losing the veto is to obtain the completion of the internal market. Justification for the Bill lies in the push for the internal market, but I ask myself what the internal market has done for us. The most comprehensive answer to that question was given by my hon. Friend the Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Deakins) last night. In a remarkable speech he gave a wealth of detail that demonstrated that the internal market has been disastrous for British trade. Therefore, we have to consider whether the extension of the internal market will do this country even more damage.

It is not much good listening to the advice of those who originally told us that if we joined the Common Market we would gain great benefits from it. They have been proved wrong. Now they want to compound the damage and push us even further and deeper into the Common Market.

On the philosophy of the internal market, we have to consider, as the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) did, the philosophy of free trade. Free trade has many advantages, but it is difficult to find any part of the world where there is perfect free trade.

Why are we so interested in the internal market instead of the international market? The United Kingdom has always looked at the whole world as its trading area. It has not adopted a parochial attitude and looked only at one part of one continent. Although we have been in the Common Market for all these years, only a minority of our trade is with the EEC. The greater part of our trade is still with the international market. If we believe that free trade is so advantageous and beneficial, why do we not look to free trade on a worldwide basis instead of erecting barriers like the common external tariff between ourselves and, for example, New Zealand?

Mr. Eric Deakins (Walthamstow): The completion of the internal market could entail a further deepening of industry's great psychological disadvantage. When we had a Commonwealth, which was a kind of free market, with tariff preferences throughout it, our industry concentrated almost exclusively on the United Kingdom home market and the Commonwealth and neglected all other world markets.

We went into the Common Market because it was a much larger market and, unlike the Commonwealth, it was a growing market. We were told that prosperity in the Common Market was increasing, that growth rates were much higher than ours and that there would be great opportunities for British industry. However, Britain's entry did not change the psychology of British industry. It regarded this new market as the be-all-and-end-all of its production and marketing, whereas the Japanese and the Germans have always regarded the world as their oyster.

On the size of the home market, why is it that Japan, with a home market of just over 100 million people — which is less than half the size of the Community — can still knock spots off all Community industry when it comes to trading on world markets? Is not the lesson for us that it is not the size of the internal market that matters but the efficiency with which one conducts one's economy and industry?

Mr. Leighton: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Japan is an extremely good example. It is an offshore island, but it does not have the advantage of the oil, gas and coal reserves that we possess. I do not believe that Japan has any natural energy resources, yet it takes a worldwide view. By economic means Japan is achieving what it could not achieve by military means. It conducts its trade worldwide. It does not believe that there should be an internal market. The belief that Britain should look towards a small internal market has handicapped British industry. Our world trade has been handicapped by the higher price of British food now we are in the EEC.

To think philosophically about free trade, if that is what we need in the internal market and the EEC is the way to obtain it, the only major policy that the EEC has achieved is its common agricultural policy. Where is the free trade in the CAP? There is no free trade at all. It is the most awful, rigid, protectionist policy of all, and it is highly detrimental to the interests of this country.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) explained that ever since the repeal of the corn

[Mr. Leighton]

law it has been in our national interest to have world trade in food and not to look to an internal market. We are far better off importing our food from the prairie countries than from the internal market of western Europe. As my hon. Friend the Member for Walthamstow has said, concentration on the internal market has disrupted our trading arrangements. We have not gained.

10.30 am

It is all very well to have opinions, as there were in the referendum, but I am not interested in opinions. I am interested in the facts—empirical evidence. The evidence we have is of the great damage and injury that has been done.

Norway was in a similar position to the United Kingdom with regard to the referendum. Norway, Sweden and Austria, which are even smaller countries than Britain, have done extremely well. They did not have to agree to the harmonisation of all their domestic arrangements. They did not have to give up their self-government and sovereignty to achieve economic success. They did the opposite, and they are now extremely prosperous and successful.

We have not gained from the internal market. Do we really want to encourage it? Is it something that we want to push along? As has been explained by my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing), article 100 gives us the possibility of extending the internal market, but on a voluntary basis. The things that countries wish to do voluntarily, by co-operation, can be done under article 100. The Bill, through article 100A, makes it compulsory. The Government are under the fond illusion that they will get only the harmonisation that they want and think is helpful to them. But, under the majority of 45 requirement, other nations will have views which are in their national interest.

Mr. Spearing: My hon. Friend has lighted on a fundamental, philosophical and constitutional question. Article 100 permits genuine international co-operation which requires the assent and consent of every individual party of their own free will. Changing that to article 100A on the internal market means that even France and Germany combined, or Britain and Germany combined, cannot stop being compelled to do something against their will by a majority — perhaps all of the southern European states. Surely that can convert something which could be co-operative into a supranational authority.

Mr. Leighton: My hon. Friend has an awesome mastery of the details of such matters. I always bow to his superior knowledge on such matters. I am only too happy to confirm what he said. He was right when he said that I had put my finger on a deep, fundamental, philosophical point. That is a habit of mine. I agree with him.

We are internationalists. I am pro-European, pro-American, pro-South American, pro-Asian and pro-African. Perhaps I should define what an internationalist is. The word "inter" means between. Therefore, the word means between nations. It presupposes the existence of separate, different and distinct nations. It does not mean merging a recognisable entity into what I think Sir Winston Churchill called a sludgy amalgam. It means presupposing the existence of historic nations being democratically self-run, but co-operating together voluntarily. That is what we believe in.

We believe in co-operating, not just with a little group of nations in one part of one continent, whose citizens are of one race and colour. I do not know what Mr. Tambo thinks of them. It must look to him like a club for retired and redundant imperialists. Our co-operation must be worldwide. The internationalism of the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston) is circumscribed and parochial. He is obsessed by this little part of the world. He wants to merge our self-government into a puny organisation which is causing us so much grievance and economic damage. He would cut us off from the rest of the world and the rest of the continent. That is the opposite of internationalism. I think that he owes it to the Committee to justify himself.

Sir Russell Johnston (Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber): The hon. Gentleman is saying, "I love humanity, but do not ask me to get on with my next door neighbour."

Mr. Leighton: That is not the case. The policy that we advocate will safeguard the Commonwealth. We take our hats off to the Minister for the work that she is doing. Unless we have a sane policy, we may damage links with the countries with which I want us to get on well.

We want internationalism and co-operation on a voluntary basis. We want self-governing countries to co-operate together. We do not want them merged into supranationalism. We do not want some bureaucratic body, which is unelected, unaswerable and unaccountable, somewhere overseas, handing down regulations and taking away democratic self-government from individual nations. That is a philosophical point.

I return to the question of the internal market and free trade. I listened carefully to what the right hon. Member for South Down said about Germany and the Prussian Zollverein. That was an exemplar of such an arrangement. This is not the first time that attempts have been made to unify western Europe to create an internal market. After all, we had the Holy Roman empire of Charlemagne. Napoleon had quite a good shot at doing it, but without great success. Perhaps we should remind ourselves of the Third Reich. Whatever else Adolf Hitler did, he had a good shot at unifying Europe. For many years, it was unified.

Sir Anthony Meyer *rose*—

Mr. Leighton: I shall give way in a moment. All previous attempts at unnatural unification have not done well.

Sir Anthony Meyer: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that this is probably the first time in the history of nations that free nations have voluntarily come together to combine their strength without any external compulsion whatever?

Mr. Leighton: That is not quite right. When the European Parliament elections were held, less than a quarter of the population of this country bothered to vote. I do not think that the shifting of the focus of loyalty of the peoples of Europe has gone to that supranational bureaucracy which the hon. Gentleman holds in such high regard. I do not believe that the people of Germany, France and Britain have transferred their loyalty from their own national Parliaments to a strange body which perambulates between Brussels and Strasbourg. I do not

think that they ever will. The hon. Gentleman is part of a dwindling minority who thought that would happen. It has not happened, and it will not happen.

Mr. Deakins: Is not the dilemma that the Government are facing over the internal market a practical rather than a philosophical one? The Government believe in the Community and in co-operation between nation states in the Community. That is on the record from the Prime Minister and others over the years. There are a few federalists in the Cabinet, and the Foreign Office is full of them.

The fact is that it is unity not just by means of co-operation between nation states. The Zollverein, which was mentioned by the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) yesterday, showed that one can achieve political unity most easily, not by military conquest, not by religious unification, but by economic unification, which then leads, almost automatically, to political unification. Of course, Bismarck had to fight a few wars against Austria and France because they objected to the unification of Germany, but, leaving that aside, unification was completed without the need for military force. However, it was then needed to keep out Austria and to stop France attacking the new German nation.

It seems to me that the Prime Minister is in a dilemma. If she believes in unification of some sort by means of nation states, to go about it by creating a completely free internal market, a unified economic structure, will lead not to that sort of unity, but to the sort that the Prime Minister professes she does not want – the unity of one European Government, some sort of federal Government.

Mr. Leighton: I agree with my hon. Friend. The point is that after the second world war, the federalists in Europe tried to jump straight away to political unity. That foundered on the rearmament of Germany. Then the federalists decided to adopt the ploy of seeking to integrate the economies of western Europe. They thought, "If only we can integrate the economies, political union will follow willy-nilly." Therefore, the object of the economic union was not intrinsically to get the economic effects; it was a secret weapon, perforce to bring along the so-called political union. It was conceived as a three-stage rocket. First, economic union, secondly, monetary union, leading inexorably and inevitably to political union.

To use the vivid word of the hon. Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes), that was the phantasmagoric concept of the federalists. Incidentally, they have all died since—de Gasperi, Adenauer and even Spinelli. They have all gone. There are one or two troglodytes still stuck around on these Benches, but there are not many of them left now. That is because in this country we learned from empirical evidence. The British are pragmatic, and life will come through all those theoretical designs eventually. Life will assert itself.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: Is not the hon. Gentleman barking up the wrong tree in talking about the possible dangerous consequences of a free internal market? That could be a good thing as long as we are not protectionist towards the rest of the world. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the existing rules and directives virtually guarantee free trade within the Common Market, but that it simply is not happening? The real fear that we should have is that another host of harmonisation directives, which will now come forward, will not solve the basic problem. That free trade is simply not happening, despite all the laws, guarantees and directives.

10.45 am

Mr. Leighton: Exactly. The hon. Gentleman puts his finger on it. Where is the free trade? That brings us to the philosophical point raised by the right hon. Member for South Down. Free trade has many benefits, but where does it exist in this imperfect world?

The example of the Zollverein is instructive to us. The idea was to have internal free trade, in the Prussian federation or whatever.

Sir Russell Johnston: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Leighton: I should like to develop this point. I have been trying to deal with the Zollverein for the past 10 minutes. I have been generous in giving way, but I shall do so after I have tried to draw some sort of conclusion from the lesson of the Zollverein.

The idea was that internal – not external – free trade would unify the German-speaking people. I do not want to criticise Bismarck. The hon. Member for Harrow, East, who is just leaving the Chamber, and I are members of the Anglo-German parliamentary association. We travel to Germany quite often. The Germans are looking for national heroes. They have been a bit short on the ground recently, in both East and West Germany. The hon. Gentleman and I went to East Germany and learned much. East Germany is making a national hero of Martin Luther. The East Germans are looking to all sorts of people in their past. The hon. Member for Harrow, East may leave now if he wishes. I just wanted him to hear that point.

I think that the exemplar that the Germans should go for is Bismarck. I think that he was the most successful German of all. He was the last German to win a war. In fact, he won three wars. He also anticipated Lloyd George in introducing elements of the welfare state. I am sure that the right hon. Member for South Down knows all about this, but I should like to jog his memory.

That free trade did not prevent Bismarck from nationalising the railways. He built the railways in Germany as a state-owned enterprise. There was no playing around with leaving it to the entrepreneurs or market forces. I suppose that one reason why he built the railways was to transport the German army, but another was to help and build up the protected German steel industry in the Ruhr. The steel that was used to construct the railways came from the Ruhr. Bismarck did not import it, although he could have done so more cheaply from the United Kingdom in those days. It was a form of planning. The right hon. Member for South Down probably will not go along with that, but he knows that some of us in the Labour party take that view.

Most countries pursue their national interest. As has been said before, our national interest is in free trade in food. We do not have that. We have rigid protectionism. I am sorry to have to say this, but I suspect that there should be a limited amount of temporary protectionism to help our manufacturing industry, if we are to keep and develop it.

Mr. Spearing: Is it not important to emphasise what is not a philosophical point alone, but one of major political

[Mr. Spearing]

importance? With regard to a voluntary co-operative integrated market, there has been unanimity up to now, so it serves the purpose of the hon. Members for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston) and for Clwyd, North-West (Sir A. Meyer). But the change in status now envisaged in the Bill, to which we referred earlier, from an agreed integrated market to one of centralised authority puts the philosophy of the Zollverein, enunciated by my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton), on a European scale and past a particular critical point. That is a matter not just of philosophical importance for the integrated market, because the political control of that integrated market is now, by treaty, outside the control of the House of Commons and with centralised political authority in Brussels.

Mr. Leighton: Let me emphasise, if there were any doubt, — I think I speak for my hon. Friends — that I am in favour of the maximum amount of friendly relations with the countries of western Europe and with countries all over the world. We want a voluntary, not a compulsory, basis. We want to keep our domestic self-government.

When we look at the internal market, the relevant document is No. 7674, which is sometimes known as the Cockfield Green Paper. It starts off with the philosophy behind this approach. It then goes on to the details. I should like to make a brief comment on the philosophy and then look briefly at some of the details.

The very first paragraph states:

"Unifying this market (of 320 million) presupposes that member states will agree on the abolition of barriers of all kinds, harmonisation of rules, approximation of legislation and tax structures".

Why should we agree to the approximation of legislation? Will that not hamper, harass and restrict what the House of Commons can do? Surely we should have freedom to decide what is best for this country. Why should we have approximation of tax structures? That will prevent a British Chancellor bringing in his own Budget. It is an absurd idea. Why should anyone agree to that?

Paragraph 4 states:

"The Treaty clearly envisaged from the outset the creation of a single integrated internal market free of restrictions on the movement of goods; the abolition of obstacles to the free movement of persons, services and capital; the institution of a system ensuring that the competition in the common market is not distorted; the approximation of laws . . . and the approximation of indirect taxation in the interest of the Common Market."

Why should not this Parliament decide on indirect taxes in this country? Surely that should be the responsibility of the elected representatives of the British people. It should not be decided somewhere else. What is the point of coming here if we do not have power to decide our own direct and indirect taxation?

Article 100 of the treaty deals with the harmonisation so close to the Government's heart. It provides:

"The Council shall, acting unanimously"—

that is the important point—

"on a proposal from the Commission issue directives for the approximation of such provisions laid down by law, regulation or administrative action in Member States as directly affect the establishment or functioning of the common market."

So there is already provision to carry out harmonisation if it is thought right and practical and in everyone's interests. Article 100A, however, moves to the qualified majority. That is why we have the Bill, although the Prime Minister did not really want it. It is because the Council decided by a qualified majority. The mere fact that we have the Bill is a good example of how the system would operate.

I will deal with just one or two of the 300 detailed items that it is proposed should be harmonised. On page 23 the annex refers to harmonisation of income tax. Is that really necessary? Do we have to agree that income taxes throughout western Europe must be harmonised? The taxation of the British people is one of the greatest powers of the British Parliament. If that power were lost, the British people would be taxed in amounts and by methods not agreed by the House of Commons. Taxes would be levied on our people by institutions not elected by us or answerable to us. Is not that perhaps the greatest loss of power for this place? The history of this country and of the House of Commons has centred on the taxation of the British people. My right hon. Friend the Member for Blaenau Gwent will recall what happened with the imposition of ship money. This goes back through the whole history of this country. If we lose the power to tax the British people, what power shall we have left?

Page 24 sets out a proposal on training in general medical practice. There are three stars against that proposal. Perhaps the Minister will get a note from her advisers so that she can explain what that means. I know that foreign doctors emigrating to the United States have to take a further medical examination. Most British doctors pass. I have nothing against Italian doctors, but I am told that only 50 per cent. of them pass and the others have to undergo further training. I hope that the Minister will explain the meaning of the proposal on page 24.

Page 28 contains a proposal to co-ordinate certain aspects of national laws regulating advertising on radio and television. There is a major debate in this country about how television should be financed, but that is a matter for us to decide. How can it be necessary, or even possible, to co-ordinate this throughout 12 countries, and what possible advantage could there be in trying to do so? Surely that should be thrown out as a petty and laughable proposition.

Time is pressing and we do not want long speeches, so I shall give no more detailed examples. I have shown how petty many of them are. When they are not petty, they are extremely dangerous, because they take away historic rights. It is our job to look after our people — no one else will do it — and it is for the Parliaments of other countries to look after their people. It is appalling that we should even consider giving up the tools and the powers that we have.

Finally, I wish to consider just one form of harmonisation. When the right hon. and learned Member for Dover (Mr. Rees) gave evidence to the House of Lords Select Committee on harmonisation of taxes on alcohol he said:

"I was engaged during several periods during the time I served in the Treasury on the relationship of the duties on wine and beer; there were infraction proceedings brought against the United Kingdom, and it was felt necessary to respond to pressure from the Commission. The charge was that we were over-severe in our duties on wine, not being to any considerable degree wine producers, and a bit too easy on the duties on beer, which was to discriminate against producers in other parts of the European Community. Now we met the case by holding steady, or raising by an infinitesimal amount, the duties on wine, and raising duties

on beer fairly considerably, and the political case which was made against us on a variety of occasions was that we were taxing the working man's drink".

If we do not produce wine and wish to place a certain excise duty on it—I have no strong views whether the duty should be high or low—why should our Parliament not decide that? Why should we be told by institutions outside this country what the excise duty on our people"s beverages should be?

It is extremely interesting to note the advice of the right hon. and learned Member for Dover to the Commission and to those in power on how to bring about the harmonisation of indirect taxes. As putting value added tax on fish and chips had great political difficulties, he suggested a different way to implement these political decisions. He said:

"I think that the European Court may be the most likely engine of advance, in that if you can relate fiscal development to certain generally applicable principles"—

principles which exist in the treaty, which says that there should be approximation of excise duties and indirect taxes

"and if the Court demonstrates that it is prepared to hand down decisions against individual countries, individual governments, you may get a little movement in that way. I instance, since it was a decision against us, the wine-beer infraction proceedings."

The right hon. and learned Gentleman is therefore saying, "I want to change indirect taxes. I find it politically sensitive, delicate and difficult, so I should like the European Court to help me by ordering me to make a change so that, when I appear before the House of Commons, I do not have to justify, convince and persuade.

I can merely say that those political judges have handed down a decision which I am instructed to follow and there is nothing that I can do about it." In evidence, the right hon. and learned Gentleman added:

"There are perceptible pressures from that source, and if I were a member of the Commission I would be seeing how far one could advance matters by that route."

The right hon. and learned Gentleman has just left the Treasury, where he found it difficult to tax British fish and chips, which is not very popular, especially with my constituents. He regards the European Court as the engine of progress. We do not want that. Indeed, it is intolerable. It is anti-British and runs entirely contrary to our philosophical approach and traditions. It is a disgrace. We should throw the whole thing out.

11 am

Mr. Biffen: On a point of order, Mr. Armstrong. It may assist the House if I respond to the points that have been made with regard to the motion in the name of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister.

If the House has concluded consideration of the Committee stage of the Bill by 2.30 pm, no problem arises. A situation may also arise when, at 2.30 pm, it would be a reasonable expectation that the Committee stage of the Bill could be concluded reasonably soon after 2.30 pm without undue inconvenience to hon. and right hon. Members and the staff of the House. In those circumstances, it would be the intention to move the motion in the name of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. If that were clearly not the case, however, the Government would wish to state their intentions, and I would therefore propose to do that at 2.30 pm.

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): Further to the point of order, Mr. Armstrong. That is perhaps a slightly less clear expression of the Government's intentions than we normally get from the Leader of the House.

Mr. Biffen: Oh no.

Mr. Shore: It nevertheless sends a signal to right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the House who are taking part in this important debate and gives some idea of the Government's thinking. Most importantly, it gives some indication to the staff who will possibly be greatly inconvenienced by the House sitting beyond 2.30 pm.

It would be very helpful if we had some idea from the right hon. Gentleman, even at this stage, of whether he intends to move progress. We are still dealing with the second batch of amendments. I agree that they are difficult and important ones, but there are no fewer than seven other groups of amendments to be considered, and there will be debates on clause stand part. I do not think that it is reasonable to expect it to be possible to envisage the termination of those debates anywhere near 2.30 pm or, indeed, for some considerable time afterwards. If the right hon. Gentleman addresses himself to that, does he not have to face the House with a decision about whether he will move progress at 2.30 pm, or shortly afterwards, or whether he will let the debate run on for a considerable time?

Mr. Marlow *rose*

The First Deputy Chairman: Does the hon. Gentleman wish to raise a matter further to the point of order?

Mr. Marlow: This is a business statement, so I assume—

The First Deputy Chairman: No, it is a point of order.

Mr. Marlow: Further to the point of order, Mr. Armstrong.

Mr. Biffen: My hon. Friend is in danger of getting like David Owen.

Mr. Marlow: I very much resent the implications of my right hon. Friend's remark. This is a matter of major constitutional significance. The Government curtailed debate last evening and there are many groups of amendments yet to come. Many right hon. and hon. Members will wish to participate in some of our later debates and they naturally have commitments later this afternoon and this evening. We all know that that happens. As we have a constitutional Bill of such significance, importance and magnitude, and as the Government decided to curtail debate last night despite the fact that many of us wanted to continue, would it not be a constitutional outrage for the Government to try to continue debate of the Bill over the weekend?

Mr. Skinner: Further to the point of order, Mr. Armstrong. Would it not have been more sensible for the Leader of the House to have come to the Dispatch Box to tell the House that, as with last night, he and his friends have great difficulty in whipping up more than 100 Tory Members who are more or less slaves to the Common Market and will troop through the Lobby to close debates?

The purport of what the Leader of the House said—it needs spelling out—is that the Government will wait until they see whether they can get more than 100 Tory Members to troop faithfully through the Lobby to close a debate. If that happens, and the Government can put

[Mr. Skinner]

enough pressure on those Members to stay here long enough, the Government will battle on. The truth, however, is that there are not all that many Tory Members out of nearly 400 who are prepared to come to work on a Friday to back the Common Market to take us deeper into that mire. That is what the Leader of the House has had to say. He should have been more open and frank with you, Mr. Armstrong, and made the problem clear.

The right hon. Gentleman ought to say now that we will finish at 2.30 pm and that he will allocate another nine hours to make up for those which were lost last night, because the Government could not hold their troops here, so that we can debate the Bill properly, as befits its importance.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): Further to the point of order, Mr. Armstrong. I sat through the whole of yesterday's debate, but I have not made a speech. I am waiting until we reach the next batch of amendments. Long speeches diminish the constitutional significance of the debate and prevent other arguments on other amendments from being made in a reasonable time. I wish that hon. Members would take account of the fact that others wish to speak.

Mr. Foot: Further to the point of order, Mr. Armstrong. It is not really convenient to the House to have such matters dealt with on a point of order. The arrangement raises difficulties for the Chair and for the House as the method by which questions can be put to the Leader of the House is quite arbitrary.

I hope that in future, when the Leader of the House makes statements about business, he will make a statement so that the circumstances in which hon. Members ask questions are clear. We had a similar difficulty a few months ago. If we accept that this process is tolerable, we shall have it more and more. It constitutes a precedent, so future proposals about business will be made on points of order when nobody can be sure whether a question is in or out of order.

Presumably it is in order to ask the Leader of the House questions on a point of order. The Opposition Front Bench has done that, so, theoretically, Back Benchers can do the same as there could not be a distinction between the Front Bench and the Back Benches. Contrary to what has been said, I think that the right hon. Gentleman was his usual explicit and honest self.

Mr. Biffen *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Foot: The right hon. Gentleman shakes his head. He is learning the arts very late in life. Some of us wish him well in that because he is part of our balanced ticket and we want him to thrive in the new personage that he has taken on. He is learning these Machiavellian ways late in life. He must be very careful. I take what he said at face value; I do not mean that in a facetious sense. He was his usual explicit, honest self. Important matters have still to be discussed. It is impossible for us to finish our debates by 2.30 and I took the right hon. Gentleman's explicit, honest statement to mean that he had made up his mind that the Prime Minister's motion will not have to be moved at 2·30 and that therefore he will have to make a statement at about that time explaining when the rest of the Bill will be considered. I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will learn the lesson and will make adequate time available for the completion of the Committee stage and, of course, for a proper Third Reading debate. I hope that the right hon. Gentleman sees the wisdom of that course. I am sure that if he did not he would jump to his feet and deny what I have said. I do not think that he will do that.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: Further to the point of order, Mr. Armstrong. Will the Leader of the House make a further statement about what he regards as reasonable progress by 2.30? To help us further in our debates, will he explain the Government's intentions if satisfactory progress is not made by 2.30?

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): Further to the point of order, Mr. Armstrong. You will recollect that on several occasions Mr. Speaker has made it clear, not only to Back Benchers but to the Leader of the House, that he disapproves of controversial statements being made under the guise of points of order, thereby limiting the freedom of hon. Members to challenge them.

What happened this morning was a contempt of Mr. Speaker and of you, Mr. Armstrong. I ask you to consider that aspect. I am surprised that the Leader of the House chose to make his statement in that form. It was a business statement.

We are in an absurd position. The remarks by the Leader of the House do not bear analysis. He said that, having lost, on the Government's decision, nine hours of debate, we have less than three and a half hours to debate seven different issues.

Sir Anthony Meyer: He did not say so.

Mr. Williams: He did. He said that he expected to be able to conclude the Committee stage fairly soon after 2.30. He is saying that he expects us to complete seven debates in three and a half hours. If there were a vote on each issue, that would take one and three quarter hours of the three and a half hours, so for the seven debates we would be left with less than one and three quarter hours and only 15 minutes would be left for each of the seven debates. That is manifestly ludicrous and unattainable. It is grossly unfair of the right hon. Gentleman to leave the staff so uncertain about what is to happen to them later today.

The Leader of the House knows that the target that he has set can never be attained. He has a responsibility, if not to us because it could be said that it is our duty to be here on a Friday, then to those who support us in the Palace of Westminster. He must let them know exactly what is happening so that they can inform their families and make contingency arrangements.

11.15 am

Mr. J. Enoch Powell (South Down): Further to the point of order, because such it is, Mr. Armstrong. By custom, the House has permitted members of the Government to make statements in the guise of points of order. The House is being very unfair to the Leader of the House. At 9.30 this morning it was clear that hon. Members wanted some indication of whether we should be sitting beyond 2.30 this afternoon. That point has been clarified by the right hon. Gentleman's statement.

The right hon. Gentleman, who is an experienced parliamentarian, knows very well the chances of dealing with seven groups of amendments and three Questions on clause stand part between now and 2.30. He said that in

the event of our not being in sight of completing the work the House will not be kept sitting too long after 2.30. It seems to me that the right hon. Gentleman has, as he normally seeks to do, discharged his promise to the House and left us in no reasonable doubt about the arrangements which have to be made.

Mr. Spearing: Further to the point of order, Mr. Armstrong. Is not the difficulty partly caused by confusing our normal procedures in the House, as the House, with our procedures in Committee? Assuming that the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) is correct — I share his view about the courtesy displayed by the Leader of the House — we should have some further indication of when the Committee might be sitting again.

Procedure-wise we are upstairs, although we are sitting downstairs. In Committee upstairs, points of order are raised about sitting again. Indeed, a Minister can convey to the Chair and the Committee on a point of order when the Committee will sit and when meal breaks will be taken. We are in a similar position.

I appreciate what I think the Leader of the House has told us. Would it be in order for him, as a leading member of the Committee, to say when the Committee might sit again, in the event of the Committee rising some time before tea-time today — I put it no more exactly than that?

If the Leader of the House wishes to change the advertised Third Reading in his business statement, a further business statement is required. I would expect such a statement to be made to the House next week. Would it be in order for the Leader of the House, before the day is out, to tell us when leave to sit again might be proposed?

The First Deputy Chairman: I think that we might now proceed with the debate.

Mr. Marlow: I shall be brief. When I introduced the debate, I asked a few questions. The Minister took note of them and will want to answer them fully. As the debate has proceeded a few more questions have occurred to me. They should be answered before we vote. I think it sensible to make my remarks before my hon. Friend the Minister gets to her feet.

I draw attention again to the point that was so ably illuminated by the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) about article 28, which states:

"Any autonomous alteration or suspension of duties in the common customs tariff shall be decided by the Council acting by a qualified majority on a proposal from the Commission."

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister is on the other side of the English Channel discussing with the Heads of other Community countries the question of trade with South Africa. We are all aware that the Prime Minister takes the view that tough economic sanctions against South Africa would be wrong in principle and counter-productive in practice. We are also aware that many individual Community countries might feel very differently, not only on the moral questions involved, but on the practical questions. We must also consider the question of advantage for one state against another. Certain forms of economic sanctions against South Africa might advantage France, Italy or perhaps Holland, but be of great disadvantage to the United Kingdom.

The article states:

"Any autonomous alteration in the common customs tariff shall be decided by the Council acting by a qualified majority".

What is the common customs tariff? Is it a tariff around the Community which applies equally to all countries in the rest of the world, or could it be a tariff which the Community applies against a country, a group of countries or a region?

If that were the case, what could an "autonomous alteration" be? Could the Commission suggest that we should have a special tariff against South Africa, and could that be agreed by a qualified majority? If so, what is happening in The Hague could be rendered irrelevant. What the Prime Minister is trying manfully — perhaps I should say womanfully — to prevent happening could be forced on the United Kingdom. Opposition Members and I probably have different views on what my right hon. Friend is trying to do. I notice that my hon. Friend the Minister of State is not in her place, but the Government Whip is scribbling away and I am sure that we shall have an answer to this important question. I do not intend to take up the time of the House with irrelevancies. I believe that this is a relevant matter.

New article 100A, referring back to freedom of movement within the Common Market and the approximation of the provisions laid down by law, regulation or administrative action, says:

"The Commission, in its proposals envisaged in paragraph 1 concerning health, safety, environmental protection and consumer protection, will take as a base a high level of protection."

I read that extract quickly. Let me read the paragraph more slowly and leave bits out. I shall stick to one relevant part. I am not sure whether hon. Members are aware of the significance of the point that I am about to make. The article says:

"The Commission, in its proposals . . . concerning health".

Health? When we joined the Common Market we were told that it was about free trade within the Community. Earlier this week the European Court gave judgments on social payments. No indication was given at the time of the referendum, during debates in the House or in the European Communities Act 1972, that social payments would be decided by a European institution.

In the House and in the Select Committee on European Legislation we have considered measures from the Community relating to environmental policy. There was nothing in the treaty about environmental policy, but those issues have been put forward by the Community and are being considered by it. Now we find in the Single European Act that environmental policy is a new part of the treaty.

Mr. Cash: I do not mean to criticise, but perhaps some people were a little disingenuous in the early stages of the consideration of the 1972-73 legislation and did not consider the treaty in its full context or examine it with the care that it warranted. They should not be so surprised to find that these things are happening now. I do not disagree with many of the matters in the treaty, but people should not be as surprised as they have been.

Mr. Marlow: That is why it is so important that we debate the issues properly now and look at the Act line by line. Each group of amendments on this measure is more significant than four or five major Bills that are going through the House. We did not give adequate consideration to previous legislation, and it is vital that we examine proposed legislation properly. We must scrutinise it carefully and look at every line, every word, and every

[Mr. Marlow]

possible meaning of the words. If it it not debated and amended now, it will be out of our grasp for ever. There will be nothing that we can do about it.

The treaty will allow the Commission to make proposals on health matters. The Community will be able to have a health policy. Does that mean that we will have a mountain of wheelchairs? Does it mean that we will have a saline drip lake? Does it mean that if someone manufactures thalidomide he will get a guaranteed price from the Community for as much thalidomide as he cares to produce? How will the health policy start and develop?

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. I am trying to relate the hon. Gentleman's comments to the amendments before us and I am having great difficulty in doing so. The hon. Gentleman must come back to the amendments.

Mr. Marlow: Article 18, which sets out new article 100A, would be deleted by amendment No. 49. The article includes provision for the Commission to make proposals on health. It is there in black and white. The National Health Service is safe in the hands of the Conservative Government, but will it be safe in the hands of the Commission in Brussels? The power is there in black and white. There is no doubt about it. The Community, the Commission, and the European Assembly — with its enhanced powers — have the power to start providing a Community health service. Think of the bureaucracy, the muddle and the waste of money.

Will our Health Service be reduced to the low standards of other Community countries? Will harmonisation mean that we have to put up with the bureaucracy and extravagance that exist in other parts of the Community? The provision of health care in other Community countries is lower than in this country, yet those countries spend more on their health care. If we harmonise, will we harmonise their extravagance and waste? Do we want that?

The Community has a disastrous common agricultural policy. What will happen if it has a common health policy? Where will the money come from? Will the CAP get out of control, or will it become more extravagant? If we have a common health policy and a common agricultural policy, will we not be robbing the hospitals to pay the farmers?

As my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) said, a number of matters were not discussed when we considered the European Communities Act. The public were not made aware of the powers that we were giving to the Community. They are here in black and white in a treaty signed by the Government. We are giving powers to the European Community over the health of our nation.

I am also worried about the preamble to the Single European Act. How significant is this preamble? What does it mean? What is its relevance? If disputes arise—an individual may wish to take a case to court because he believes that European law is not being applied in one country—will the preamble have any status or validity?

Mr. Cash: I should be grateful if my hon. Friend would remember that that question arises on a later batch of amendments. It is becoming tedious to some hon. Members to have to wait to speak on matters that arise on later amendments. If everything is pushed up into earlier amendments, proper consideration will not be given to important issues at the relevant time. That often happens when there is a filibuster.

The hon. Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Deakins) is not present, but I wish to put on record the fact that it helps enormously if hon. Members speak to the right amendments at the right time, and do so briefly.

Mr. Marlow: I am sorry that my hon. Friend has made those comments, at some length. It is not my intention to speak at length. I heard my hon. Friend the Minister of State say that my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford was right. All these issues that we are debating are affected by the veto, the preamble and majority voting. It is irrelevant for the Minister to say that we shall be coming to those issues at a later stage. The veto is relevant to what we are discussing, as is the preamble. How can we take a vote on the amendment without knowing the relevance of the preamble and the veto to it? It is no good saying that we shall come to it later. We must know now, because we shall take a vote now, and if we do not have the information to take the vote, it is not a proper vote. These points have also to be addressed at this earlier stage.

11.30 am

My hon. Friend the Member for Stafford made a point about the relevance of debating the preamble. We see that there is a hook in it on which the Community can hang its health policy. The preamble says:

"Determined to improve the economic and social situation by extending common policies and pursuing new objectives".

The "social situation", "common policies" and "new objectives" show that the preamble will be ammunition for, or a weapon in the hands of, the European Court. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will reply to this point. First, we have the fact that the Commission and the Community can have a health policy, and now, from within the preamble, which is a matter of great moment when justice is considered in the Community, we have it reinforced. My hon. Friend should tell us about that.

Another point of some consequence involves a little mental arithmetic, which even at this time of the morning does us no harm. All these issues on the internal market and external tariffs will be decided by majority voting. The total number of votes within the Community for that vote is 76. We have 10 votes. Greece, Spain and Portugal between have 18 votes and with Italy they have 28 votes. That means that the Mediterranean countries can control, and decide on, any vote.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): The hon. Gentleman is making a good point about the fact that we now have to block three countries to obtain a qualified majority, but the assumption that the Mediterranean countries will always have the same interests in any matter is not necessarily the case, as I am sure the hon. Gentleman will agree. Will he also accept that, on internal market matters, it may be that Spain and Portugal, the new members, will agree with Britain? I am not saying that that invalidates the case that the hon. Gentleman is making, but does he not agree that it is important not to spoil the case by implying that the Mediterranean countries will always gang up on us? We may have a coincidence of interest. I do not want the hon. Gentleman to spoil his good case by making a blanket attack on the Mediterranean countries.

Mr. Marlow: I am certainly not making a blanket attack on the Mediterranean countries, but there may be

circumstances in which they will gang up on us. It may be that there is a high level of protection against imports of fruit and foodstuffs grown in the Mediterranean countries. I am sure that, like myself, the hon. Gentleman has the interests of the United Kingdom consumer at heart. The north Europeans may wish to lower the tariff so that we can get the benefit of better and cheaper foodstuffs from outside the Community, but there may be a blocking minority. The qualified majority would be able to stop the rest of us from lowering such tariffs.

There is an even more significant aspect, and that is that we have a population of about 55 million. We have 10 votes. Belgium, Denmark, Greece, Ireland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Portugal have an aggregate population that is less than that of the United Kingdom. Equally, it is less than the population of the Federal Republic of Germany. Between them, those countries have 28 votes.

Mr. Skinner: I hope that the hon. Gentleman is not into proportional representation.

Mr. Marlow: No, I am not.

Those countries have the ability to block Germany and us, and in many ways, separately as well as together, we are much more important economically to the Community than many of the other countries individually, even on a size-for-size basis. Together, let alone individually, West Germany and the United Kingdom do not have the ability to block. Each Irish citizen has five times the voting power of each British citizen. Heaven knows, but each citizen in the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg has 50 times the voting power of each one of our constituents.

On Friday it is my habit, provided that there is no business in the House in the afternoon or evening, to take my advice bureau and to go out with a few of my friends to knock on doors, find out how people feel, and perhaps go into a few pubs or clubs in Northampton to speak to the people. I invite my hon. Friend the Minister, one evening before too long, before the Bill becomes an Act, to come with me on one of those sessions and knock on doors and go round the pubs and clubs in Northampton. She can then briefly explain to the people of Northampton how she can justify, as I am sure she can, for she is eloquent, a transfer of power to the European Community that is such that the people of Ireland have five times as much voting power as they have, and how seven small countries with a lower aggregate population than ourselves have three times as much power when it comes to voting.

How can my hon. Friend justify the surrender of power from this House to institutions in the Community, knowing that the small countries of the Community will have 28 votes between them and that they have a vested interest in European unity rather than in working together within Europe? They want to move towards a federal Europe. I understand that my hon. Friend is not in favour of a federal Europe. We know that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister is adamantly against a federal Europe, and we are grateful for that. We know that the overwhelming majority of British people are against a federal Europe, but the voting figures that we have make it almost inevitable that, drip by drip, slowly, day by day, we will mover closer towards a federal Europe. That is what the voting figures mean.

If my hon. Friend the Minister believes that that is not the case, perhaps she will agree to my request and come to visit the robust citizens of Northampton and explain to them how what is there in black and white is not black and white at all but a fable, untrue, and will not have the effect that I have suggested. I am sure that it will take all my hon. Friend's considerable eloquence to put that case. I look forward to her accepting that invitation.

Mr. Skinner: I was going to make a further protest about parliamentary time, but in view of what the Leader of the House has had to say, or not say, I shall wait a little longer. I am tempted, although I might not do it, to move a closure myself to see whether the Government have 100 Members here. My guess is that we would be able to make it abundantly clear that what the Leader of the House has had to say is all "kid and cod 'em".

Mr. Foulkes: Bluff.

Mr. Skinner: I agree with my hon. Friend.

There have been several references to the Prime Minister's role, but I think that a few people have got it wrong. Several times, from both sides of the House, the Prime Minister has been spoken of as somehow being against the Common Market really in her heart. I do not believe that. This is the same woman who marched, with the ex-Tory Prime Minister, the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath), into the Lobby against the Labour party 36 times. We had longer debates then than we are having on this issue. Several days were set aside almost every week and the whole process went on for months before we passed the European Communities Act.

I do not accept the idea that the Prime Minister is going to the Common Market battling away for the people of Britain. She does a pretty good propaganda job getting that message across, but it is untrue. She is content to see people such as the hon. Member for Wallasey (Mrs. Chalker) fronting, as she has been doing last night and today. The right hon. Lady does not mind the hon. Member for Wallasey doing the dirty work while she is giving the impression to the BBC and the ITV that she is battling for Britain in the Common Market. She has the Common Market blood in her veins, just as much as the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Jenkins), who lined his pockets at the expense of the Common Market, the ex-leader of the SDP, who could not even stay here last night for his Adjournment debate. The Speaker had given——

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. The hon. Gentleman is straying from the amendments and he should not make allegations against any other Member.

Mr. Skinner: Following what has been said about the Prime Minister and her attachment to the Common Market, and following the speech made by the hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow), I think I am allowed to comment on the Prime Minister's relationship with the Common Market and all the gallivanting round Europe that she does. Every time she steps on that plane she spends taxpayers' money, yet she complains that Derbyshire county council does not have enough money for this, that and the other and accuses it of spending too much on home helps and social services. She loves to get on that plane and gallivant off to Europe, spending taxpayers' money. That is relevant to the debate.

When the British people hear the words "Common Market" they cringe. It is common all right. It has cost us

[Mr. Skinner]

a small fortune and the Prime Minister is as much up to the neck in it as the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup who dragged Britain in. It is right for me to make a passing comment about another pro-Marketeer who has the Common Market in his blood, the right hon. Member for Hillhead because people like him who were in the Labour party walked into the Lobby with Tory Members to start this tawdry, rotten process.

Sir Anthony Meyer: On a point of order, Mr. Armstrong.

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. The hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) is a practised parliamentarian and knows that he can allude to all sorts of matters, but he must relate his remarks to the amendments.

Mr. Skinner: I am.

The First Deputy Chairman: The hon. Gentleman is not doing that and I am listening carefully—*[Interruption.]* Order. I am in an extremely tolerant mood, but the hon. Gentleman must deal with the amendments under consideration.

Mr. Skinner: One of the amendments seeks to delete article 15. Article 15 is in the legislation because people such as the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup, the Prime Minister and the ex-leader of the SDP joined together to take Britain into the Community and to sign article 15 with all the other obnoxious articles.

The right hon. Member for Hillhead should be present today. Where is he? He could not even turn up last night to take part in the Adjournment debate which the Speaker had allocated to him. Earlier in the day the leader of the SDP, the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen), complained that he could not ask a second supplementary question, yet his mate did not turn up for a debate when he got one. The right hon. Member for Hillhead had been allocated, not merely a question, but half an hour's debate. What hypocrisy.

Mr. Cash: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Skinner: No, I am not giving way. Well, go on then, if you want.

Mr. Cash: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that a referendum took place under the auspices of the Labour Government in 1975 which settled many questions to which the hon. Gentleman has referred? Does he accept that many hon. Members would entirely repudiate his wholly unwarranted attacks on the Prime Minister?

Mr. Skinner: Tory Members like to bathe in glory by telling their constituents that the Prime Minister is battling in Europe for the British people, when all the time she is agreeing to this new extension of the Common Market and to get Britain deeper and deeper into it. I am not conned by all that silly nonsense, even if the hon. Gentleman is. He is one of the few Tory slaves who has turned up this morning because the Whips told him to do so. Last night the Whips were running round all the pubs and bars in the House trying to get Tory Members to stay.

Mr. Cash: Will the hon. Gentleman sit down? He made a personal allegation against me, Mr. Armstrong, and I wish to reply to it, if I may.

Mr. Skinner: Is the hon. Gentleman raising a point of order because, if so, that is what he should say.

Mr. Cash: The hon. Gentleman made a personal allegation against me, Mr. Armstrong. Although the hon. Gentleman has only just arrived in the Chamber today, I sat here all of yesterday. I am here entirely of my own volition and certainly not because the Whips have asked me to attend. I entirely repudiate what the hon. Gentleman says, and I ask him to retract it.

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. The Committee would be helped if we could get on with the important amendments under consideration.

Mr. Skinner: I was present last night and I saw the hon. Gentleman trying to raise a point of order then. He should attend that class which I have told the Speaker to set up for the right hon. Member for Devonport. It will enable them to raise points of order, to speak when they cannot raise a point of order and to raise a point of order and speak at the same time. They need a few lessons. I thought that the hon. Gentleman had more sense than to want to join a class with the right hon. Member for Devonport. The hon. Gentleman was present all last night and listened to goodness knows how many points of order and interventions, and he has heard a further 20 points of order this morning, yet he still has not got the drift and does not know how to do it.

The Prime Minister tries to kid the British people that she is not in favour. She is not here to vote today and she was not present yesterday. She is leaving it to the Minister to do all the dirty work. That is why the Government are in trouble today and why they cannot move the closure. All the time that I have been speaking and when my hon. Friends were speaking earlier I expected a Tory Whip to come along with the full authority of his office and stop the debate.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: I wish one would.

11.45 am

Mr. Skinner: The hon. Gentleman wishes that the Whip would close the debate? But he is on our side. He probably has the same idea as me and knows that the Government cannot close the debate because they do not have 100 hon. Members present. That would blow the gaff and we would deal with the matter another day.

When we were debating why the treaty of Rome was being extended, I heard the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) say that it was because of back-door deals. I think I heard him say that it was a kind of quid pro quo for the Hillsborough agreement and the Anglo-Irish treaty. That is the sort of thing that happens in the Common Market. Leaders get together and ask, "What do you want then?", and one says, "I would like to have majority voting because the veto does not fit in with the Common Market." When the right hon. Member for Hillhead was President—at that time he was called Roy Jenkins — he wanted majority voting. All Common Market people want majority voting because they want to arrogate power to themselves. They do not care from whom they take that power. Because it is difficult to sell majority voting in Britain, especially to our Parliament, the leaders say, "Well, I tell you what, Prime Minister, we could perhaps deliver something else. We could help with the Irish". That is how matters are dealt with.

That is what leaders will be doing now when they are supposed to be talking about sanctions against South Africa. I will bet diamonds that they do not talk about

sanctions alone. They will haggle and barter. The millions of black people in South Africa may well be furthest from the minds of the people in The Hague, who will be concocting some sinister deal. Then in another 12 months we shall be debating some issue and an hon. Member will ask where it has come from. It may well have come from The Hague.

Mr. Deakins: My hon. Friend's point is made in rather different language by the Comptroller and Auditor General in the National Audit Office report entitled, "Achievements and Costs of the Common Agricultural Policy in the United Kingdom." Paragraph 8 states:

"the practice has evolved of the Council adopting by general consensus an overall package of decisions, which each Member State considers is on balance likely to be more favourable (or less unfavourable) to its interests than any other which might be negotiated."

Does that not prove my hon. Friend's point?

Mr. Skinner: I have not read the document to which my hon. Friend has referred. My hon. Friends the Members for Walthamstow (Mr. Deakins) and for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton) have read all these documents and they study the fine print. I simply listen to them when they make formidable speeches and that allows me to get the drift of what is happening. However, I believe that I have expressed the case better than the Comptroller and Auditor General.

The Government are twisting the issue; they are bluffing and conning. They are telling the public that they have a clever way of putting matters up for discussion without informing them about the subject. The people in the Common Market are expert at doing that. That is why that principle came from the belly of the wets who sit on the alliance Benches. The Social Democrats are the original Common Marketeering types why try to bluff their way through politics and avoid the class conflict in society. We might all wish to remove class conflict, but we cannot. We have to say yes or no on occasion. We should not fudge and mudge. The Common Market is the apex of fudging and mudging.

That fudging and mudging is exemplified in the documents which my hon. Friend the Member for Walthamstow reads. We are supposed to be discussing amendments Nos. 5 and 6 and article 15 and all the other points that have been raised. I have examined today's Order Paper. The Leader of the House continually tells us that there is not sufficient parliamentary time to debate certain matters. There are more than 1,000 early-day motions in the back of the Order Paper, some of which have been signed by more than 150 Members of Parliament. These are important issues. For instance, my hon. Friend the Member for Stockton, North (Mr. Cook) has raised an important issue which deserves debate—nuclear power—and he wants to discuss ionisation and other important matters.

Mr. Cash: On a point of order, Mr. Armstrong.

Mr. Skinner: I see that the hon. Gentleman has got the point and now knows how to raise a point of order.

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. The hon. Member for Bolsover is stretching my tolerance. I cannot see that early-day motions are relevant. Which amendment is he referring to?

Mr. Skinner: You are very patient, Mr. Armstrong. I will tell you why I am making the point about limited parliamentary time. This new treaty will give the opportunity to the clever Dicks in the Common Market Assembly to discuss nuclear power in Britain while Parliament is refused the opportunity to debate it. That is why it is an affront to my hon. Friend the Member for Stockton, North, because he cannot discuss the dangers of nuclear power in the light of the disaster in the Soviet Union. It is an affront to my hon. Friend that he should be told week after week that he cannot discuss nuclear power because of this tinpot debate about the Common Market which will take several days to conclude.

Mr. Forth: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that one of the unique qualities of this House, which he and I both love dearly, is the system whereby the Opposition have an absolute allocation of time? Does he agree that, if this subject is so dear to his heart and to his hon. Friends, they can use an Opposition day to deal with it? That facility, as he may well know, is not available in the continental political system and is unique to this House. It will remain with us and will be available to the hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends.

Mr. Skinner: We always come up against that point in the parliamentary Labour party. I would not dodge that point for one moment. However, by giving more power to the Common Market, we give it more chance to debate nuclear power and the ability to make a decision over our heads. We might have difficulty in persuading my right hon. Friend the Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock) to use half a Supply day to debate nuclear power, but that does not alter the fact that, under the conditions in the Bill, we will give the European Assembly the power to do the job for us. We should be doing that job in this House.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: Is not the hon. Gentleman making a poor point? I fully support the amendments, but does he not accept that, if we transfer our power to the European Assembly—as we are doing—the Assembly will have less time to debate matters such as nuclear power and we will have more time?

Mr. Skinner: I think that the hon. Gentleman has perhaps forgotten what he reminded the House about on many other occasions. The Common Market Assembly does not deal with matters in the way that we deal with them. It has ways and means, even without a debate, to start a procedure which could result in some harmonisation. Before we knew where we are, we might be subject to some form of nuclear power edict which had arisen not from a major debate in the Common Market but because some clever bureaucrats had put their heads together and imposed it upon us. If the hon. Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) wants to travel down that road, he can do so.

Last Saturday, the Bolsover Labour party asked me what I would be considering in Parliament this week. I said that there were many interesting subjects for debate and that, no doubt, South Africa would be an important issue. I said that towards the end of the week we would be debating the Common Market. They asked me, "Why are you debating that, Dennis?" I told them that some idiots in the Conservative party had decided that the Common Market had been such a complete failure that they wanted to give it even more powers. That is roughly what we are doing.

The Common Market has failed. Anybody who understands anything about the Common Market realises

[Mr. Skinner]

that it has not worked. We may argue until the cows come home as to whether we went into the Market early enough. But that is not important any more. The important point is, what is happening to the Market now? The Common Market is bankrupt and has been for some considerable time. Here we are today telling the people of Britain that we will give more powers to an organisation which has not got two ha'pennies to rub together. If the Common Market had been a coal mine, the Government would have shut it. The Market is bankrupt, and it is not making any money. While every coal mine has some reserve of coal, the Common Market has nothing.

I can imagine a conversation taking place between the Prime Minister and the Treasury. It would go something like this: "The Common Market has no money, Prime Minister", and the right hon. Lady would say, "I have told you, if it has no money, shut it." The Chancellor of the Exchequer would say, "It is not a coal mine or a pit. It is the Common Market", and the Prime Minister would reply, "Save it".

The Common Market is all part of that contradictory economy which the Prime Minister holds dear to her heart. The idea is that, if a pit does not make money, it must close down. If the steel industry does not make money, it should be closed. Similarly, if the railways do not make money, they should be closed and all the people thrown out of work. However, when we come to this Bill on the Common Market, backed up by the Common Market party—the alliance — the Government use a different set of standards and ask how they can bail it out. They decide to use taxpayers' money to give it a fresh lease of life.

Mr. Deakins: Is not the logic of the completion of the internal market that there will be more closures in the basic industries, because the forces drawing industry and investment to the centre will be enhanced by the freedom of capital movement, freedom of investment, freedom of labour and freedom of services? The peripheral regions in this country will need more Government support — which they will not receive from this Government but which they would hopefully receive from a Government of a different party — to counteract the impact of the internal market.

I believe that the Prime Minister—and I hope that I do not do her an injustice—does not care about the regions of this country. Only the Labour party cares about the regions. That is why, in these amendments, we are vigorously opposing the completion of the internal market which will make a great difference to the people we represent.

12 noon

Mr. Skinner: My hon. Friend made similar comments in his speech last night, and he is right. When I go back to my constituency in the north Midlands I will meet the Whitwell miners and their families and it has just been announced that their pit is to be closed. Another 700 or 800 will join the dole queue. When I compare that with what is happening in the Common Market with all the bureaucratic machinery, there is no need to go much further.

My hon. Friend is right. He remembers, with me, that when we went into the Common Market without the vote of the British people—we only had that afterwards—there was a lot of talk about economies of scale. To be honest, I was not sure at that time what economies of scale were. However, I heard the ex-leader of the Social Democratic party talking about it one day and I thought, "I had better listen to what this lot is all about." Apparently, economies of scale meant that Britain's coal industry would reign supreme. Why? Because we were a coal-mining nation with 300 or 400 years of coal beneath our feet and we would be able to expand our coal industry because we had more than the rest of the Common Market put together. We would be selling tonnes and tonnes of coal to the Common Market and it would be selling us some of its manufactured and other goods in order to balance the books.

For one half second—only a half second—I thought that it was just conceivable that there might be something in these economies of scale. But what happens? Is the Common Market buying our coal? As my hon. Friend says, not only are they not buying our coal but we have finished up with a manufactured trade deficit—correct me if I am wrong—of about £8,000 million.

Mr. Deakins: Twelve thousand million pounds.

Mr. Skinner: There, it has gone up. There is a £12,000 million deficit with the Common Market on manufactured goods. Yet those people have the temerity to come along, now that they have got us into this sludge, into this mess, into this mire, and say "Let us tell the British people that the only way to get out of it is to stop in the betting shop and back and back until all the money has gone." What a crazy thing to do.

Any sensible politician, or anybody in any walk of life, who runs into a hole would say, "Well, I must cut my losses." That is what the gambler does in the betting shop. He does not go in the next day, the next day and the next day, if he has any sense, because he knows that the bookie will win in the end. He cuts his losses. We are not cutting our losses today.

Mr. Leighton: If one finds oneself in a hole, is not the sensible thing to do to stop the digging?

Mr. Skinner: If a person is looking for coal, he keeps digging.

What I am trying to say is that this is madness; it is lunacy. If only the British people were given a chance to hear what is happening. The trouble is that they are not told. They are given the impression that everything in the garden is lovely. They are not told the truth about it. For instance, every day the headlines should say that there is a £12,000 million manufactured goods trade deficit. It ought to be slapped in front of the British people continually.

I only hope that the next Labour Government will not go any further down this yellow brick road. It might as well be said. We are all together on these Benches today, just as we were last night, and probably will be until the debate has finished. But now, in the expectation of a Labour Government, we must tell those sloppy people who believe in this road to nowhere in the Common Market that we are going no further. We must overturn any decisions that are carried. We must have none of this business of the Leader of the Labour party standing at the Dispatch Box saying, "I do not like the mess, but I cannot undo it." We must find the ways and means of undoing it in accordance with our conference policy.

Mr. Marlow: Several of my hon. Friends have been trying to find out what the Labour party's policy is. The hon. Gentleman is well aware of conference policy. Will he tell the House what that policy is and how sure he is that it will become Labour party policy?

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. The hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) must not be tempted down that road. It would be completely out of order.

Mr. Skinner: The hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) has asked an important question, Mr. Armstrong. In the course of the few more minutes that I have to speak I might get round to explaining, en passant —I have done that twice. It was good the first time, was it not, but there were more people there then.

People in the Labour party and elsewhere said that they hoped that I would oppose this extension of power. I said that I would. They were concerned about some of the things that they were promised in 1973. They said to me, "Dennis, what has happened to all those wonderful pension plans for our old-age pensioners? Why haven't we got them?" All those people like Shirley Poppins and the rest who took us down the yellow brick road said that one of the attractions of the Common Market was better pensions. They said that our people had the worst pensions in Europe. What happens? The right hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Jenkins), who missed his Adjournment debate last night — that was delightful. Even Mr. Armstrong knows it. He is laughing. But where are those pensions?

Mr. Don Dixon (Jarrow): Does my hon. Friend think that the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Jenkins) will have his pension reduced because he was not interested in the Common Market? He was not prepared to sit here and listen to the debate so that he could have his Adjournment debate afterwards.

Mr. Skinner: We know what happened. I was just coming on to the fact that all the old people in Britain did not get their increased pension but he got his. We shall have to send in a memorandum, or whatever they do in the Common Market. They have a special way of doing it in 15 different languages. We shall explain that he has not done his job. He could not even stay during the Common Market debate. That really is a crime for a Common Marketeer. One could understand the right hon. Gentleman missing his Adjournment debate, after, say, a debate on the Welsh economy, since he is a Scottish Member of Parliament, but not to be present when we are debating his beloved Common Market really is a crime. He ran away and then missed his opportunity to speak for half-an-hour when the leader of the Social Democratic party had been saying earlier that it was not fair that he could not get a supplementary in.

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. I know that the hon. Gentleman is making passing reference, but we really must get to the amendments before the Committee.

Mr. Skinner: Yes, I am drawing to a close, but the pension is an internal matter.

Mr Spearing: I hesitate to intervene, Mr. Armstrong, but is it not a fact that the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Jenkins) virtually ran the internal market for some six years?

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. The hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) was referring to the absence of the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Jenkins) on a certain occasion in the House—indeed, he has done it more than once—and that has nothing to do with the internal market.

Mr. Skinner: My hon. Friend has made a fair point. Such people should be here to defend the Common Market instead of leaving that to some of the second-raters, and there are not many of them. They were the champions of Europe—or rather, the Common Market, because it is not all Europe. They were going to save Britain from the continuing problem with the pound. I do not know whether anyone else remembers, but I remember that when we went into the Common Market we were told that there would be no problem ever again with the pound. What happens? Every time the right hon. Gentleman speaks now they want to get us into the European monetary system and some other entrapment within the Common Market.

What it really means is that the Marketeers have backed the wrong horse. The British people have been conned. We have mass unemployment, which is caused partly by the Common Market and partly by the Government's actions. We have all these people without jobs. We have not got those wonderful pensions for our pensioners.

We have not abolished standing charges and on an international theme we have not even fed the Third world. I remember the debates when countless people said that the Common Market, together with Britain, would be able to feed the improverished millions in Africa and in central and south America. I am talking about little kids with matchstick legs. It was said that they would be properly fed if Britain went into the Common Market.

We have had the appalling experience of seeing that this much vaunted Common Market cannot even deliver on an international humanitarian basis. It has failed in every respect. That is why we should say over and over again that we will not give extended power to that bunch in Europe. That is why I will vote for these amendments and fight and fight until we get out of this sorry mess.

Mr. Tom Normanton (Cheadle): After what I can only describe as one of the most appalling abdications of parliamentary responsibility that I have listened to during my 16 years in Parliament, I shall try, in accordance with your wishes, Mr. Armstrong, to come back to the amendments.

Before I do so, may I draw to the attention of the Committee the fact that while some right hon. and hon. Members are indulging in utter irrelevancies, on the continent politicians of all persuasions are celebrating the anniversary of the birth of the man who was often described as the architect of the concept of a united Europe —not a confederal or a federal Europe, but a united Europe. I am speaking about Maurice Schuman, and I should like to quote two sentences of his. He said:

> "Europe will not be built in a day, nor as part of some overall design. It will be built through practical achievements that first create a sense of common purpose."

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): So that the Committee can get the precise flavour of what the late Maurice Schuman said, perhaps you, Mr. Armstrong, will allow my hon. Friend to give it to us in French?

The First Deputy Chairman: The hon. Gentleman knows that that is not allowed.

Mr. Normanton: I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) for that helpful intervention, but I shall not strain the Official Reporters by quoting it in other than the official language of this Parliament.

Some right hon. and hon. Members are straining at a gnat in arguing the merits or demerits of the clauses, under the subterfuge of proposing amendments to delete the clauses. Constitutionally the Bill is of minimal significance. The fundamental issue was settled long ago, when Parliament passed by a massive majority, which represented the views on both sides of the House of Commons, the European Communities Act 1972.

The political issue on which the Committee should concentrate its time and thought is how we can be the more effective in influencing future development in the Community. Europe, and by that I mean the continent of Europe, will develop with or without a blueprint or a design, and with or without Britain's membership. The logic of that leads me to believe that the developments will be much more acceptable to Britain and British politicians on both sides if Britain influences events from within European institutions.

The contributions to this debate this morning and last night have implied that Britain should never have joined the European Community. Those views are sterile and damaging. We are in, and we will remain in. That is the declaration made by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and the position from which I, and I believe the Committee, should view the matter before us.

12.15 pm

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): At the start of his speech my hon. Friend commented on the abdication of parliamentary responsibility. His suggestion was that it was an abdication of responsibility to make speeches in Committee on matters that worried hon. Members. I thought that the comments earlier in the debate implied that there was an abdication of responsibility in the context of the internal market. Whisky, insurance and banking are important to Scotland. It was said that the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Jenkins), who represents a Scottish constituency, but who appears to know very little about Scotland, did not even trouble to stay here to say anything at all about these important matters.

Mr. Normanton: I shall not pursue the argument about whether views would have been expressed constructively had the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead, (Mr. Jenkins) been here. That is not the substance of this debate, and I am sure that you, Mr. Armstrong, will be the first to agree with that.

I want to hear Britain's voice and her views coming through as constructive and positive. I want to see us improving the decision-taking procedures in such areas as —these include a number of matters in the amendment that we are debating—the opening of the Market for goods and services and, out of respect for my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker), the products of his glorious country, especially its liquid products. I want to see the decision-taking mechanism in the Community improved to enable the Third world to develop its ability to feed itself. I also want to see the establishment of much greater stability in currency. I want Britain to join the ERM of the EMS, and so does 90 per cent. of British industry. Fortunately, a large number of my hon. Friends and a few Opposition Members also want to see that.

The Bill is a minnow and falls far short of what is necessary. However, on the basis that half a loaf is beter than no bread I shall support its progress in the Lobby and reject every one of the amendments, which could and should have been comprehensively debated in the Chamber had there not been such an appalling abdication of parliamentary responsibility and time wasting through dealing with total and utter irrelevancies. After the passing of the Bill I shall continue to try to influence further developments in and through the European Parliament, where debates are on really important issues and where speeches are much more forward looking than some of the speeches that I have heard from some right hon. and hon. Gentlemen.

Mr. Spearing: The hon. Gentleman has made some assertions, but may I remind him that the Bill is not about whether we stay in or come out of the Common Market? It is about whether this Parliament provides more power to institutions of the Common Market. The hon. Gentleman thinks that that is too little, but does he agree that clause 3 (4) provides for greater control of the internal market by the European Assembly? That is because, under the requirements of the European Assembly Elections Act 1978, when greater power is given by this Parliament to that Assembly, express permission must be given. Does he agree that to that extent this is a constitutional issue and that the proposal is that power should pass from this House to the Assembly, because the Act says so, and so do the Government?

Mr. Normanton: I have no doubt whatsoever that the Bill has constitutional implications. That fact is recognised by the usual channels and by the way in which the debate is being conducted on the Floor of the House rather than upstairs. The role of the European Parliament is constantly being ignored. The presence in that institution of representatives who are elected by the same electorate as the electorate who return hon. Members to this House has also been ignored. The perspective that is evident in the hon. Gentleman's argument inhibits the more effective representation of British views and interests in the European Parliament.

The Bill is a minnow; it does not go far enough. There is all the difference in the world beteen the objectives for which Maurice Schuman and many continental Socialists strived for so long and what the hon. Gentleman seeks. They strove for a united Europe, or a Europe that is united. There is all the difference in the world between a Europe that is united and a united states of Europe. One is a concept. The other is a legalistic constitutional lawyer's representation of it. As the Bill does not contain many of the points that it should contain, I am content to pursue the ultimate objective of a united Europe, or unity in Europe, by using the channels that are open to each and every hon. Member. My main accusation against Britain in Europe is that we are failing effectively to use the opportunities that were presented to us in the 1972 and in the 1979 Acts, all of which are open to us, with or without the Bill. On the basis that half a loaf is better than no loaf at all, I support the Bill and reject the amendments.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: My hon. Friend is dealing with very broad issues. Does he agree that the free internal market

is virtually guaranteed now by previous decisions of the Common Market and the many regulations? The free internal market is not operating because of the actions of national Governments. Does my hon. Friend not accept that to flood this country and others with another host of harmonising directives will not solve the problem? The free internal market is not operating, not because of a shortage of directives, but because member states are not implementing the free internal market?

Mr. Normanton: Our Commissioner, Lord Cockfield, presented a constructive view of our goal and how we should achieve it. His perspective of the manner in which that objective should be achieved is very different from that which applied in the 25 years before the presentation of this paper. He has set 1992 as the date by which the Common Market, in the commercial sense of that term, should become a reality. However, we are still dragging our feet at national member state level because of the inadequacies and inherent defects of the decision-taking mechanism of the European Community. We should be ill-advised to ignore these points. We are only eight years away from the deadline that was set by Lord Cockfield and the Commission, representing all 12 member states. The Bill is necessary to ensure that the decision-taking process right across the board, but more particularly in the commercial field, can be implemented. I am confident that it will be.

Mr. Taylor: How?

Mr. Normanton: I am confident, on the basis of my involvement in one institution of the Community, that it will be possible. Without the Bill, I see no possibility of meeting the 1992 deadline.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): On a point of order, Mr. Armstrong. I think that the hon. Gentleman referred to his involvement in the European Assembly. I assume that he is a Member of the Assembly. Should he not have declared an interest during his speech?

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. That is a matter for the hon. Member, not for me.

Mr. Normanton: I abide by your decision, Mr. Armstrong, on that point of order, but the *Official Report* will show that I was nominated by this House to represent the House when Britain joined the European Community 13 years ago. All right hon. and hon. Members have been well aware of my connection, and I am sure that there is no procedural or constitutional reason for me to waste time declaring that interest, although some hon. Members may wish that to happen.

Mr. Madden: Further to that point of order, Mr. Armstrong. I apologise for delaying the Committee, but my clear understanding is that there has been a ruling from the Chair on previous occasions that any hon. Member who has an interest, whether or not it is in the Register of Members' Interests, should declare it. If the hon. Member, whether or not he has been nominated, and for however long he has been a Member of the European Assembly, has an interest, he should declare it.

The First Deputy Chairman: I can only repeat what I said before, that whether an hon. Member declares a particular interest is a matter for him.

Sir Russell Johnston: Further to that point of order, Mr. Armstrong. No hon. Member of this House who has been elected to another legislature has to declare that interest. That is a matter for the electorate.

The First Deputy Chairman: Yes. That is why no impropriety has occurred this morning.

Mr. Gow: Further to that point of order, Mr. Armstrong. The hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston) referred to the European Assembly as a legislature. Is it a legislature?

Sir Russell Johnston: It will be, if this Bill is passed.

The First Deputy Chairman: That matter has been debated at length since we first began these proceedings.

Mr. Gow: The hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber is the official spokesman on foreign affairs for the Liberal party, but he may not have been correct when he said that the European Assembly is a legislature.

The First Deputy Chairman: It is a matter for debate, and it has been debated at length. It is not a matter for the Chair.

Sir Russell Johnston: I happily accept that it is another Parliament and not a legislature.

Mr. Gow: The hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber, the Liberal party's official spokesman, made a significant error regarding foreign policy. However, it is not uncharacteristic of the Liberal party, even its official spokesman, to make errors. My hon. Friend the Member for Cheadle (Mr. Normanton) explained to the Committee that, in his view, the Bill does not go far enough. He described it as a mouse of a Bill.

Mr. Normanton: A minnow.

Mr. Gow: My hon. Friend has moved from animals to fish. It is a matter of deep concern to my hon. Friends and my hon. Friend the Minister that my hon. Friend the Member for Cheadle, who is a Member of the European Assembly, criticised those who sit on the Treasury Bench. My hon. Friend said that we have not gone far enough. Can my hon. Friend tell the Committee and can he persuade me — that is quite a task — that I should be complaining, not that the Bill goes too far, but that it does not go far enough? How far does my hon. Friend want it to go?

Mr. Normanton: I am tempted to rise to that bait. I am sure, Mr. Armstrong, that, having caught your eye, you would be most unwilling to see me, as other hon. Members have done so far, proceed on a matter that is completely irrelevant or additional to the direct point of debate, which is an amendment. I think that, during whatever time you are willing to allocate to me, you would wish me to concentrate on the amendment.

12.30 pm

I want to see the mechanism of decision taking improved and, above all, to include the opportunity for the directly elected representatives of the British people to make a positive input into that process of decision taking. I have interpreted and analysed the Single European Act. I have no doubt that the way in which it is applied will reduce the "power" of the European Parliament in an area which this Parliament never had, or seems to be oblivious to the importance of having—the power over spending.

[Mr. Normanton]

We talk of the Budget. The Budget is a vital and fundamental issue to the House of Commons. The House of Commons came into being as the means by which taxation could be imposed on the people.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: On a point of order, Mr. Walker. For the past 15 minutes my hon. Friend has not once referred to the internal market. That is what we are meant to be debating.

The Chairman of Ways and Means (Mr. Harold Walker): I have not heard anything that has been out of order since I have been in the Chair.

Mr. Normanton: I thought that I had made two, if not three, references to the development of the internal market when I spoke of the plan, the policy and the strategy to be deployed, which was spelt out clearly by Lord Cockfield, who made absolutely clear what the problem was. He made it abundantly clear, as he saw it, how we should achieve that objective. I believe that the Bill is defective in many respects. However, that issue, at least, which is covered by the amendment—I shall vote against it—is covered in the Bill. Without the proposals getting on to our statute book, the measures and the objectives spelt out by Lord Cockfield will be virtually impossible to achieve. They will be difficult enough to achieve even if the Bill is enacted. I believe that that is relevant to the matter that we are debating—the amendment.

We are straining at a gnat when we think that European political developments will be entirely dependent upon and exclusively influenced by legislative means. They will not. They never will be. They will be influenced by the involvement of politicians, business men and all sectors of society, where there is a strong, clear objective and goal to work towards, who contribute through every channel, whether it is legislative or not. That is why I say that I am critical of the Bill, but more critical of those who strain at the gnat of irrelevant alternatives.

Mr. Spearing: On the question of the internal market, which is what we are talking about, will the hon. Gentleman tell the House, from his extensive experience of the House, and I gather, by inference, his continuing elected membership of the European Assembly, whether he favours continued control of the internal market by unanimous agreement of Ministers, and therefore by agreement of nation states unanimously and in co-operation? Or does he favour the proposal in the Bill, and in the amendment that we are discussing, whereby a centralised authority of Council or Parliament decides by majority? Does the hon. Gentleman favour that authority in central European political institutions, or by agreement among national Parliaments?

Mr. Normanton: I do not see the schizophrenia on this subject. I do not see that it is an either-or situation.

Mr. Spearing: That is the amendment.

Mr. Normanton: No. As I see it—I think that I have said it three times already and perhaps strained the patience of the Committee in doing so—the Bill will contribute towards the achievement of the objective that we all want. Anyone who wishes to see the economy of Britain better established, healthier, and more competitive must want to see the abolition of all the man-made non-tariff barriers that proliferate. There were two ways in which that was attempted. One was by one item after another, achieving what was called the harmonisation process.

However, I go back to the proposal that Lord Cockfield spelt out so clearly. It is a much more pragmatic way. I should have thought that that in itself would endear it to the views of a British parliamentary institution. But it is not an end in itself. It is not the only channel that has to be pursued. We have to bear in mind that this is a limited Bill. It makes possible a few steps forward in——

Mr. Teddy Taylor: Order. This is a filibuster.

Mr. Normanton: —the right direction. Above all, it leaves the main challenge to right hon. and hon. Members of the House, elected as we are by our constituents, and our fellow political parliamentarians elected by the same electorate——

Mr. Spearing: No.

Mr. Normanton: —to the European Parliament. It is no different.

Mr. Spearing: That is not true.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: This is an outrage.

Mr. Normanton: That is the way in which I would urge——*[Interruption.]*

The Chairman: Order. I am trying hard to follow the line of the hon. Gentleman's argument. *[Interruption.]* It is difficult when I have to do so against a continuous background of sedentary noises. If I have a chance to listen to the hon. Gentleman, I might be able to decide whether he is in order.

Mr. Normanton: Thank you, Mr. Walker.

I think that logically and coherently I have come to the end of the main points that I wanted to make by way of contribution to the debate. I enter the caveat that this is a minnow of a Bill—whether we call it a minnow or a mouse does not matter. Anyone listening to the objections to it would——

The Chairman: Order. The hon. Gentleman is addressing himself in general terms to the Bill rather than to the specific amendments before the Committee. I hope that he will now direct his remarks to the amendments.

Mr. Normanton: In that case, I shall conclude with a final reference to the importance and the means of achieving a common market for all British industrial and other products and services. Throughout all the years that I have been privileged to serve as a nominated and now as an elected Member of the European Parliament it has been absolutely clear that pursuing the techniques that have been in operation since the European Community was formed will be counter-productive and thus an enormous waste of time and expectations. The method now proposed by Lord Cockfield will be the better served by the passing of the Bill and the rejection of the amendment on which we have been attempting, at least, to concentrate our attention.

Sir Russell Johnston: I shall not delay the House long——

Mr. Teddy Taylor: Hear, hear.

Sir Russell Johnston: The hon. Gentleman has a cheek to say that. The whole debate began with an hour and a

quarter from him and he is inclined to detain the House for a fair length of time. I do not generally do so. Therefore, he is in no position to criticise.

The House owes a debt to the hon. Member for Cheadle (Mr. Normanton). Serving in two Parliaments is a considerable exercise and his efforts to achieve the advancement of his constituents in Westminster and in Strasbourg are extremely praiseworthy. It should also be recognised that the internal market is a subject on which he has concentrated a great deal of time and effort.

The hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), who spoke immediately before the hon. Member for Cheadle, spoke extremely forcefully. Certain Members, such as the hon. Member for Bolsover and the hon. Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor), have fought against the Community every inch of the way—against our joining it, against our remaining in it and now against attempts to make it function better and to make its supranational agencies and market more effective. Whether they are Right-wing, as many of them are, or Left-wing, as many of them are, they are in happy agreement to tolerate periodic bouts of Governments whom they despise rather than surrender the Buggins' turn chance of an absolute guarantee of government at some stage which our first-past-the-post system uniquely offers.

Late last night, the hon. Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Deakins) made a considerable speech. I wish to refer to two aspects that I do not fully understand. I said that I did not understand why in the final analysis the hon. Gentleman would prefer — he was quite definite about this — to live in a country with a Conservative Prime Minister for as long as it takes, with all the economic and other policies with which he disagrees, rather than allow a large number of issues to be determined by an elected Parliament — or Government, if you like — covering a wider area and led, for the purposes of the argument, by a German Socialist. The hon. Gentleman would have none of that. He said that it was the dreaded federalist approach, as though it were a disease which would contaminate people. He also said that people were not told in the 1975 referendum that this was what it was all about. That is not true. I clearly recall taking part in a debate in Inverness during the referendum campaign with my friend Hans Nord, a Dutch Liberal, and saying that, although I was a Liberal, if I had to choose between a German Socialist called Helmut Schmidt and a British Socialist called Wedgwood Benn, give me Helmut Schmidt every time. Why? Because I am interested not in a person's nationality, but in his political objectives and policies. That is what the debate should be about.

The hon. Member for Faversham (Mr. Moate)—I do not blame him for not being here—went on about the national interest. There is no abstract definition of the national interest. It is defined by the Government of the day, and the present Government did not obtain the support of the majority of the voting population. Their definition of the national interest is often fiercely disputed by the Opposition parties.

12.45 pm

Political direction ought to be pre-eminent. As the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) said, the European Community came into existence for political reasons, but the motor was economic. There was much that the middle-sized powers in Europe could do more effectively in concert when measuring up to the leading economies of the United States and Japan, not to mention the USSR and the Asian powers. We will not be able to compete with advanced technologies in the United States and Japan unless we can generate activity in our market, which is larger than that of the United States and considerably larger than that of Japan, which is 120 million, not 100 million as the hon. Member for Walthamstow said.

Managing such an approach, which enables democratic choice to be afforded to the people concerned, necessitates structures of government which we can call federal. The hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash), who has made several interventions, read out almost like a litany the Prime Minister's statement to the effect that she would not have anything to do with federalism. Doing that is wrong and does not face up to reality. I do not care what word is used, but we are discussing something like federalism. It is atavistic not to face up to that fact.

I am puzzled by our method of dealing with the Bill. I hasten to add that this is no criticism of the Chair. We are in a Committee of the whole House debating amendments which everybody knows the Government cannot accept. The constitutional theory is that, if it wishes, Parliament can reject the Government's proposition and put the whole lot back in the melting pot. That ignores reality, however, which is the discipline of party Government, the Whips, the power of patronage and the fact that the Government are committed to honouring an international agreement into which they have solemnly entered. They will not default, and the Minister will not accept any amendment.

There does not seem to be much practical sense in this, therefore. I do not deny the importance of a constitutional backstop when there is real opposition — that is a fundamental part of parliamentary government—but for all the ringing declarations from the few diehards here, there is no real opposition in the country to our continuing in the Community. People are interested in making the Community work better and improving its democracy.

Mr. Deakins: Surely the purpose of debating amendments is to expose issues and to discuss. The name "Parliament" means that we are a talking shop. We have developed a lot, but the Chamber is a centre where we can talk. The national press has not taken an interest since 4.45 pm yesterday, which is a sad reflection on the media, but this is a place where arguments can be exposed, even if we know that the Government will win in the end.

Sir Russell Johnston: I do not dissent from much of what the hon. Member for Walthamstow says. It is evident that the European Community is not high on the political Richter scale with press.

If we are serious about making a constructive contribution to the process of making the European Community work better, it is sensible to have more narrowly focused debates regularly, rather than a succession of general debates in which everyone repeatedly says the same thing.

The Chairman: Order. I am listening patiently, but I do not think that the hon. Gentleman's remarks have much to do with the internal market. We must return to the amendment.

Sir Russell Johnston: I am grateful to you for your patience, Mr. Walker. It need be stretched no further because I have finished.

Mr. Jeremy Hanley (Richmond and Barnes): The European Council at Milan in June 1985 reaffirmed the Community's commitment to achieve a single market for goods and services by 1992. It identified special priorities: first, to remove physical and technical barriers to the movement of goods, secondly, a free market in financial services; thirdly, a free market for transport and related matters; fourthly, the liberalisation of capital movements; and, fifthly, the full freedom of establishment for the professions. Are those the priorities of certain member states — of France and of Germany? Are those the priorities of a gang of European countries set to try and defeat Britain in one way or another? Not in the slightest. They are the United Kingdom's own priorities. The Bill seeks to succeed on those five priorities.

There is disagreement among member states, and I have no doubt that similar debates are taking place in those countries. Certain diehards on the Left and Right — united in their extremism if in nothing else — are trying to destroy the United Kingdom's interests.

I believe wholeheartedly that the Bill is right and that the proposed amendments are wrong — particularly the one which we are discussing.

Progress has been made on problems caused by differing national standards for goods and in many other areas. Agreement on common technical and safety standards means that United Kingdom exports conforming to them will have the right, for a change, of automatic access throughout the Community. Perhaps Opposition Members and some of my hon. Friends are against United Kingdom exporters being given the right to a fair market for goods of supreme quality in the Community.

Fifteen measures laying down agreed Community standards for industrial products were adopted in October 1984. The United Kingdom put forward an initiative designed to oblige member states to accept in their domestic markets goods which meet the required technical and safety standards of goods from other member states. I wonder why right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the House are against achieving that fair market for goods of the highest quality produced in this country. The initiative has now been agreed by member states, thanks to the United Kingdom. Provisions have been built in to ensure that there is no reduction in health and safety standards.

Mr. Bill Walker: Earlier my hon. Friend the Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley) suggested that anyone who was opposed to the Bill, as it applies to the internal market, was an extremist. My hon. Friend could not have been present when I made my speech last night. I said that, under article 100, it should be possible, if the will were there, for products and services in which I have a constituency and Scottish interest — whisky, banking and insurance — to develop in the market. They have not developed when, under article 100, they could and should have developed. My hon. Friend does a disservice to the Committee and to hon. Members by suggesting that people with that view are extremists.

Mr. Hanley: I apologise if I implied that my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) was an extremist.

Earlier, I mentioned the extreme views against the Common Market regularly expressed by hon. Members on both sides of the House. The United Kingdom has taken the lead in efforts to reach common standards for linking computers and telecommunications networks. That is what the internal market is all about. We are trying to open, in a way which I always believed was symbolised by the Common Market, a proper and free market for the highest standards of goods and services provided by British industry. I cannot understand why Opposition Members are so opposed to the increased sales and more jobs that the Bill will help to create.

The Bill will also help, particularly in the internal market, in the simplification of frontier controls on goods traffic. The existing bureaucracy is diametrically opposed to the interests of British exporters. The single administrative document is intended to replace the various national import, export and transit forms currently used in trade between member states. Full implementation will take place on 1 January 1988, and I hope that it will be a substantial step towards achieving the aims that I thought I was supporting when I voted in the 1975 referendum for our continued membership of the Common Market. There will be one form, not many.

Mr. George Robertson (Hamilton): I intervene to show that I am still alive and kicking after all these hours of debate. The hon. Gentleman is giving us a clear exposition of the benefits of the internal market, but may I direct his attention to the new article 100A in the Single European Act? It says:

> "The Commission, in its proposals envisaged in paragraph 1 concerning health, safety, environmental protection and consumer protection, will take as a base a high level of protection."

May we take it that the hon. Gentleman agrees with that as well?

Mr. Hanley: I agree with protecting our national interests and sharing our national interests with those of other countries to improve our market. I see no reason why there should not be a bit of give and take, and I believe that that will be achieved by the Act. I do not believe that we shall have any loss of sovereignty if, in exchange, we gain part of the sovereignty of 11 other nations.

We need a liberalisation of road haulage. I cannot understand why Opposition Members should oppose that aim. The first priority must be to end road haulage quotas.

The hon. Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) asked on a point of order earlier that an hon. Member should declare his interest. I cannot understand why the hon. Member for Bradford, West has not declared his own interest. I see from the Register of Members' Interests that he is sponsored by the Transport and General Workers Union and that his constituency party receives £600 per annum and financial support at general elections, reflecting an agreement between the TGWU and the Labour party.

Surely the hon. Gentleman should declare his interest in the extra funding and the more jobs that will flow to his members from the internal market. I remind him that the deregulation of coaches in this country six years ago has produced 50 per cent. more passengers, a 40 per cent. reduction in fares and a 20 per cent. increase in the number of services. Exactly that sort of deregulation is envisaged in the Act for road haulage and other transport services throughout Europe. The hon. Gentleman should declare his interest, because he will be profiting from the Bill.

Mr. Madden: If I had contributed to the debate I would have declared my interest, as is my habit. On this occasion,

I am one of those rare parliamentary animals who choose to listen to a debate. I have been here for a long time and if I contribute to the debate I shall declare my interest.

Mr. Hanley: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman and I am glad to have reminded him. I hope that we shall hear from him in due course—perhaps on another day.

We also need a more liberal regime for air services in Europe. Again, Britain has shown the lead on an internal market in air services. Britain and the Netherlands made a bilateral agreement last year which has resulted in cheaper excursion fares and a wider choice of routes for travellers. That has resulted in an increase of 16 per cent. in the number of passengers using services between Britain and the Netherlands. In the first year there were 70,000 more passengers and 10 new services. That is the sort of growth that liberalisation, deregulation and a common market can achieve.

Mr. Bill Walker: My hon. Friend is correct. The liberalisation of the routes between Holland and the United Kingdom has proved advantageous to the internal market. For example, my daughter found that it was cheaper to fly from Scotland to London and then on to Amsterdam and from there to Los Angeles than to fly from anywhere in the United Kingdom. My hon. Friend should bear in mind exactly what we mean by opening up markets, because experience has shown that when we open up our markets we do not enjoy the benefits of other markets opening up, for many different reasons.

1 pm

Mr. Hanley: I agree with my hon. Friend. I hope that the opening of markets in Europe is the first step towards liberalisation of air transport throughout the world. There has been far too much trouble in this sector for many years. Today, we are discussing only the European market. An agreement signed only last year between Britain and West Germany means that we are now free to operate services between any points in the United Kingdom and Germany. Further agreements have been signed with Luxembourg and Belgium. The Common Market is meant to achieve such co-operation. The Bill is a further step forward to the liberalisation of this and many other sectors.

I should like to see a genuine common market in services. At the moment, we do not have that, and that is not the Common Market for which I voted. It is absurd that businesses in the other member states cannot shop around in Europe or the United Kingdom for their insurance cover, but British businesses can. The lack of competition that results from protection of markets simply means higher costs for European businesses. It is no wonder that right hon. and hon. Members say that the Common Market has failed, and it is understandable that with such restrictions it has not succeeded. That is why the Bill is before the House.

Mr. Teddy Taylor *rose*——

Mr. Hanley: I shall give way to my hon. Friend, but I make it clear that this is the last time that I do so.

Mr. Taylor: Does my hon. Friend accept that existing directives guarantee freedom in almost every sector—for example, insurance and air fares? Does he agree that what is needed is a way to ensure that the free market operates with the existing directives instead of saddling industries here and abroad with a whole parcel of new harmonising directives? Is not the problem that the existing directives are not being carried out?

Mr. Hanley: I would normally bow to my hon. Friend's excellent judgment, but it is precisely because existing directives have been proved to be ineffective that we need the Bill and must take this brave new step forward to create the common market that I believed we were introducing when we joined.

We need a more competitive climate in many sectors, particularly industry and business. The priorities are greater vigilance in preventing protectionist use of state aid and making sure that the requirements of Community law do not impose unreasonable burdens on smaller enterprises. We need growth for smaller enterprises, and the Bill will help to derestrict many of the pressures against it. We also need to create the framework for greater collaboration between companies and member states. As my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary said, our industries will never flourish to the extent that they should, and we shall not create employment to the extent that we could, nor compete effectively with the United States and Japan, without the completion of a genuine common market.

So far, most matters concerning the internal market have been subject to unanimity voting, but now qualified majority voting should apply. As this will include a policy for sea and air transport and the right to provide services freely in other member states and an agreement on common standards of industrial products, which is the key to export growth, I must support it. Unanimity will still be required for all decisions on taxation. Some of the recent lies and rumours about the effect on taxation, such as VAT on food and so on, are the arguments of the desperate. It is not in the interest of the House or of the people whom right hon. and hon. Members claim to represent to exaggerate the effect of the Bill and of the Common Market.

Unanimity is still required for taxation and for measures relating to the free movement of persons and the rights and interests of employees. Therefore, the Bill will create a more common market. As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said, the Bill is an important step towards enabling the United Kingdom to realise more fully the benefits of our membership of the EC.

Much of the criticism of hon. Members about the failure of the Common Market has been that it has not been a common market, as it needs to be if it is to succeed. The legislation takes us one step further towards a successful Common Market. Perhaps that is why right hon. and hon. Members on both sides are opposing the measure tooth and nail. The simple reason is, perhaps, that they do not want to see the Common Market succeed and would rather see Britain isolated and losing its trade. I remind the Committee that 48 per cent. of our exports go to the Common Market. Perhaps hon. Members would like us to lose our exports, which would mean lost jobs, lost confidence and lost position and authority in the world. The Bill will help to create the Common Market that we need for Britain to succeed in future.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mrs. Lynda Chalker): I am slightly surprised to be on my feet after some seven hours and 20 odd minutes of debate, during all of which I have managed to be present except for 25 minutes.

[Mrs. Lynda Chalker]

The right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) was extremely gallant towards me this morning, but I must advise him that he may kill me with his kindness. The hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) gave a comic turn which had little to do with the future of the United Kingdom or with creating opportunities for people in new industries, which is what the internal market is about. We may have had a good laugh, but it did not compare with the invitation which I shall consider most carefully from my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow). I must tell him that when I am not in the House, I regularly knock on doors in my constituency and the one thing that my constituents say to me is, "You wanted the Common Market. We voted significantly for it in the referendum. Get on with it and bring it up to date." That is exactly what is wanted.

Mr. Marlow: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mrs. Chalker: No. I cannot give my hon. Friend an answer, because I have not asked my husband yet, so he will have to be patient. *[Interruption.]* I do not think that there can be any issue related to my private life, and I shall not discuss it from the Dispatch Box.

During our debate a point that has recurred relates to the position of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. After the many months of intergovernmental conferences she said to the House:

"In my statement in this House following the last European Council in June"—

that was in Milan—

"I made it clear that we would have been ready then to take the steps necessary to complete the internal market, to improve decision taking, to formalise foreign policy co-operation and to improve procedures for consultation with the European Assembly.

Those objectives are now embodied in the conclusions of the Luxembourg European Council together with some tidying up of the treaty to reflect the Community's development.

I believe that the conclusions on completing the Common Market and reducing the burden of regulations will be of long-term benefit to British firms selling their goods and services in the European Community. Together with the arrangements to reduce the scale of Britain's budgetary contribution agreed last year, they will be an important step towards enabling this country to realise more fully the benefits of our membership of the European Community." —[*Official Report*, 5 December 1985; Vol. 88, c. 430.]

Let us have no further quibbling about where the Prime Minister stands. That is where she stands and stays on this matter.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: Does my hon. Friend accept that the Prime Minister made her position absolutely clear on 2 July 1985, when she said:

"I thought that our proposals, which would not have required treaty amendment, would be better. It is important that the internal market be completed, . . . keeping the unanimity rule."—[*Official Report*, 2 July 1985; Vol. 82, c. 189.]

Was that not the clearest statement that could have been made on the matter?

Mrs. Chalker: Sir Harold——

The Chairman: Order. I am very grateful to the hon. Lady for her compliment. I wonder whether she knows something that I do not, but I must tell her that I have not yet been knighted.

Mrs. Chalker: I am sure that it will not be long before you are, Mr. Walker, since you possess great patience.

I can tell my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) that one of the reasons why the country is so fortunate to have my right hon. Friend as Prime Minister is that she learns very fast. My right hon. Friend realised that it would be better for the country, given the agreement which the other nations were prepared to make through the intergovernmental conferences, if we enshrined the progress that we had made in this Bill. That is why the Bill is before the House today. I should have to carry out a great deal of research to discover whether my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East still says today what he said many years ago. However, he should give credit where credit is due.

Mr. Marlow: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mrs. Chalker: I have already given way. I must tell my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North that I cannot answer his question.

Mr. Marlow: I should like to ask my hon. Friend the Minister a different question. My hon. Friend said that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister had learnt something. From whom has she learnt, and what has she learnt? Did my hon. Friend the Minister teach my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, or did she learn at the same time as the Prime Minister?

Mrs. Chalker: I would never be so presumptuous as to believe that I could teach the Prime Minister anything. Obviously my hon. Friend believes that he can. Unfortunately, he does not appear to have succeeded. He should learn from reading the speeches, rather than from my taking up the time of the Committee at the Dispatch Box explaining every dot and comma to him.

The debate about the internal market has at times been interesting, and at times even stimulating. It has been a long debate, which has delved into every nook and cranny, both within the imagination and some way beyond.

Mr. Deakins: Will the Minister give way on that matter?

Mrs. Chalker: I have hardly begun to deal with the internal market. I trust that the hon. Gentleman will allow me to do so before he intervenes. I shall not give way to the hon. Gentleman. I have given way twice and I am trying, for the convenience of the Committee, to make progress.

I was asked to describe the internal market. I can tell right hon. and hon. Members that the market is defined as an area without internal frontiers in which the free movement of goods, persons, services and capital is ensured in accordance with the provisions of the treaty.

One of the advantages of the new provisions, which my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North asked about in his first speech, is an explicit commitment to remove unnecessary barriers in the market by 1992. There will also be the possibility of faster decisions on internal market matters, being made through the introduction of the qualified majority, with correspondingly reduced opportunities for one or two member states to hold up necessary measures which do not affect them.

A third advantage is that there will be a maintenance of unanimity in areas of special sensitivity to the United Kingdom, unanimity in taxation, in the free movement of individuals and in the rights and interests of employees.

A fourth advantage is that the safeguards which we have negotiated through the intergovernmental conferences in the internal market allow us to maintain high national standards of health and safety if these would be underlined by lower common standards adopted against our wishes by a qualified majority, subject of course, as at present, to the possibility of challenge before the European Court of Justice.

A fifth advantage is that the internal market provides firm ground for the maintenance of national measures to control immigration from Third world countries and to combat terrorism, crime, and the illicit traffic in drugs, art and antiques.

Other hon. Members, including the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson), asked about the impact of the internal market on this country. That perfectly fair question was asked many moons ago. I have already said that there are costs of existing barriers to trade. In fact, £6,000 million is wasted. I am sure that the hon. Member for Hamilton would not want to deny his constituents cheaper air fares on a European scale. My hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) made that point when he intervened in the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley).

Does the hon. Member for Hamilton deny that there have been benefits, in particular between Britain and Holland, in the opening up of 10 new air routes, in the reduction of the fares and in the increased percentage of passengers travelling? That has all been good for business. That, too, has brought about increased job opportunities for those who work in those increased services.

1.15 pm

Does the hon. Gentleman also think that it makes it easier to sell fares and, indeed, goods in Europe by stopping those opportunities, which will be further opened by the qualified majority voting on air transport? I cannot understand how, with his mainly sensible opinions, he can possibly have said some of the things that he did. But perhaps he, too, has learnt in the intervening hours.

I hope that the hon. Gentleman has more faith in our financial services than he illustrated previously. If he thinks that they are unable to cope, I have news for him. He should tell that to the countries which fear competition from London. Why are the Opposition, alone among European parties, blind to the interests of ordinary working people who want the freedom and opportunities that the Common Market will bring? I think his answer is that, having talked long about reform while the Labour party was in government but having achieved nothing, it cannot now bring itself to support the Government in championing the cause of prosperity and jobs in Europe. I am sorry if that is the case. I hope he will say that it is not.

Mr. George Robertson: We are the party which champions the cause of the unemployed and puts it at the top of the agenda. We do not start erecting the grand rhetorical fences on which the Minister daily sits. If she wants to use air fares as the great example of the benefits that the internal market will bring us, she must remember that the European Court of Justice announced only two weeks ago that under existing regulations the air fare cartels are illegal. So the EC does not need any more powers to bring the air fares down. It can do that under the existing powers.

Mrs. Chalker: The hon. Gentleman is right, but we need to liberalise still further. He heard my hon. Friend the Member for Richmond and Barnes say so. I was not talking simply of air fares. I was giving an example of where liberalisation has led to something better — a position which has brought about new industry, new opportunities and thereby new jobs.

There are many reasons for making the internal market our top priority. I have already mentioned that the costs to Britain and to others of not having a complete internal market, which were explained so clearly by my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary on 23 April, are against the interests of the British people. Having those barriers costs the Community £7,000 million a year. Who pays the sum in the end? It is the consumer who pays.

It cannot be in our interests to have either air fares kept artificially high or for our shipping to be denied access to the coastal trade of other member states. The cost is loaded back on to the consumer. It cannot be in our interests for our insurance and financial services, which are among the most competitive in Europe, to be denied access to the growing market. That denies the consumer choice and, therefore, the best value for money that we seek to achieve for all consumers.

My hon. Friend the Member for Faversham (Mr. Moate), who sadly is not with us today, asked whether obligations would be placed on other member states for the removal of barriers to trade. The principal change, as my hon. Friend recognised, was the introduction of qualified majority voting, but the treaty also sets the date of 31 December 1992 for the completion of the internal market.

We have never claimed that those changes will automatically break down all barriers to trade, but they create a much greater opportunity for doing so than we have had before. That is why we need to go further than using simply those possibilities under the original treaty of Rome. Hon. Members should not underestimate the political impact of these changes that were agreed by all 12 Heads of Government. The Common Market, thanks to the efforts of this Government, has put the removal of barriers to trade and industry and thereby to jobs to the top of the Community agenda. We are making a concerted effort to speed up decision taking in this and other areas so that all countries may receive the benefits.

The hon. Member for Hamilton had a little bit of fun at the expense of my right hon. and learned Friend the Paymaster General. The hon. Gentleman criticised the Paymaster General for not having worked out details of employment growth in the 1990s. The title of the document is "Strategy for Employment Growth into the 1990s". That paper was produced by the Irish, Italian and British Governments and has been submitted to the other EEC countries, which, together with the three initiators, will fill in the detail. Therefore, the hon. Gentleman was in error in describing it as lacking in detail.

The hon. Gentleman said that the Paymaster General had described much of the agenda of the Council of Ministers on the subject of social affairs as piffle. In his heart of hearts the hon. Gentleman knows full well that specialist bodies sometimes get bogged down on issues that are less than relevant to the greatest social problem facing Europe — that of unemployment. I have seen the newspaper cutting to which the hon. Gentleman referred. When such a body gets bogged down, some of the things

[Mrs. Chalker]

that it does may appear trifling, and I know that the hon. Member for Hamilton thinks that some parts of the last seven hours have been trifling.

Mr. George Robertson: The hon. Lady has chosen to comment on the speech that I made some seven hours ago. I made justified criticism of the Paymaster General. The cutting is from *The Guardian* and is headed:

"Clarke denounces EEC debate as 'piffle'."

The Guardian correspondent, Mr. Derek Brown, who is an eminent Common Market correspondent, reporting from Luxembourg, said:

"Mr. Clarke acknowledged that the paper was long on strategic aims and short on detailed proposals. He made a virtue of its imprecision saying it was meant to entice people into discussion."

Britain already has almost 4 million people unemployed. Does the Minister not think that this is a time for more detailed decision and less enticement into discussion?

Mrs. Chalker: I know that my right hon. and learned Friend the Paymaster General has already worked out the details that are needed for Britain, but when working with 11 partners it is right that we should discuss the content of something that we wish to do together. That must be discussed in detail with them, and that is why my right hon. and learned Friend awaits the filling in of the details.

In his speech, the hon. Member for Hamilton totally forgot the role of the European social fund, from which Britain has benefited substantially. In the last four years Britain has been allocated more than £1,200 million from the social fund, and our youth training scheme in particular has benefited from that fund.

Mr. Marlow: As a Conservative, can my hon. Friend tell the Committee what benefit she finds in sending money to the European Community so that it can allocate the cash for policies which we in Britain could allocate ourselves?

Mrs. Chalker: A great deal of benefit has come from combining with our European neighbours. I have worked in all three of the Government Departments that deal with the European question, and I know that many good ideas came from overseas. We have managed to put them into effect in legislation during the last seven years, and that has helped many people. That is especially true in the social field which has been helped by the European development fund. By its investment the fund has helped many out-of-date industries to become new industries.

The hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) is not in the Chamber, but that doughty fighter, the hon. Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Deakins), has been here throughout the debate. Both hon. Gentlemen asked about the rolling action programme on the internal market. The Committee knows that the Dutch, British and Belgian Governments, who hold the presidency of the Council in succession, are working closely together to make progress on the internal market agenda of the Community. The action programme which was placed in the Library is a presidency document and not a Commission proposal. The action programme is based on the proposals in the Commission's White Paper, to which reference has been made. That programme has been considered by the Scrutiny Committee. There has, therefore, been scrutiny —perhaps not so much as hon. Members would like— of that programme.

Mr. Spearing: The Scrutiny Committee may have looked at some or conceivably all of the proposals, but does the Minister agree that the proposal relating to the presidency was not available to any hon. Member and that it has not come before the Scrutiny Committee? Will she bear that matter in mind in future discussions about the role of the Scrutiny Committee?

Mrs. Chalker: I think the hon. Gentleman knows me well enough to realise that if he wants any paper that has been published he has only to ask for it and I shall make sure that he gets it.

Mr. Spearing: But it was not published.

Mrs. Chalker: At that time it had not been published, but as soon as it was placed in the Library of the House of Commons the hon. Gentleman knows that, as Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee, he would have had access to it.

Mr. Spearing *rose*——

Mrs. Chalker: I know the point that the hon. Gentleman wants to pursue.

Mr. Spearing: Oh!

Mrs. Chalker: The hon. Gentleman knows that I am conscious of the need to allow the Scrutiny Committee to examine papers. He also knows that I intend to give him as much information as possible. It is important that there should be a good Scrutiny Committee, not only in this House, but in the other place. I am not seeking to stop scrutiny, but I believe that scrutiny should be managed a little more effectively and efficiently than has hitherto been the case.

My hon. Friends the Members for Northampton, North and for Southend, East asked about the common external tariff and the impact of majority voting on the ability of the United Kingdom and the Federal Republic of Germany to protect our interests. There is no reason to fear that extension of majority voting under article 28 will lead either to more protectionist tariffs or to unduly liberal ones. Any fundamental changes in external trade policy, including the common external tariff, are a matter for decision under article 113, which already provides for majority voting. Article 28 is used for a much more limited purpose — to decide on temporary alterations or suspensions of the tariff for particular products to meet changing market conditions. Over 1,000 suspensions are made each year, usually to help European firms by enabling them to export at reduced or zero tariffs those raw materials or components that are not readily available within the European market.

It is true that more majority voting could in theory mean a majority forcing a temporary alteration on one member state, but under article 28—and I see no reason for it to change—what usually happens is that one or more member states seek temporary changes because this would be of benefit to their firms and to the Community as a whole. We shall benefit in such cases from the extension of majority voting, because it will no longer be possible for one member state unreasonably to block a tariff suspension that we want. That is completely beneficial, and I hope that my hon. Friend will take it in the spirit in which it is meant.

Sir Russell Johnston: Surely the Minister must recognise that from time to time Britain will lose. We cannot gain all the time. Majority voting means that sometimes we, too, will have to give up something.

Mrs. Chalker: The hon. Gentleman knows that from time to time life has its benefits and its disadvantages. He also knows that there are sufficient like-minded people in all 12 member states who are benefiting from the internal market to make it a success in the direction in which the 12 Heads of Government have already decided they want to go.

Mr. Marlow *rose*

Mrs. Chalker: Mr. Walker, I have been very patient. I believe that, after seven hours and 20-odd minutes of debate, I should be allowed to get through my speech for the convenience of the Committee.

The Chairman: Order. The hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) heard the Minister say that she is not prepared to give way. He must not persist.

1.30 pm

Mr. Gerald Kaufman (Manchester, Gorton): On a point of order, Mr. Walker. I am sorry to interrupt the debate, but I wish to raise a matter of great importance to one of my constituents. I refer to the guidelines of the Home Office about the rights of Members of Parliament to stop removals of relatives and friends of constituents. It is an urgent matter, otherwise I would not have interrupted the debate. I have just spoken to the Home Office on the telephone. Under the arrangements—*[Interruption.]* The matter has nothing to do with the hon. Lady the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, but it is a matter for Mr. Speaker.

The Chairman: I remind the right hon. Member that the House is in Committee. The matter that he has raised has no relevance to the proceedings of the Committee.

Mr. Kaufman: I am sorry to have inconvenienced the Committee in such a way, but the matter can only be settled this afternoon. I ask the Chair to assist.

The Chairman: As Chairman of the Committee, there is no way that I can deal with the matter. It is not relevant to the proceedings of this Committee.

Mr. Kaufman: I apologise, Mr. Walker. I would not have dreamt of intervening in the proceedings of the Committee if it were not a matter—*[Interruption.]* I am glad to hear that hon. Members do not care about human rights. I apologise for the intervention. I hope that you understand, Mr. Walker, that I would not have raised it in this way were it not a matter of great urgency. I should be grateful for your advice on how I can communicate with Mr. Speaker. Obviously, because the House is in Committee, he is the authority to whom I should appeal. I wish to communicate with him publicly, so that the treatment and misbehaviour of the Home Office regarding one of my constituents can be known.

The Chairman: I am afraid that I cannot help the right hon. Member. The House is in Committee. I am sitting in my capacity as Chairman of Ways and Means, and Chairman of the Committee. The only advice that I can offer the right hon. Member is that he should inform the Speaker's Office of the matter that he has brought before the Committee.

Mrs. Chalker: I was about to refer to the speech of the hon. Member for Walthamstow when there was that most interesting diversion. I can assure the right hon Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) that hon. Members are determined to have an interest in human rights, but not in the middle of a debate on the internal market, especially when the House is in Committee.

The hon. Member for Walthamstow knows, before I start, that we will not agree. Let us accept that we both have a point of view. The hon. Gentleman believes that he is right. He has been waging war since long before 1972, when he made a valiant effort against the Bill. The hon. Gentleman does not like the Common Market. He wishes that he could persuade his Front Bench to get this country out of the Common Market, but he has not yet succeeded in doing so.

Mr. Skinner: It is party policy to leave the EEC.

Mrs. Chalker: The party is a varied organisation, as the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) knows. However, at this moment, I am more concerned with the hon. Member for Walthamstow, if the hon. Member for Bolsover will forgive me. I am not an economist. I do not believe that the hon. Member for Walthamstow is one either. I shall not bandy figures with him. I have been through them carefully. It seems to me that the striking changes in industrial employment are symptoms of the fundamental changes in the structure of British industry that have taken place over the past 15 years as new technology has been introduced and as the patterns of international trade have shifted.

The hon. Gentleman admitted that our exporters have already greatly enlarged their share of the European market. Our deficit in manufactures has grown because our imports have grown faster than our exports. I do not seek to dispute that matter. However, we must remember that the British market has, traditionally, been an open one. The markets in Europe which our exporters must tackle are very different. Those markets have been riddled with the non-tariff barriers to British exports described so eloquently by my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East. Completing the internal market means breaking down those barriers to trade, and it means making the European markets more accessible to our exporters, not just in theory, but in practice. That is why the Government attach so much importance to the internal market.

Perhaps my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East will let me know about his problem with buses doing the last leg of journeys that start in London and go through Southend airport. My late father had the privilege and pleasure of being one of the chairmen during its development. I shall try to help my hon. Friend, but I suspect that what has happened is that it is the barrier within the internal German market that is stopping him from having the bus that he needs to continue the journey which the company he mentioned set up. I shall look into that with my hon. Friend.

Mr. Deakins: I do not agree with what the Minister says, but I understand it. I sympathise with that point of view. The hon. Lady is saying that our market has been open and the other markets have been relatively closed. I understand that, but it has always been said that it is possible for a German industrialist to come to Britain to meet half a dozen people in the retail trade—the big chain stores—and cover 80 per cent. of the British

[Mr. Deakins]

market. What is there in the completion of the internal market that will reverse that process, so that British industrialists going to Germany can see half a dozen people and cover 80 per cent. of the retail market in Germany?

Mrs. Chalker: I sincerely hope that some of the barriers to cross-border trade that our industrialists come up against — the numerous forms that are required by some European countries — will be reduced. Those are the things that are costing the Common Market £6,000 million a year in barriers that we do not need to have. That is the answer to the hon. Gentleman's question.

I could go on at some length about the EEC deficit in manufactures, but I shall not do so. We have to face the fact that improving our balance of trade in manufactures can be done only by improving competitiveness, lowering unit costs, reducing unnecessary burdens on industry and creating the conditions in which inventiveness and flair can prosper. That is exactly what this Government have been doing, and that is exactly what we want to go on doing, but at a faster rate with the completion of the internal market, which will help us, too, by breaking down other states' barriers to trade, which the hon. Member for Walthamstow spoke about.

My hon. Friends the Member for Southend, East and for Faversham also asked about the freedom of insurance services. There has been some progress. There is freedom of establishment in insurance. It is thanks to European Community directives that our insurers can set up companies in other Community countries, but they cannot sell their services direct from Britain. That is what is impeding important parts of the British insurance industry, such as Lloyd's, from furthering their markets abroad.

A German citizen or company is prohibited by German law from buying insurance on the London market. That is a major barrier to trade which the draft non-life insurance directive is intended to abolish. Progress on it has been blocked for the past few years, but we hope that, with the European Court's decision in cases now before it, we shall get the draft directive moving again and that the introduction of majority voting will make it easier for us to get it swiftly adopted.

Several other hon. Members spoke about inner German trade. As my hon. Friends know, the protocol to the treaty of Rome provides that trade between East Germany and the Federal Republic of Germany is treated as internal trade. That has been there since 1972. Article 3 of the protocol also contains provisions designed to contain conflict between the operation of the protocol and the principles of the Common Market. The Federal Republic of Germany takes steps to ensure that goods from the German Democratic Republic are not marketed in such a way that they can be confused with goods from the Federal Republic. That has been going on and will continue to go on. My right hon. Friend the Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and my hon. Friend the Minister for Trade have made considerable efforts with the Commission on the problem areas that I know my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East has. He has a constituency problem over dried eggs. We are continuing to make representations to the Commission.

My hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North was concerned about raspberry pulp dumping. My right hon. and noble Friend the Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has asked the Commission to negotiate special arrangements to prevent that.

Mr. Bill Walker: I am aware of the efforts that various Ministers have made, but to my knowledge those efforts have been going on for five years. It should be possible to prevent the dumping under existing directives, but that has not happened, and I am not sure that anything in the Bill will alter the situation.

Mrs. Chalker: If the problem is of such moment, and I agree with my hon. Friend that it is, we shall have support from our partner countries in the internal market to stop such dumping as has been occurring.

My hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East asked about cross-frontier broadcasting. The Commission's proposal has been and still is being discussed by member states. Britain wants the abolition of existing trade barriers that could prevent the export of our programmes, which are among the best in the world, but at present there is no agreement among member states that a binding directive would be appropriate, let alone that the substantive comment should be as now proposed by the Commission. We shall continue to discuss this to achieve a situation which will benefit British industry and British broadcasting.

Several hon. Members referred to qualified majority voting. Anyone who considers the figures, as my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North did in his second speech, will realise that if we move from a qualified majority of 45 out of 63 to a qualified majority of 54 out of 76 there is no change in the balance of voting and the majority remains at 71 per cent. My hon. Friend said that a blocking minority of 23 might stop us going forward, but it will be less easy to achieve than the present figure of 19. Moreover, there are occasions on which we may favour the use of a blocking minority. The extent to which it is used, however, will be very judiciously judged, because, although it may be right in some cases, there are plenty of other cases in which it would not be right. We believe that qualified majority voting is right only on certain issues, because some countries have sought to block sensible moves in the Community and in the internal market on aspects in which they are not involved in trade. Because unanimity was required, such blocking has impeded the completion of the internal market.

Mr. Marlow: I do not think that my hon. Friend has answered the substantive point, which is that an accumulation of small countries with a total population less than that of the United Kingdom can operate a blocking minority, whereas the United Kingdom and Germany together cannot do so. How can that be right?

Mrs. Chalker: Many more countries have joined the United Kingdom and Germany in most of the debates. That is part of the Community co-operation that goes on most of the time.

Many hon. Members have asked complex legal questions and I shall write to each and every one of them. I assure the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell), however, that the word "autonomous" in article

16 of the Single European Act represents no change. It has simply been carried over from article 28 of the treaty of Rome.

As for article 100A, the right hon. Member for South Down asked about the meaning of "shall". It is necessary because it empowers the Council to take measures within the terms laid down in the article, but it depends on the context whether it imposes a duty to act. The extent of that duty depends on the articles concerned, but I shall write to the right hon. Gentleman.

1.45 pm

I shall also write to others who raised similar legal issues. My hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North mentioned South Africa in regard to special action taken by the Community in trade with other countries. Such action is taken under article 113, not article 28. We already provide for decisions by qualified majority in the general provision covering the Community's common commercial policy.

I could not have followed a better speech than that made by my hon. Friend the Member for Richmond and Barnes. I congratulate him warmly on it. He has realised what the facts are and I can endorse everything that he said. Progress with the internal market is vital for the United Kingdom's trade and industry. I must mention for a third time the £6 billion cost that barriers to trade inflict on consumers in Europe. We want to get rid of them and to stop the wastage. I therefore urge my right hon. and hon. Friends to vote against the amendment.

Mr. Marlow: My hon. Friend has set out many of the advantages of the measures before us, but I do not think that she has dealt in proper detail with many of the problems that could arise. We have heard of the benefits, but not of the disadvantages.

If my hon. Friend is listening, I wonder whether she could confirm that economic sanctions could be taken against South Africa by majority voting now. I think she said that that was possible. Perhaps she could nod if it is.

Mrs. Chalker: My hon. Friend seems to be rather muddled on this issue. Any decisions will be taken by the Heads of State in the European Council working together in political co-operation. In that regard, we are not covered by article 113. As I said a few moments ago, if decisions are taken on the basis of the Community's common commercial policy, they will be taken under article 113, as already happens. There is no difference whatever.

Mr. Marlow: I thank my hon. Friend. I think she is saying that the intention is that it should be done through the Council of Ministers, with the Prime Minister there, on the basis of unanimity, but that later, if not now, it would be perfectly possible, on the basis of a recommendation from the Commission, for economic action to be taken against South Africa on the strength of majority voting even in existing circumstances.

I asked my hon. Friend whether she could deal with paragraph 3 of article 100A regarding the Commission making proposals about health. That is an important hook which could be used for introducing a wide range of policies concerning health and safety. We need to know what the Community's competence could be before we make a decision.

In what my hon. Friend called my second speech, I asked her whether she could let us know, before we voted on this group of amendments, the constitutional power of the preamble and what effect it will have in the European Court of Justice. I also asked whether she could let the House know how effective the veto would be in the political realities which would arise from the changes that the Bill would introduce and about the enhanced status that the Europan Court might or might not have from the preamble.

Mr. Deakins: I have no intention of detaining the Committee, but the Minister said twice that this debate had lasted for seven hours. If left on the record unchallenged, that assertion would give a misleading impression of events. Perhaps I may draw attention to the fact that, at any time after I sat down at approximately 12.10 am last night, when the debate had been going for three and a half hours, it would have been in order for a member of the Government or a Whip to try to catch the Chair's eye to move a closure motion. When I sat down, the Government Whip moved that we report progress, we went home and came back this morning.

When I arrived this morning, I was confidently expecting the first speech to be the closing remarks by the Minister, who did not have time last night because she was cut short. I expected that we would then proceed to a vote on the amendment.

At any time during today's debate it would have been possible for the Government Whip to seek to catch your eye, Mr. Walker, and seek permission to move the closure. That was not done. The debate has continued for twice as long as it might have done. That is the responsibility, not of right hon. and hon. Members who took part in the debate, but of the Government, who are in charge of the business.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The Committee divided: Ayes 4, Noes 84.

Division No. 236] **[1.50 pm**

AYES

du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward	
Moate, Roger	Tellers for the Ayes:
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*	Mr. Dennis Skinner and
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*	Mr. Max Madden.

NOES

Amess, David	Greenway, Harry
Ashby, David	Ground, Patrick
Ashdown, Paddy	Gummer, Rt Hon John S
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*	Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Baldry, Tony	Hampson, Dr Keith
Biggs-Davison, Sir John	Hanley, Jeremy
Boscawen, Hon Robert	Hargreaves, Kenneth
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*	Hayes, J.
Burt, Alistair	Hayward, Robert
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*	Heathcoat-Amory, David
Cash, William	Hind, Kenneth
Chalker, Mrs Lynda	Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*	Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Cope, John	Johnston, Sir Russell
Cormack, Patrick	Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Couchman, James	Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Dunn, Robert	Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Eggar, Tim	Lang, Ian
Eyre, Sir Reginald	Latham, Michael
Fallon, Michael	Lawler, Geoffrey
Favell, Anthony	Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey	Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*	Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Forth, Eric	Lester, Jim
Freeman, Roger	Malone, Gerald
Galley, Roy	Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Garel-Jones, Tristan	Merchant, Piers

Montgomery, Sir Fergus	Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Moynihan, Hon C.	Tracey, Richard
Normanton, Tom	Twinn, Dr Ian
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*	van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian	Viggers, Peter
Rhodes James, Robert	Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon	Waller, Gary
Ridsdale, Sir Julian	Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*	Warren, Kenneth
Silvester, Fred	Watts, John
Spencer, Derek	Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Stanbrook, Ivor	Wolfson, Mark
Stern, Michael	Wood, Timothy
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*	
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter	Tellers for the Noes:
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*	Mr. Peter Lloyd and
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*	Mr. Tony Durant.

Question accordingly negatived.

Mr. Marlow: On a point of order, Mr. Walker. The Leader of the House is to make a statement in 28 minutes' time, and as, for this major constitutional issue, the Government have been able to bring in only 84 hon. Members, which is about 20 per cent. of Conservative Members, do you think that the Leader of the House might wish to withdraw the Bill when he makes his statement?

Sir Edward du Cann: I beg to move amendment No. 7, in page 1, line 13, after 'Communities)', insert 'but not Article 17 thereof'.

We are now discussing tax harmonisation, a matter that must interest every citizen in the land, for, as the old saying has it, like the poor, taxes are always with us. At first sight, it may seem reasonable for the Bill to commit every member state to harmonisation of indirect taxes as far as necessary to complete the internal market. There is immense keenness within the Community on taxation. We had a directive to that effect in 1985, and this morning there is a remarkable piece in the *Financial Times* to which I should like to draw the attention of the Committee. The article, written by Quentin Peel from The Hague, says:

"The European Commission yesterday warned member states of the EEC that plans to remove all barriers to trade within the Community were falling well behind schedule."

The article went on to make a strongly worded criticism of the Council of Ministers and said that the Dutch, who at present hold the Presidency of the Commission, singled out three areas for emphasis. The first was the need to agree on tax harmonisation, described as

"an essential prerequisite for completion of the internal market."

There is immense impetus and drive behind the proposal to harmonise taxes among member states.

As hon. Members walk up and down Whitehall, one can overhear the anodyne assurances and soothing phrases, "There's nothing in this, old boy. Just a technical affair designed to ensure there are no obstacles to British exports." Such statements are invariably made by those who have never run a business in their life and who know little about practical matters. Whether imports into the United Kingdom would be facilitated is not mentioned. Indeed, while we have much talk about harmonisation of taxes, we hear too little talk about the real obstacle to trade in the Common Market—non-fiscal barriers.

Amendment No. 7 calls for the United Kingdom to be excluded from this harmonisation process. I shall try to say why right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the House believe that it should be excluded. The great advantage of these Committee debates is that they give an opportunity to question the Government and, I hope, for the Government to give clear answers. In that context, I can perhaps best proceed by putting some questions to my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs.

Are the Government content that the freedom of the British Chancellor of the Exchequer to levy taxes as he wishes should be removed? The answer must be yes or no. I presume that the answer is yes, otherwise we would not be discussing the measure. How does that square with what was said so clearly in the debates at the time of the referendum, which was that there would be no derogation from the United Kingdom's sovereignty? I remember that being said on many occasions by those who advocated our signature of the treaty of Rome. The number of occasions on which that was written in propaganda material is easily within the recollection of the House. There follows from that a question for the House: is the House content that the Commission, as opposed to the elected representatives of the British people, should decide tax levels in the United Kingdom?

Let us consider the taxation levels of the 12 member states. We have a most efficient Library staff in the House, who have been good enough to find the figures for me. They say that several European Community countries have a multiple VAT rate structure, and gave me the level of standard rates prevailing in various countries. In three countries, the standard rate is lower than in the United Kingdom: Spain has 12 per cent., Luxembourg has 12 per cent., and Germany has 14 per cent. However, seven countries have standard rates higher than ours, and some by an appreciable margin. Denmark has 22 per cent., Ireland 23 per cent., the Netherlands 19 per cent. and France 18·6 per cent. It is not simply a matter of the standard rate in the majority of the Community countries being higher than that in the United Kingdom. There are some extraordinarily high rates beyond that. For instance, in Belgium the highest rate is 33 per cent., in France 33·33 per cent. and in Italy no less than 38 per cent.

To explain these points in simple language, the majority of Commission countries have a higher standard rate for VAT than the United Kingdom. Most have multiple rates, which we do not, and a number have top rates which I believe that the majority of the British people would regard as extremely high.

May we have a categoric assurance that VAT rates will not be raised as a consequence of this Bill being enacted? I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will make a careful note of that question and give us a clear reply. Many of us are very anxious about this matter. I have already remarked that there is sensitivity among our fellow citizens in the United Kingdom about tax rates. An increase in VAT rates would undoubtedly mean a sharp rise in the cost of living, and that would be an intolerable burden for many people.

We heard earlier that the United Kingdom's contribution to the common finances of the Community is currently inadequate and that a larger slice of the VAT revenue raised in this country is required. It is inevitable that in such circumstances some of us are suspicious that it is likely that VAT rates will be raised in this country. I hope that I shall have a clear answer to that point.

I should now like to consider the range of taxation. In this country we have traditional exemptions from VAT. We have a zero rate and we have grown accustomed to food, fuel and educational material being tax free. The

House will remember the great political battles that we had over some aspects of that. There was a great battle over the question whether books and children's shoes should carry VAT. We have all taken the view that there will always be good social reasons why some commodities should be exempt from indirect taxation. It is fair to say that the House would agree that it is essential that we should retain the zero rate of taxation.

An excellent House of Commons background paper is available in the Library which states:

"One weakness in the argument to retain zero-rates is that virtually all other countries in the Community levy VAT on reading matter."

The paper states that other countries levy VAT on commodities currently untaxed in the United Kingdom. The paper continues to give the rates currently in force.

My next remarks might horrify the Committee and create great anxiety in the country. The report shows that in Ireland there is a 23 per cent. rate on newsprint. In Denmark there is a 22 per cent. rate on books. However, these countries are not exceptional. In Belgium books are taxed at 6 per cent., in France at 7 per cent., in Germany at 7 per cent., in Luxembourg at 6 per cent. and in the Netherlands at 5 per cent. Taxation on items which we would consider proper to exempt from tax is commonplace in the Community.

That is not all. It is not only books that are involved. Every other Euro state levies VAT at rates ranging between 6 per cent. and 22 per cent. on gas. What would the British citizen think if he had to pay VAT on his gas bill? Every other Euro state, except the Irish Republic, charges VAT on electricity. Again rates vary between 6 per cent. and 22 per cent. Every other Euro state except Ireland levies VAT on food, if you please, and the rates vary between 3 per cent. in Italy and 22 per cent. in Denmark.

Those are the facts; that is what everyone else does. What does harmonisation mean for us?

2.15 pm

Mr. Michael Latham (Rutland and Melton): Does my right hon. Friend realise that we do not need this legislation because Britain is already before the European Court for infraction proceedings for having failed to put VAT on building work in the industrial and commercial sector?

Sir Edward du Cann: I am much obliged to my hon. Friend as I am coming to that point in just a second and want to develop it.

I hope that I have said enough in this short address to show that the United Kingdom is the odd country out in the Community. The logic is not that the other countries of the Community will harmonise with us but that we shall harmonise with them. That is where all the pressure will be. There will not be pressure on them to adopt our zero rates. The pressure will be on us to tax gas and electricity, the commodity which my hon. Friend mentioned, newspapers, books and even food.

May we please have a categoric assurance from the Minister that if we pass the Bill the zero rate will remain valid in the United Kingdom and that we shall not tax items which are currently exempt?

I now come to my hon. Friend's point which I want to develop. The House should be aware of a written answer given by the Minister of State, Treasury on 4 March 1986. It says:

"The EC Commission has applied to the European Court of Justice for a declaration against the United Kingdom that the zero rating of certain goods and services is incompatible with the sixth VAT directive, as not being for clearly defined social reasons"—

there is an impertinence surely—

"or for the benefit of the final consumer"—

another impertinence, the Committee may think.

"The Government do not accept this contention"—

so far so good—

"and will defend the issue before the European Court"—

again, good, the Committee may think.

"It is unlikely that the case will be heard at the earliest before the end of the year."—[*Official Report*, 4 March 1986; Vol. 93, c. 94.]

My hon. Friend did a great service to the Community by drawing attention to this matter and in noting one commodity that is affected. It is not only the commodity to which he drew attention in his necessarily short intervention—the catalogue is really quite long. Let me give the Committee some of the items.

The Commission's challenge covers a wide range of supplies of goods and services—feeding stuffs, seeds, live animals yielding food for consumption—what will the farmers say to that?—sewerage services, water—apparently the Common Market wants to tax water—new services, fuel and power, to which I have already adverted, construction and buildings, to which my hon. Friend referred—what will people say when they have to pay VAT on their new house?—protective clothing and footwear—a tax on safety. What idiocy this is.

This is not the first time that the United Kingdom has been challenged on these matters. The EEC Commission first wrote to the United Kingdom on this issue in October 1981. So we have been under pressure for some time. This is not just a single aberration of an act on the Commission's part. It has been trying to destroy our zero rate for five years. The Customs and Excise notice says:

"Should the Commission's case be upheld in the European Court, in whole or in respect of individual items, the United Kingdom would be obliged to tax the supplies in question at a positive rate."

Mr. Marlow: My right hon. Friend has said that the Customs and Excise people would be obliged to do something, but Parliament can be obliged to do nothing. Parliament is sovereign and can make its own decisions on these issues.

Sir Edward du Cann: I have the greatest admiration for the judgment of my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) in normal circumstances, but on this matter he is entirely wrong. If the European Court of Justice finds against us, the Government will be obliged to abide by the judgment of the court. There is no doubt whatever about that. That is why I asked the Minister if the Government were content that the Chancellor of the Exchequer would no longer have the right on his own to decide the levels of taxation in Britain. I went on to put a second question. I asked if Parliament was content to have its right to decide these matters taken away, because up to now it is in Parliament that such decisions are ultimately taken.

Mr. Marlow: I understand what my right hon. Friend is saying and I understood him earlier. The Government might be required, and the Government can propose and put measures before the House of Commons, but the House is entitled to vote against the measures. Where do we stand then?

Sir Edward du Cann: With his unerring instinct my hon. Friend puts his finger on the precise point. The House of Commons will become impotent if we pass this legislation. That is why a number of us are keen to see that the facts are more widely advertised. This legislation is a wedge. It may be thought of as a thin wedge, but it is a wedge and before many years have gone by the small crack that it opens will become a chasm and enfin — if I may use a single word of French because I do not want to try the Committee's patience any further — we shall be relegated to the status of some sort of subordinate authority of lower grade, say, than a county council.

Mr. Spearing: Is it not notable that even the hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) was not aware of enforceable Community rights under the European Communities Act 1972? Will the right hon. Gentleman go a stage further and ask the Minister whether the sixth directive of which the right hon. Gentleman speaks and which applies irrespective of anything contained in new article 99 — because it is legislation that is already taking effect — has within it not only the power of the Commission to take the British Government to court, as it is doing, but the right to send letters to our Chancellor of the Exchequer threatening infraction proceedings? It has probably done the same thing in respect of VAT on building repairs which some time ago was a most unpopular measure brought in by the Chancellor. If those things are correct, should there not be a full statement in reply to this debate about the extent to which sixth directive letters have been received by the Government and their reaction since 1978?

Sir Edward du Cann: It may be a surprise to you, Mr. Walker, and to the Committee, but alas I am not privy to the Chancellor's in-tray and I have not seen any of his correspondence. I am unable to give the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) a direct answer to his questions, but the logic of what he says is impeccable. The Commission is able and will increasingly be in a position, if we pass the Bill, to give instructions to the Chancellor and to other Ministers.

I agree entirely with the wise and appropriate suggestion of the hon. Gentleman that it would be right for the Minister, when replying to the debate — presumably on another day — to tell us whether her understanding of the situation is the same as his. As the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) said, my hon. Friend the Minister has listened to the debate with great courtesy. She has a duty to the Committee, to the House of Commons and to the nation to answer clearly and without equivocation. One of the main reasons why Back Benchers have initiated this series of debates is to try to ensure that our countrymen and countrywomen are better informed about the realities and therefore more competent to judge the matter. When they are better informed, I believe that they will share the reservations that many of us have tried to express over the years.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for the superb way in which he is putting before the Committee this enormous danger. Action under the sixth directive places an obligation on the British Chancellor of the Exchequer to charge VAT on gas, food, electricity and water. Does my right hon. Friend agree that the danger of the new article 99 is that it imposes a further obligation to harmonise by 1992? My right hon. Friend was right when he said that the position is serious now, but the imposition of VAT on essential items for the British people will make it very much worse.

Sir Edward du Cann: My hon. Friend is entirely right, and I am grateful to him for underlining the point. When people are aware of what may happen, I am convinced that there will be an immense storm of protest. During the last few years hon. Members will have received a plethora of letters from gas and electricity consumers. People are very sensitive about these charges. The thought that VAT will be added to their gas and electricity bills, at rates as high as 20 or 30 per cent., will fill them with horror. Very few people can afford the extra money. It is said that the payment of VAT is the price of entry into the European Community, but there is a limit to the price that any of us can afford and that this House of Commons should tolerate.

If a commitment to harmonisation is included in the Bill, who will decide if it is to be implemented? I hope that my hon. Friend will be able to answer that question. I presume that the European Court will decide. I think that my hon. Friend the Minister of State confirmed this in a reply that she gave on 17 June at column 867. She said, in effect, that the European Court, on an application from the Commission, could determine whether Britain had harmonised VAT sufficiently. Is that her considered opinion? What worries so many of us is the thought that the veto, about which we have heard so much and upon which we have counted for so long, would be absolutely valueless.

As long ago as 1981 the Commission considered taking us to court for not levying VAT on gas used in business or commercial premises, but it appears from the best information that it is possible to obtain that it delayed taking action, pending the introduction of the Single European Act. Now that we have the Single European Act and now that we have been taken to court, will my hon. Friend confirm that the veto, upon which we have relied so much, is meaningless?

Let us suppose that the Commission asks the European Court to adjudicate. Let us further suppose that the court decides against us. What freedom of action would my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer then have? It seems to me that he would have no freedom of any sort. Therefore, the Bill proposes a further derogation of sovereignty. As such, it is utterly repugnant and unacceptable to me. I hope that the Committee will also find it unacceptable. My hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North made a fine speech. All hon. Members admire his constancy and the strength with which he has advocated the European cause. He has chided all hon. Members indirectly for perhaps not paying more attention to the need to control expenditure.

It being half-past Two o'clock, THE CHAIRMAN *left the Chair to report Progress and ask leave to sit again.*

Committee report Progress; to sit again on Monday next.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That—

(1) Standing Order No. 6 (Arrangement of public business), as varied by the Order [7th November], shall have effect for this Session with the following modification, namely: in paragraph (8) the word 'five' shall be substituted for the word 'four' in line 82;

(2) Notwithstanding the provisions of the Order [7th November], Private Members' Notices of Motions shall have precedence over Government business until Seven o'clock on Monday 14th July, and the ballot for these Notices shall be held after Questions on Tuesday 1st July.—*[Mr. Malone.]*

Ordered,

That at the sitting on Wednesday 2nd July, notwithstanding the provisions of Standing Orders No. 3 (Exempted business) and No. 4 (Prayers against statutory instruments, &c. (negative procedure)), if proceedings on the Motions in the name of Mr. Secretary Fowler relating to Social Security and on the Motions in the name of Mr. Neil Kinnock relating to Housing (S.I., 1986, No. 1009) and to Social Security (S.I., 1986, No. 1010 and S.I., 1986, No. 1011) have not previously been disposed of, Mr. Speaker shall at Seven o'clock put any Question necessary to dispose of any Motion which may already have been moved and shall then put forthwith the Question on such of the remaining Motions as may then be moved.—*[Mr. Malone.]*

Business of the House

2.31 pm

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a short business statement.

In view of the lack of progress made on the proceedings of the European Communities (Amendment) Bill, and following discussion through the usual channels, it is the Government's intention to table a timetable motion on the Bill this afternoon. The business already announced for next week will be amended as follows: Tuesday 1 July—At the end on Tuesday, timetable motion on the European Communities (Amendment) Bill.

I shall announce the timing of the remaining stages of the Bill in my next business statement.

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): The business statement may have been short, but it was disgraceful. It is completely unacceptable for all hon. Members.

Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that we are dealing with a constitutional measure—a measure which, at the very heart of it, to a greater or lesser extent, according to Members' judgment, transfers power from this sovereign Parliament to alien institutions in Europe, and which diminishes the sovereignty and the rights of the British people? Is it not extraordinary that we should be subjected, after such short and cursory debates—*[Interruption.]* Yes, indeed. We have had two days of debate in which hon. and right hon. Members have had little opportunity to express their deep feelings and anxieties. Is it not outrageous that we should be faced with a guillotine motion because the Government have not been able to control their own Back Benchers and to move progress, which they should have done last night but failed to do? Is it not a double outrage in that the guillotine motion has been tabled for debate on Tuesday at 10 pm? I do not believe that there is any example—I challenge the Lord Privy Seal to give one—of a Bill which has been subjected to a guillotine motion but not in prime time. It is a disgrace. I ask the right hon. Gentleman to think again.

Mr. Biffen: I quite understand the deep ambivalence that the right hon. Gentleman has towards what he calls alien institutions. Doubtless, it is shared by many of his colleagues. The real points of principle that he raised are appropriate for the debate we shall have on Tuesday.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): When the European Communities Bill 1972 was debated in the House, was there a guillotine? As this Bill does precisely the same thing as the European Communities Bill, only to a much greater extent, would it not be constitutionally inappropriate to have a guillotine on this Bill?

Mr. Biffen: The history of the House of Commons is littered with guillotines on constitutional matters.

Mr. J. Enoch Powell (South Down): Does the right hon. Gentleman recall that when the right hon. Member for Old Bexley, Old Sidcup and old everything else introduced a Bill to take this country into the European Economic Community he announced that it could not be done without the full-hearted consent of Parliament and people, and that the attempt to do so without the full-hearted consent of Parliament resulted in that Bill being forced

[Mr. J. Enoch Powell]

through this House of Commons by a guillotine? Is not the right hon. Gentleman aware – I am sure that he is, because we share the same memories – that history is repeating itself?

Mr. Biffen: Indeed, I share the same memories. I shall for ever share the affection, respect and knowledge of what I learnt from my association with the right hon. Gentleman on that occasion. However, perhaps I have a different recollection of the arithmetic. The size of the majority on the Second Reading of this Bill is in no way related to that on the Second Reading of the European Communities Bill.

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg (Hampstead and Highgate): I am sure that most people in the country will be glad that the Leader of the House has taken this decision, but does he accept that, whatever full-hearted consent may or may not have been given, it was overwhelmingly confirmed in a referendum, and those who attack it now should not admit that thought?

Mr. Biffen: I realise that my hon. Friend's intervention was well-intentioned. No one ever lightly or cheerfully undertakes a timetable motion in respect of a constitutional measure. But the very fact that constitutional measures are normally proceeded with on the Floor of the House of Commons makes them particularly susceptible to the Committee form of debate. So I happen to believe that the best protection of the interests of the House and thereby the interests of the British people does not lie with referendums or anything else; it lies in a perceived judgment as to how best we can co-operate with our fellow nation states and whatever alliances we choose to undertake.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): Will the Leader of the House reconsider his remarks about the pace of progress in view of the facts? Will he confirm the following: that in the past 24 hours there have been three groups of debates, the first relating to the transfer by statute of powers from this House to the European Parliament, the second relating to the imposition of harmonised legislation on the United Kingdom without Royal Assent, by majority voting of the Council of Ministers, and the third relating to the prospect of value added tax on gas and food, which has just been raised by the right hon. Member for Taunton (Sir E. du Cann)? In view of the important nature of each of the three matters that have been discussed so far, how far did the right hon. Gentleman take that into account when he decided to make the announcement concerning a guillotine before the Committee's next sitting?

Mr. Biffen: The hon. Gentleman fairly raises some points that must be central to the debate that we have on Tuesday. I hope that he will not regard it as a discourtesy to him or to the House if I say that those arguments belong more properly to Tuesday.

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): As the Leader of the House will accept, there are seven groups of amendments to come, all covering important issues, of which the harmonisation of VAT is only one. Between now and tabling the motion, will my right hon. Friend consider the possibility of dividing whatever time the Government are willing to make available equally among the seven issues so that we do not have one grand debate followed by a series of votes without all the issues being considered? I appreciate that the best thing is to get everything covered, but between now and tabling the motion will my right hon. Friend consider dividing up the time in that way so that all those vital issues are discussed in a limited way?

Mr. Biffen: I take note of what my hon. Friend says. I know too well that he has genuinely attempted to add a constructive nature to the debate. I believe that much the most appropriate point at which to consider those matters and to come to a decision is when the motion is considered on Tuesday.

Mr. Ron Leighton (Newham, North-East): Is the Leader of the House aware, contrary to what was said a moment ago, that in the referendum it was stated clearly by the Government of the day that no important new policy could be agreed to by a British Minister without the agreement of a British Minister answerable to the House – in other words, that there would be unanimity? That is being removed in large measure by the Bill. Does the right hon. Gentleman also recall that, when we considered the Bill for direct elections to the European Assembly, it was said that to give extra powers to the Assembly would need fresh legislation? Is not this that fresh legislation? If it is, should it not be properly scrutinised as it is a major constitutional measure?

Mr. Biffen: Yes, and clearly the House will have to judge whether the quality of the scrutiny hitherto conferred in the Committee meets the criteria that the hon. Gentleman has stated. Above all, however, those are arguments to be made on Tuesday.

Mr. Peter Viggers (Gosport): Does my right hon. Friend agree that no hon. Member is likely to change his view of the Bill at this stage and that if a further month were allocated there would still be complaints about foreshortening the debate, so the time has now come to move on?

Mr. Biffen: I note what my hon. Friend says and appreciate the helpful intent.

Mr. Michael Foot (Blaenau Gwent): Will the Leader of the House now answer the question put to him by my right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) which he has so obviously avoided thus far? Can he cite any previous occasion when a guillotine motion has been proposed for discussion at the time of day that he has proposed? Have not all such motions, particularly those affecting constitutional measures, been fully discussed in proper time? Will the right hon. Gentleman reconsider the matter? Does he agree that it would be disgraceful for the Government, having failed to mobilise sufficient people to get their measure through yesterday, to force it through by means of a guillotine measure and quite exceptional procedures?

Mr. Biffen: Anyone with the authority and expertise of the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) in despatching five guillotines in one day deserves to be attended to with care and courtesy, but these matters can best and properly be debated on Tuesday.

Mr. Eric Deakins (Walthamstow): Why was there a six-week delay between Second Reading and bringing the Bill before a Committee of the whole House?

Mr. Biffen: There is nothing extraordinary about that period of delay or about a measure of constitutional significance requiring and receiving appropriate formal and informal consultation. There are no problems about that. The problems have arisen since the Committee stage.

Mr. Patrick Thompson (Norwich, North): Does my right hon. Friend agree that a much better debate would have been possible, before or after the guillotine motion is passed, if the House had voted in favour of time-tabling the Standing Committee stages of all public Bills?

Mr. Biffen: My hon. Friend invites me to reminisce about an occasion now past and beyond recall, but no doubt this issue will be taken into the folklore and evidence to be argued when that matter next comes before the House.

Sir Russell Johnston (Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber): Can the hon. Gentleman give us any idea how much time will be allocated?

Mr. Biffen: That is a matter for consideration on Tuesday.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): Does my right hon. Friend agree that it would be realistic and constitutional to ensure that there was a short guillotine debate followed by a reasonable time for those hon. Members so far deprived of the opportunity to speak as a result of a filisbuster to speak on a number of extremely important issues? Does he agree that it would be appropriate to allow about an hour for the guillotine debate and the remainder of the time under Standing Order No. 46 for the debate on those issues?

Mr. Biffen: I do not wish to add any comment that might exacerbate the divisions between those who have been seeking to take part in the debate. My hon Friend makes an understandable comment, but I must say again that we shall be able to take account of all those factors on Tuesday and the House will then be able to make a decision.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Can the right hon. Gentleman cite any previous occasion when the guillotine motion has been moved not just at 10 o'clock at night but after a debate in which the closure has not been moved by the Government? I was always under the impression — no doubt "Erskine May" will confirm this — that guillotines were introduced when there was difficulty getting legislation through. Even on the second day of these proceedings and after a fairly long debate the Government could muster no more than 84 Common Market slaves to support them in the Lobby, so they failed to achieve the required 100. Will the right hon. Gentleman examine the record to see whether a guillotine has ever been moved without a closure having been moved as a result of a possible filibuster?

The truth is, as the right hon. Gentleman probably knows, that the debate has taken place against a background of hostility to the Common Market which fits in with the views of most people outside. It is a sad state of affairs when the right hon. Gentleman, who voted with me and my hon. Friends 36 times out of 36 against the lousy, rotten Common Market in the first place, finds himself moving a guillotine motion to allow a bankrupt Common Market to continue using British taxpayers' money when there are so many decent, wonderful things we could do with that money instead.

Mr. Biffen: The hon. Gentleman can make a speech whereas the Leader of the Social Democratic party cannot even scrape together a point of order. I congratulate him on that. Those who live near the woods learn not to be scared of owls.

I am in some ways grateful for the hon. Gentleman's rather touching concern that there should be greater use of the closure by the Patronage Secretary. It is just possible, in the rather more liberal regime with which my right hon. Friend is associated, that he hoped that all of those who engaged in loquaciousness would learn to repent of their characteristic and that that was why he was unwilling to move the closure.

Mr. Jerry Hayes (Harlow): Does my right hon. Friend agree that it would be rather foolish to pretend that there have not been delaying tactics, which is perfectly legitimate for hon. Members who feel deeply about something? Does he further agree that, so that right hon. and hon. Members might have a full opportunity of debate, it would be appropriate, if the House agrees, to decide the timetable motion on the nod?

Mr. Biffen: These are matters for the House. I am certain that, if it was resolved that it would be better to have timetabling resolved on the nod, there would be that much more time for debate of the substantive motions. These are not matters which the Government would wish to impose, but if it was the will of the House the Government would be most happy to react.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): My right hon. Friend will be aware that several of us have sat throughout the Committee stage and made very short speeches as we care deeply about what is happening. Is he aware that there will be some anxiety in the country that the House is not according proper importance to the timetable motion, not because it is the wrong thing to do — I believe that it is the right thing to do — but because of the time of day for which it is proposed? The time can be used to our disadvantage. That should have been borne in mind. I believe, however, that a timetable would be to the benefit of the House and good debate.

Mr. Biffen: I much appreciate the fact that my hon. Friend has drawn the House's attention to the fact that this is a problem which generates deep and passionate conviction. That necessarily colours the type of debate that we have had. As to how we can best proceed under the general guidance of a timetable motion, the matter is one for Tuesday's debate. I look forward to what my hon. Friend will have to say then.

Immigration (Members' Representations)

2.48 pm

Mr. Gerald Kaufman (Manchester, Gorton): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I am grateful to you for allowing me to raise a point of order which arises out of a case involving a constituent, which affects the rights of every right hon. and hon. Member.

Earlier this week the Home Secretary ruled that a relative of one of my constituents should be removed from the country under the Immigration Act 1981. New evidence was provided to me by that person's wife and father-in-law. As a result, I today notified the Home Office that further representations were on their way within the time scale laid down by paragraph 9 of the guidelines that have been debated in the House.

This afternoon, my secretary notified the Home Secretary's Private Office that such representations were on their way. A civil servant in the Home Secretary's Private Office, Miss Pelham, said that she could not accept the representations, nor could she agree to stop the removal of the person, which is timed for Sunday, and so today is the last day on which I can take action.

I spoke to this person and told her that it was not for her, a civil servant, to make a decision which the Secretary of State must make both under the Act and within the guidelines which the Government put before the House for approval. However, this lady was adamant that she would not accept my representations and that she did not regard as "compelling"—the word used in the guidelines—the evidence that I presented on behalf of my constituent. I made it clear to her that I did not regard it as the function of the Minister's Private Office to make adjudications upon the merits of material which the Secretary of State should consider. She refused to budge and said that she would not do that which is required under the guidelines in such circumstances—to put a stop on the removal of the person. I had to advise the lady that my only recourse, because of the time, was to advise the person to ignore the notice for removal, since the procedures laid down by the House had not been observed. I also said that I intended to bring the matter before the House.

The case to which I refer involves a constituent, but the guidelines operate for every hon. Member. If constituents are to be penalised when hon. Members are alleged not to have observed the guidelines, and at the same time civil servants, without consultation with Ministers and without accepting representations from Members, ride roughshod over the guidelines, what on earth are the rights of Members of Parliament?

Mr. Speaker: That is not a matter for me, but I have allowed the right hon. Gentleman to make his point.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. You will recall that I have drawn similar matters to your attention in the past and you have said that they are not matters for you. Our rights to prevent the removal of our constituents are some of the most important rights held by hon. Members. Knowing your constituency, Mr. Speaker, I imagine that you have exercised your rights in this respect. Under the new guidelines, further representations are accepted only if the evidence is new and compelling, and made within four days. If they are not, the person is removed.

On the basis of the case put by my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman), and of many others, and because the number of people refused entry into the country has increased by more than one third in the last year, I appeal to you to reflect on the matter. We are talking about one of the most important rights of Members of Parliament. The Home Office clearly wishes to remove those rights entirely. I ask you to reconsider the matter, to ensure that our rights are fully protected.

Mr. Speaker: I thank the hon. Gentleman, but I do not have an option to reconsider, because this is not a matter for the Chair. I have allowed these important points to be made, but we must move on.

Petty Officer John Black

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn. — *[Mr. Malone.]*

2.54 pm

Mr. Michael Latham (Rutland and Melton): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for his presence today. I am raising the distressing case of Petty Officer John Black on behalf of his mother and stepfather, Mr. and Mrs. K. Crane of Melton Mowbray. Both Defence and Foreign Office Ministers have been in correspondence with me about the case and I have asked several private notice questions. I have also had two meetings with Foreign Office Ministers, one accompanied by the parents. I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Enfield, North (Mr. Eggar) for his kind and helpful reception of my constituents and myself.

There are a few undisputed facts. Petty Officer Black, who was stationed at the time at HMS Dolphin at Gosport, was in Spain on leave with a friend, Miss Patricia Jeffs, on Christmas eve 1983. On or about Christmas day, he died in the apartment in Sabinillas which Miss Jeffs was renting. On either 26 or 27 December, Miss Jeffs reported to neighbours that Mr. Black was dead. The police came and Miss Jeffs was arrested and held in custody for a time before being released without charge.

Two Spanish pathologists carried out post mortems and an analysis of Mr. Black's blood. His body was brought back to Britain on 11 January 1984 and a post mortem was carried out by a British pathologist, Dr. Peter Puller, who is now dead.

A Spanish judge ruled at Estepona on 10 May 1984 that death was caused by acute carbon monoxide poisoning, the source of it being unknown. Twelve months later on 22-23 May 1985, an inquest was held at Portsmouth. After hearing testimony, which included evidence from two Spanish pathologists and from Miss Jeffs, the jury reached a majority verdict of unlawful killing.

On 3 December 1985 the British embassy in Madrid presented a formal note to the Spanish Government on the case, and on 30 April 1986 the Spanish Government replied. The gist of their note was that the case had not been closed, but that there was insufficient evidence to accuse anyone of Mr. Black's death. That is how matters stand.

A British submariner, aged 25, a very fit young man, tall and physically strong and an excellent sportsman, has been unlawfully killed. No one has been charged with his murder and justice has not been done. My aim today is to urge the British Government that pressure should be kept on the Spanish in this matter, which has brought immense grief to Mr. and Mrs. Crane.

The case throughout has been the subject of much rumour and speculation. For example, the *Daily Express* of 24 November 1984 referred to reports that Spanish police had suggested that Mr. Black died because of some work that he had done in Britain involving gaseous substances entering his body.

Other press reports allege that British naval intelligence officers had cleaned the flat before allowing Miss Jeffs to report the death. Gibraltar was said to be full of rumours that she was a spy. The *Daily Mirror* of 23 May 1985 said that Mr. Black was a member of the crew of HMS Conqueror which sank the Belgrano.

On 25 May 1985, the *Leicester Mercury*, which has taken a close and sensitive interest in the case, spoke of the apparent lack of a determined investigation by the Spanish authorities. In letters to me, the Spanish embassy has been formal and courteous, but certainly not over-helpful. An unnamed Spanish detective was quoted by the *Leicester Mercury* on 30 May 1985 as saying that a major blunder has been made in the case by the Civil Guard.

All attempts by Mrs. Crane's solicitors to retain Spanish lawyers to assist have been unsuccessful. The Cranes felt that they did not get proper help from the Foreign Office when they flew to Spain after hearing of Mr. Black's death and they were unable to see his body. At the British inquest, Detective Chief Inspector Paul Blaker expressed public dissatisfaction with the co-operation that he had received from the Spanish authorities.

Let us deal with the rumours in the hope that we can dispel them. In a letter to me on 6 July 1984, my noble Friend the Minister of State for Defence Procurement, Lord Trefgarne, said:

"There is no truth in the assertion of a cover-up".

He also said that there were

"no security implications in John's tragic death."

Ministers have told me that Mr. Black was based at the shore base of HMS Rooke in Gibraltar throughout the Falklands conflict and that he was on leave from the submarine school HMS Dolphin when he died. It was said at the inquest that he had served on HMS Revenge and HMS Sovereign, two sea-going submarines.

In the interests of getting to the bottom of the rumours, I ask my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary these direct questions. First, was Mr. Black engaged at any time in any intelligence work in Spain or on such work in Gibraltar which took him into Spain?

Secondly, can my hon. Friend comment on the alleged Spanish rumours that Mr. Black had been affected by gaseous substances during his work for the Royal Navy? Miss Jeffs was quoted by the Spanish judge in Estepona during the May 1984 hearing. He reported that

"on one occasion John had told her in confidence that he had suffered from troubles connected with radioactivity on the submarine on which he was serving, but he never told her the whole truth, always maintaining it was secret."

If there is any basis for that claim, it must appear in his naval medical records. What is the true position?

Thirdly, at the British inquest, the Spanish pathologist, Dr. Gonzales, said that the police in Gibraltar refused to give any information to the Spanish police about the five visits that Mr. Black and Miss Jeffs made to Gibraltar between 16 and 24 December. He added:

"This is something that very much surprised the Spanish police and myself. There are many details that have puzzled the police."

In a letter to me dated 16 September 1985, my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State wrote:

"There is no evidence to support the Spanish allegations. The Gibraltar police have made a careful check of their records and confirm that they received no approach from the Spanish authorities about this death, nor did they receive any reports on the case."

As there is no reason why Dr. Gonzales made up this allegation, he must be repeating what the Spanish police told him. What is the truth about this? Was there liaison between the two police forces about this, or not? There must be records about that as well.

Fourthly, did any British intelligence personnel tell Miss Jeffs to keep quiet about the cause of his death or

[Mr. Michael Latham]

clean her flat before she reported his death? Were any British intelligence personnel involved at all? If so, in what capacity? Did any of them visit her flat during the crucial period 25 to 27 December?

Fifthly, in view of the persistent statement of lack of co-operation by the Spanish authorities, are the Government satisfied that the contents of the British diplomatic note have been adequately investigated? The British note contained 60 sheets of annexed paper, including a transcript of the inquest and a detailed commentary of the Cranes' solicitor. The reply that I have seen is fewer than two sides of paper and does not contain anything about the grave issues emerging from the inquest or the commentary. Have the Spanish really investigated this? Do they want to find the truth? Are they co-operating now with the British police?

At the British inquest, the coroner first tried to steer the jury away from an unlawful killing verdict, but it returned one after 25 minutes. I would have done the same on the evidence presented to the court. Chief Inspector Blaker described it as a "most suspicious death".

Without acting as judge and jury, I will now record open testimony given in public at the inquest which merits further investigation.

Miss Jeffs said that on Christmas eve 1983 she and John Black went out for the day and had little to eat and drink. John had had a beefburger and chips and she had had a few chips. However, she told the Spanish police that they went to several bars, had drinks at several of them, returned to her flat at 9 pm, ate some York ham and possibly had a drink or two more. Her friend, Fiona Burke, who bailed her out of jail on 4 January 1984, said that Pat Jeffs had told her that she had drunk a lot. Miss Jeffs denied this at the inquest.

Miss Jeffs' friend, Mr. Tony Taylor, quoted her as saying that they had returned to the flat at about midnight and that both she and Mr. Black felt ill. She had gone to bed and Mr. Black had decided to take a bath. Miss Burke also quoted Miss Jeffs as saying that she felt ill and went to bed. Miss Jeffs did not say that at the inquest. Instead, she said:

"It was my intention to lie down before going out in the evening . . . John did not complain about feeling unwell."

The Spanish pathologist made several points about Mr. Black. His stomach contained some white beans. In the kitchen there was a small casserole where there were the same white beans. Next, he was in a "contented state" from alcohol but not really drunk. There were also some barbiturates in his body which could have increased the feeling of contentment. Mr. Black's body was found on 27 December in an empty bath with the plug not in place. A streak of blood was coming from his nose. His right arm was on his chest, his left behind his back. However, his hands and feet looked as if he had been in water for some time. The soles of his feet were marked and stained as if he had been walking without any shoes. There was a violent wound to his right shoulder, which could not have been caused by any fall. There were grazes on the front of his body as if done after death. How did those wounds happen?

Mr. Black's body contained an exceedingly high level of carbon monoxide—72 per cent. level in the blood. This carbon monoxide was not accidental. It was not a domestic accident. It could not have been caused by a domestic water heater in the flat. He died too quickly for the heater to have been the cause, and the level of carbon monoxide was too high. He absorbed the fatal amount very quickly.

Other points from the inquest also caused concern. There is an unexplained 24 hours. Miss Burke said that she was telephoned in England on 26 or 27 December by a neighbour who told her that John Black was dead and that Pat Jeffs was in gaol. Miss Jeffs said that she went to the neighbour's on 26 December after she had tried to wake John whom she had discovered at about 2 am on Christmas day naked in the bath. She was suffering from diarrhoea and could not walk. She was feeling ill. She had not been unconscious for 48 hours. The police and pathologists went to the flat on 27 December. The pathologists found some air fresheners placed in each room. Who put them there? Did anyone enter the flat between Miss Jeffs going to bed at 9 pm on Christmas eve, waking at 2 am on Christmas day and allegedly discovering Mr. Black in the bath, and the arrival of the police on 27 December? Who was it and why? The pathologists said that there was diarrhoea in the flat when they arrived and that it had been scrubbed. By whom?

Miss Jeffs had some significant injuries. She had bruises on her left foot, left and right knees, round her genitals and buttocks, on both hips and elsewhere. The Spanish pathologists said that such wounds came from some sort of violent action. They did not correspond with any simple fall. Miss Jeffs said that she felt paralysed, kept stumbling about, dragging herself around and falling over. Fiona Burke quoted Miss Jeffs as saying that while she was ill she fell out of bed on to the floor, causing injuries to her right hip and leg which caused her to limp. It is not easy to reconcile those two sets of testimony by the medical experts and Miss Jeffs. One wonders if all the relevant details have come to light.

I have deliberately concentrated on matters in the public domain, stated in court, and available to anyone who had read a transcript or press reports of the inquest. It is entirely fair to say that Miss Jeffs attended the inquest, gave lengthy evidence and that the British police described her as "very co-operative". Other people whose testimony was read out in court did not attend because they were abroad. The coroner drew public attention to the fact that the agent involved in selling a flat in Spain to Mr. Black, Lieutenant Commander (retired) L. Ayling, who operated from Gibraltar, had declined to make a statement or to come to the inquest. Therefore, not all the possible testimony is available, nor has it been subjected to cross-examination.

Obviously there are major inconsistencies and grave features in this case. I have not dealt with all of them, only the more notable ones.

I wish to return to the crucial aspect. A capable, fit and promising young British submariner has been dead for two and a half years. He died in Spain, suddenly and suspiciously. A British jury has found that he was unlawfully killed—that is, either murdered or as a result of manslaughter. Medical experts say that he died suddenly of a massive dose of carbon monoxide poisoning. That alone should surely have galvanised the Ministry of Defence. Why has it not been constantly demanding action to discover the killer or killers of one of its service men and to bring the person or persons to justice? Should they not have been at the forefront of those demanding action

Why has it been left to the *Leicester Mercury*, to me, to the Foreign Office and, above all, to Mr. Black's grieving mother to demand action and the truth?

None of us can accept that the Spanish authorities have done enough to bring the guilty to justice. Nor can we be happy that the British Government have acted sufficiently speedily or energetically. It is most distressing to hear statements from our police that the Spanish police have been unco-operative. It is disappointing that initially I had to approach the British Legion and other service charities to try to get money to pay for the transcript of the British inquest to be translated into Spanish, until the Ministry of Defence finally agreed to pay the £800 or so. It is also deeply regrettable that the Cranes have had to spend a lot of money, which they can ill afford, on legal help to find out how their son died.

British Ministers should tell the Spanish Government, now our NATO and EEC ally, that they have not done anything like enough. We cannot accept their brief diplomatic response. They should leave no stone unturned to bring the case to a proper conclusion. The Ministry of Defence and the Foreign Office should offer all facilities and information to help them in their task. My hon. Friend, as Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces, must have a deep interest in the welfare of British service men and their families. I look to him to reply positively today.

3.9 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. Roger Freeman): I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Latham) who has raised the subject of the tragic death of Petty Officer John Black, Royal Navy, in Spain in December 1983. My hon. Friend has been diligent and thorough in his examination of this sad case, and I am glad that he has brought this matter to the House for debate today on behalf of his constituents. I can assure him that, although I come new to this matter, it will have my close and continuing attention. May I also tell my hon. Friend that I appreciate the deep anguish felt by Petty Officer Black's mother, Mrs. Crane, over the death of her son. I join my ministerial colleagues and my predecessor in conveying our deep condolences to her.

I want to be as helpful as I can to my hon. Friend, and perhaps I should deal first with Petty Officer Black's naval duties and responsibilities, and then with the Spanish legal proceedings concerning the investigation of his death. My hon. Friend has raised many detailed points and I shall read the *Official Report* with great care. I shall write to my hon. Friend on the matters that I do not cover in my speech.

I should like, first, to deal with Petty Officer Black's naval responsibilities. He served in the Navy for some seven years, joining at the age of 18. He had a normal career and served for much of that time as a rating in the submarine service. On 26 April 1982 he had a routine posting to HMS Rooke at Gibraltar as a leading seaman. He left on 19 July 1983, after serving there for about 15 months, to go as a matter of normal career development to HMS Dolphin at Gosport to complete a course as a petty officer. Petty Officer Black returned to Spain on leave at Christmas 1983 while still serving with HMS Dolphin at Gosport.

In response to some of the major points raised by my hon. Friend about Petty Officer Black's naval career and responsibilities, I should like to state first, in relation to his medical fitness, that I confirm that he served in Her Majesty's submarines in the normal course of his duties. When he went to Gibraltar in April 1982, he was perfectly fit and well.

Secondly, Petty Officer Black was in Gibraltar, as I have said, from April 1982 to July 1983 and he was not involved in the Falklands campaign. His period of service in Gibraltar, as the House will appreciate, covered the period of the Falklands campaign.

Thirdly, in relation to his work in Gibraltar, I can tell the House that he was involved in the collation of classified information at HMS Rooke, but no more than any other rating of his rank or branch would be expected to do. During his posting to Gibraltar he qualified as a petty officer and performed all his duties well. I wish to emphasise, as my predecessor the then Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces stated in a letter to my hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton on 6 July 1984, that there was nothing out of the ordinary about Petty Officer Black's work. The one sentence in that letter which may be relevant states:

> "I assure you and the parents that there is no truth in the assertion of a 'cover-up' and that there are no security implications in John's tragic death."

I re-emphasise and underline that point.

My fourth point concerns Lieutenant Commander Ayling, a retired naval officer. Lieutenant Commander Ayling is an estate agent in Spain and was involved with Petty Officer Black simply because Petty Officer Black wanted to buy a flat. Miss Jeffs, with whom he was staying on Christmas leave, was already renting a flat in the same locality and the police used Lieutenant Commander Ayling and his Spanish wife, who were well known local residents, in their interviews with Miss Jeffs.

The Navy did not know about the death of Petty Officer Black until 27 December, that is to say, until after the police began investigating the death. I can tell my hon. Friend that no Navy or Foreign and Commonwealth Office officials have ever been in the apartment in which Petty Officer Black was found dead.

Secondly, let me deal with the other aspect of my hon. Friend's speech and the points that he raised about the proceedings in Spain and the inquest procedure in Spain and in Portsmouth. My hon. Friend said that, following the initial investigation by the police, Spanish pathologists gave as their opinion to the judge involved in the case that the cause of death was carbon monoxide poisoning from a source or sources unknown. The judge in charge of the case, who is an obviously independent judicial authority, decided that there was no one to be accused in this case and therefore no proceedings were commenced against any party or parties concerning the sad death of Petty Officer Black.

At the British inquest held in Portsmouth, we know that the jury returned a verdict of unlawful killing, as my hon. Friend said, and that the Spanish pathologists—the same pathologists—gave further evidence. The Ministry of Defence paid for the translation of the inquest verdict and proceedings, and that was sent to the Spanish judge. He concluded that no new evidence had been presented concerning the case. Therefore, the position as far as the Spanish authorities are concerned is that the case is still open and will be looked at again if new evidence is presented by the Spanish police authorities or, indeed, by private proceedings initiated by the family of Petty Officer

[Mr. Roger Freeman]

Black, with new evidence to produce. It is only on the basis of new evidence being presented that further proceedings can be pursued.

Let me deal, in response to my hon. Friend's speech this afternoon, with what the Ministry of Defence can do to assist my hon. Friend's constituents. First, the Ministry of Defence will answer in detail, and as comprehensively as we can, any questions that my hon. Friend cares to put to us. As I have said already, I and my officials will study the *Official Report* of this afternoon's proceedings with great care, and I also know that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office will ensure that any new evidence available to us will be presented to the appropriate Spanish authorities.

In specific response to my hon. Friend's submission this afternoon, I have today instructed officials at my Ministry to review all the documents again afresh to see whether there is any new evidence that could be brought to the attention of the Spanish authorities. That review, coupled with any new evidence that can be brought by my hon. Friend on behalf of the family, or submitted directly by the family or their legal representatives, will enable us to decide whether there is fresh evidence that can and should be presented to the Spanish authorities. I can assure my hon. Friend that, if that is the case, that evidence will be presented promptly and properly.

However, I must tell my hon. Friend that this matter is one for the Spanish authorities to decide whether it is to be pursued further and charges brought. I am sure that he will accept that. The Spanish judiciary is an independent authority, and it is for it to decide, on the basis of fresh evidence produced, whether to take the matter further.

This is a sad case, and I repeat what I said at the outset. I regret the tragic death of Petty Officer Black and ask my hon. Friend to convey to Mrs. Crane, Petty Officer Black's mother, our sorrow and understanding in this matter.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at seventeen minutes past Three o'clock.

House of Commons

Monday 30 June 1986

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

WALES

Hospital Waiting Lists

1. **Mrs. Clwyd** asked the Secretary of State for Wales what action he intends to take to seek to reduce hospital waiting lists in *(a)* Mid Glamorgan and *(b)* other area health authorities in Wales.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Mark Robinson): In support of the responsibility which all district health authorities, including Mid Glamorgan, have for managing their hospital waiting lists, a workshop was held on 9 April to identify problems, analyse the reasons for them and to provide solutions. Another will be held in the autumn to review progress achieved.

In addition, the announcement of the establishment of a Welsh Office catalyst team was made at the April workshop with the aim of helping authorities to target the main problems identified and to indicate appropriate measures that can be taken to reduce waiting times. Preliminary results of this work have already highlighted certain immediate steps which could be taken in individual authorities to reduce waiting lists. Although the cost of this can be substantially met by district health authorities within existing resources, I am prepared to support measures, with special financial provision, that will help make an early start on the specific problems identified. Health authorities, including Mid Glamorgan, will now be notified of this initiative, which I am taking this opportunity to announce.

Mrs. Clwyd: We must welcome any new initiative from the Welsh Office, particularly if it means giving extra funds to the hard-pressed health authorities, and I hope that the Minister will spell that out in some detail. The problems of social deprivation, high unemployment and all the other factors that make Mid Glamorgan a special case have been spelt out to the Welsh Office time after time. The high levels of people waiting for in-patient and out-patient hospital treatment are completely unacceptable. I press the Minister again to make substantial resources available to Mid Glamorgan to meet its special needs.

Mr. Robinson: It is precisely because of our concern about waiting lists that I have today announced this initiative. It is an initiative for the current year and its purpose is to speed measures which we believe have been identified and can be taken by district health authorities, and I am glad that the hon. Lady welcomes that fact.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: I particularly welcome my hon. Friend's initiative for pursuing the waiting lists in Wales, but may I press him a little further on the analysis of the existing position? How much of the increase in the waiting lists is due to what I would call new demand for treatments which were either not available before 1979 or certainly not as widely as now and of which we should be proud?

Mr. Robinson: My hon. Friend is right. There are a variety of reasons for the growing waiting lists, which is a rate of growth that we inherited. There have been 450,000 more patient attendances than in 1979, looked after by an 18 per cent. increase in front-line staff, including 4,000 more nurses.

Mr. Geraint Howells: Can the Minister explain to the people of Wales why there is a need for waiting lists at all in 1986?

Mr. Robinson: The key thing that we must concentrate on is not so much the waiting list as waiting time—the length of time that people have to wait when they enter hospital for acute and routine surgery. People have to wait because there is considerable pressure of demand on our health services, which will always be there. The pressure comes from the fact that there is a growing public expectation of what the Health Service can provide, and that is very clear.

Mr. Rowlands: What does the Minister say about the system by which a patient goes to see a consultant and is told that he or she has to wait for 18 months before an operation can take place, and the same consultant then offers to do the same operation for £1,000 a mere 20 miles down the road? Will the workshop system and the review that the Minister is to undertake cover that sort of thing, so that we have full-time consultants working in a full-time Health Service?

Mr. Robinson: Clear guidelines are laid down for private practice and it is not possible to queue jump by, first, seeking an early consultation, and then queue jumping for provision through the National Health Service.

Mr. Barry Jones: The Government have been too complacent for too long. How speedily will the Minister move to assist the cancer patients of north-east Wales, who must travel to England for treatment, and who experience long waiting times for initial treatment? The journey to Clatterbridge hospital in the Wirral is difficult and lengthy at certain times of the year. Have not waiting lists risen by more than 8 per cent. throughout Wales during the past year? Does the hon. Gentleman know that almost 130,000 Welsh people await treatment of some kind, and that in many areas of the Welsh Health Service more people wait for treatment each year than receive it? The Minister has dawdled long enough. He must bring forward measures for new money speedily.

Mr. Robinson: I thought that I had just announced new measures for more money and a special initiative. Between 1974 and 1979 the rate of increase was 7 per cent. Today it is still 7 per cent. Similarly, the figure for out-patients was then 55 per cent. while today it is 53 per cent. The story is not quite as bleak as the hon. Gentleman would like us to believe.

The hon. Gentleman raised the important issue of cancer services in north Wales. As he knows, we have

conducted our own inquiry, which has resulted in a consultation paper, which was recently issued. We now expect responses to that.

Rate Support Grant

2. **Mr. Raffan** asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the redistribution of the underclaimed rate support grant.

The Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Nicholas Edwards): Following discussions with leaders of local authorities in Wales, I announced on 20 February that £13 million of underclaimed grant would be recycled to county councils. Rate bills in Wales were reduced as a result by 5p in the pound on average. I have now decided to recycle the remaining balance of underclaimed grant which presently amounts to £5 million. I expect this to be used to reduce the rate call in 1987-88.

Mr. Raffan: Bearing in mind my right hon. Friend's words, that those county councils that succeed in making savings will receive a higher proportion of the remaining grant, and as Clwyd alone has co-operated and done so, how much will Clwyd receive?

Mr. Edwards: Clwyd increased its overall share of the total grant available, and my decision to recycle in full will give the county £2·6 million more grant than it initially claimed.

Mr. Wigley: Is the Secretary of State aware that there is a crying need, particularly in the rural counties of Wales, for more resources to be made available to maintain the county roads, which are in a tremenduously bad state as a result of recent bad winters? In allocating any future resources, will the right hon. Gentleman bear that in mind?

Mr. Edwards: We continue to keep under review the allocation of resources between the various competing local authorities. The hon. Gentleman knows full well that if, say, the rural authorities put in a bid, it is promptly matched by a bid from, say, an area of urban deprivation. It is a question of allocating resources in a way that is agreed by the local authorities as a whole.

Mr. Roy Hughes: Does the Secretary of State appreciate that local authorities in Wales which have acted responsibly throughout are rather disgusted by the arbitrary way in which he has treated them? Will he at least ensure when he next reports on these matters that the redistribution between the two tiers of local government will not be affected?

Mr. Edwards: District councils in Wales have, on average, spent in line with the settlement and have therefore claimed the amount of block grant to which they are entitled. For district councils, therefore, there is no unclaimed grant to recycle. The announcement that I made about recycling concerns solely the counties.

Leasehold Reform

3. **Mr. Ron Davies** asked the Secretary of State for Wales what consideration is being given by his Department to the special needs of leaseholders in Wales in respect of the implementation of the Nugee report on leasehold reform.

12. **Mr. Gareth Wardell** asked the Secretary of State for Wales what measures he intends to introduce affecting the position of leaseholders in Wales, with specific reference to the implementation of the Nugee report on leasehold reform.

Mr. Mark Robinson: In addition to taking action on the main recommendations of the committee on the management of privately-owned blocks of flats, it is intended to introduce legislation as soon as possible which would extend to all domestic leaseholders a right to challenge the coverage and premiums for the insurance of their properties proposed by owners of freeholds.

Mr. Davies: I am grateful to the Minister for that reply, which is most encouraging to the people of south Wales. May I remind him, however, of the activities of one company that operates primarily in south Wales — Castlebeg of Jersey. The hon. Gentleman's Department has received a catalogue of complaints about the activities of that company, including complaints about malpractices, intimidation and deliberate attempts of tax avoidance. Will the Minister give an assurance that when legislation is introduced it will be sufficiently tight to provide proper legal protection for those who are subject to that company's depredations?

Mr. Robinson: I am aware of the activities of Castlebeg Investments, which is causing problems not only in the hon. Gentleman's constituency but in mine. My right hon. Friend has written to Castlebeg Investments in response to a letter from that company, expressing his concern about its activities. We shall, of course, ensure that legislation is drafted in a way that will provide the protection that both the hon. Gentleman and I are seeking to achieve.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: I welcome the Nugee committee's recommendations, but will the Minister go much further and accept that, even if the recommendations were adopted, the onus remains on the tenant to contest the matter in the courts? Does he accept that the level of premium could still be open to imposition, because only people wealthy enough in accommodation would be able to exercise that right? Will the Minister look again at my ten-minute Bill of 14 January and consider whether the onus should be put on the landlord to check the insurance and on the tenant to arrange insurance cover, because that would be in the best interests of both parties?

Mr. Robinson: I am aware of the hon. Gentleman's ten-minute Bill. When seeking to amend the law we must tread a delicate balance between the rights of the lessor and the rights of the lessee. We will do all that we can to draft legislation to ensure the maximum protection for leaseholders, but we must also consider rights on the other side.

Mr. Geraint Howells: Have the Government any plans to abolish the current leasehold system in Wales?

Mr. Robinson: No, Sir.

Labour Statistics

4. **Mr. Roy Hughes** asked the Secretary of State for Wales what are the latest unadjusted figures for unemployment in *(a)* Newport, *(b)* Gwent and *(c)* Wales; what were the equivalent figures in May 1979; and what has been the percentage increase in each case.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: On 8 May 1986 the total numbers of unemployed claimants in the Newport travel-to-work area, Gwent and Wales were 13,021, 29,828 and 179,225, respectively. Unadjusted figures for 1979 are not available on a comparable basis.

Mr. Hughes: Will the Secretary of State undertake to scrutinise the Newport figures closely? Is he aware that male unemployment is far higher than female unemployment? If the Minister deducts from the figure the many thousands travelling to Newport to pursue their work, he will see that male unemployment in Newport is very high indeed and compares with blackspots such as Ebbw Vale and the top of the Rhymney Valley. Bearing in mind Newport's favourable geographical position and its communications network, is that not a severe indictment of the Government's economic policies?

Mr. Edwards: On 8 May 1986 unemployed claimants in the constituency totalled 4,986 and in the Newport travel-to-work area the total unemployment rate was 16·1 per cent., and the male unemployment rate was higher at 19·3 per cent. The hon. Gentleman will be aware that the jobs are provided for those in the area not only within but outside Newport along the M4 up to Cwmbran and beyond.

Mr. Alex Carlile: Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that the Development Board for Rural Wales has shown a particularly well-directed and determined aggression towards reducing unemployment in its area? Does he also agree that the time has come for the board's area of rural Wales to be increased substantially?

Mr. Edwards: I certainly agree that Mid-Wales Development is doing a good job. I was in New Town on Friday opening new premises for Laura Ashley and visiting other premises. There is no doubt that the board is providing many job opportunities throughout the area that it covers. I have considered its possible extension, but I have decided that on balance the arrangements should remain as they are. As the hon. and learned Gentleman knows, we have recently altered the arrangements under which the Welsh Development Agency covers the rural area and it has introduced a number of new measures which will extend its activities in other parts of Wales.

Mr. Raffan: In view of its important implications for jobs in north-east Wales, what is the current position of Delyn borough council's application for the extension of the Delyn enterprise zone to cover the former Courtaulds Greenfield site, and will my right hon. Friend be supporting the application?

Mr. Edwards: I could not fail to notice the vigour with which my hon. Friend has advanced the case for the application, which I am considering carefully. I must also consider all the other bids that are being made by other areas which have special claims. My hon. Friend will know that we have made substantial special capital allocations available to Delyn and the enterprise zone, which is proving extremely successful.

Mr. Anderson: Does the Secretary of State share the Opposition's concern that such new jobs as are coming, welcome but inadequate, tend to be for females and part-time and therefore low paid, increasing the relative poverty within Wales?

Mr. Edwards: I remember an Opposition Member telling me some years ago that one of the effects of the recession would be to destroy job opportunities for women in Wales. He said that that would be one of the adverse consequences. We cannot be entirely unhappy about the fact that there is a tendency for more women to go to work. It is not entirely a bad thing, to be criticised. It is also true that much of the substantial capital investment that is taking place is creating jobs for men and women. That is particularly true, for example, of the large-scale capital investment which has been taking place in the steel industry, the aluminium industry and other heavy industries.

South Wales Coal Industry

5. **Mr. Barry Jones** asked the Secretary of State for Wales when he next expects to meet the chairman of the National Coal Board to discuss future employment prospects in the coal industry in south Wales.

11. **Mr. Ray Powell** asked the Secretary of State for Wales when he expects to meet the chairman of the National Coal Board to discuss future employment prospects in the coal industry in south Wales.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: I met the chairman designate of British Coal last week and had a useful discussion covering a wide range of issues affecting the south Wales coalfield.

Mr. Jones: A new deal between the CEGB and British Coal foreshadows the loss of another 1,500 jobs in the south Wales coalfield. Does the Secretary of State understand that the south Wales work force, between March 1983 and March 1987, will be halved, even though in the past year productivity has risen by 61 per cent.? When will the Government sanction the new Margam mine in west Glamorgan? We demand that this is done urgently, given the indications of new job losses. Finally, when will the budget of NCB (Enterprise) Ltd be expanded, in the certain knowledge that the new job losses will wipe out any of the gains so far made by NCB (Enterprise) Ltd.?

Mr. Edwards: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will agree that it was right for the National Coal Board and the CEGB to do a deal to enable lower energy costs to be passed on to industry generally. That will undoubtedly increase pressure on the coal industry to increase productivity levels even further than it has so far, and I am glad to say that productivity levels are rising fast in the south Wales coalfield.

We discussed Margam. It is a fact that the board is currently reconsidering the Margam issue. No formal propositions have been put to the Government, but we will consider such propositions if and when they come.

As for the financing of NCB (Enterprise) Ltd., the hon. Gentleman will know that £20 million is currently available. We have made it clear that that important organisation will receive the finance that it requires to do the job that it has undertaken.

Mr. Powell: Is the Secretary of State aware that today the last pit in the Rhondda has been closed, that at Ogmore over the past few months every colliery has been closed—five collieries and 5,000 men put out of work—that 27 pits have been closed and 43,000 jobs lost in the mining industry since the end of the miners' strike, and that 30,000 tonnes of coal are imported every month from South Africa? Is the right hon. Gentleman one of the 50 Tory Members who have direct or indirect financial links

with the South African apartheid regime? Perhaps he will ask his hon. Friend the Member for Delyn (Mr. Raffan) whether he has an interest directly in that regime.

Mr. Raffan: I certainly have not.

Mr. Edwards: The fact that coal mining has ceased in the Rhondda emphasises the historic nature of the process that has taken place under successive Governments over a long time. I raised with the chairman designate the question of South African coal which is entering Europe, and in some quantities indirectly into this country, but he told me that it has practically no effect on the south Wales industry, because it is not the kind of coal that is generally produced in south Wales.

Mr. Raffan: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Let us have a question instead.

Mr. Raffan: I assure my right hon. Friend that I have some sympathy for the hon. Member for Ogmore (Mr. Powell) on that point. I might add that I have no financial interests in South Africa whatsoever. Indeed, I am a former member of the executive of the anti-apartheid movement, which may be of interest to the hon. Gentleman. I am completely opposed to the present South African Government. We should look after the interests of our own coal mines first. The Government should perhaps consider taking action against imports of South African coal into this country, as well as other sanctions against the South African Government. I hope that the hon. Member for Ogmore will withdraw the smear that he made against me personally and show some courtesy to this House by doing so at the end of Question Time.

Mr. Edwards: I do not intend to get involved in the smearing that may be going on. The question of coal imports was one of the issues discussed at the recent meeting of the European Community Ministers. The imports that affect the south Wales industry are largely north American imports rather than South African imports.

Initial Teacher Training

6. **Dr. Marek** asked the Secretary of State for Wales when he expects to receive the report by the Welsh Advisory Body on Further and Higher Education on the rationalisation of initial teacher training provision in the Principality.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Wyn Roberts): The committee of the Wales Advisory Body considered this matter on 27 June. It decided to advise my right hon. Friend that a review of initial teacher training provision in Wales at the university and local authority colleges should be undertaken in conjunction with the University Grants Committee and that a decision about any rationalisation of local authority provision should await the outcome of that review. My right hon. Friend is giving this advice careful consideration and will announce the future intakes to initial teacher training courses in the public sector as soon as possible.

Dr. Marek: Does the hon. Gentleman recall his secret instructions to the Welsh Advisory Body that initial teacher training rationalisation in Wales should be based on a minimum yearly intake of 100 students? Does he also recall his instructions to the University Grants Committee, which in a letter dated 20 May to universities said that it was

"grateful to universities for agreeing to accept the additional numbers."?

If the hon. Gentleman recalls those two questions of policy, what does he say to the charge which, by a back-door method, he has tried, shamefacedly and unacceptably, to close Cartrefle training college and to evade responsibility for so doing?

Mr. Roberts: I absolutely deny the charge. There is nothing secretive about the way in which I or my predecessor with responsibility for education in Wales acted. The working group, whose papers were leaked, recommended that initial teacher training should cease at Cartrefle. School leavers have been able to choose from six B.Ed courses in Wales and about 50 B.Ed courses in England, and too few have chosen Cartrefle.

Sir Anthony Meyer: Is it not a fact that, under the Government, the number of students being trained and going into primary school teaching has increased?

Mr. Roberts: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. The entry of students increased from 400 to 500 between 1983 and 1985. The addition of a further 25 this year raises the annual entry until 1989 to 525.

Pupils (Expenditure)

7. **Mr. D. E. Thomas** asked the Secretary of State for Wales what was the total expenditure per pupil in all Welsh schools in 1979, and in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Total net revenue expenditure per pupil in maintained schools was £624 in 1979-80 and £1,066 in 1984-85.

Mr. Thomas: Does the hon. Gentleman still maintain, even after the report he received from Her Majesty's Inspectorate which was an indictment of the state of school building, let along the state of the curriculum, that net expenditure on education by all local authorities in Wales has increased in real terms during his period in office?

Mr. Roberts: Of course I do, because the real-terms equivalent of the figures that I cited on revenue spending per pupil were £949 in 1979-80 and £1,066 in 1984-85—a difference in real terms of £117. I am glad that the hon. Gentleman mentioned the HMI report, but I am sorry that he did not see fit to withdraw his disgraceful allegation that Ministers tampered with it. I assure the House that that was not the case. A breakdown of total expenditure per pupil by local education authorities in Wales shows that only 3 per cent. is spent on capitation fees and less than 5 per cent. on building maintenance.

Sir Raymond Gower: Do not these figures make nonsense of some of the exaggerated propaganda about expenditure on education in Wales and in the United Kingdom generally? Is the enhanced figure per pupil the amount actually available in schools, or is some of it eaten up in the cost of increased administration?

Mr. Roberts: I have given a breakdown of some of the figures relating to expenditure per pupil. It is a fact of life that 71 per cent. of the expenditure goes on teachers' salaries, 10 per cent. on other salaries—I think that that

meets my hon. Friend's point—13 per cent. on premises, less than 5 per cent. of which is spent on maintenance, 3 per cent. on captitation and 3 per cent. on other expenses. My hon. Friend is right to say that the expenditure figures make nonsense of many of the allegations against the Government.

Mr. Barry Jones: What plans does the Minister have to replace the pre-1903 schools? Too many of them are still dank and dingy. There is a lot of damp and many have leaking roofs. Is it not really a moral question—our youngsters should have the finest investment in their education, given the awful difficulty they will have on leaving school in getting jobs in a period of depression? Will the hon. Gentleman accept from me the advice that, rather than give increased grants to the public schools of Wales, he should channel that money into the local education sector and ensure a better deal for children in state schools?

Mr. Roberts: The hon. Gentleman knows only too well that there is a considerable amount of money available to local education authorities for education—some £659·5 million in rate support grant in the current year. Some of the old schools are, indeed, in bad condition but I have also seen schools built by the Labour Government which are now falling apart. This year we have increased the capital expenditure available to local authorities by 30 per cent., with £39 million for education buildings.

Arfon and Dwyfor Districts

8. **Mr. Wigley** asked the Secretary of State for Wales whether he will take steps to give the Arfon and Dwyfor districts full development area status.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The assisted areas map was drawn up in 1984 following a most comprehensive and objective review. The investment decisions of industry demand a substantial measure of stability in the map and I have no plans at present to make changes.

Mr. Wigley: Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that last month's unemployment figures showed that unemployment was more than 21 per cent. in Pwllheli and more than 19 per cent. in Caernarfon in areas not designated as development areas, whereas the average unemployment figure in development areas was 19·6 per cent. in Wales, 18·9 per cent. in Scotland and 20·1 per cent. in Great Britain? In view of the higher unemployment in Arfon and Dwyfor compared with other development areas, will the right hon. Gentleman reconsider and give development areas status to those two areas?

Mr. Edwards: Similar changes have taken place in a number of areas in England, Wales and Scotland. If changes were to be made on that basis there would have to be a substantial redrawing of the map, which would not necessarily be to the advantage of Wales. I should emphasise the considerable scope that is available in an intermediate area for providing assistance. The hon. Gentleman should not underestimate that.

Sheep Annual Premium

9. **Mr. Harvey** asked the Secretary of State for Wales what is the closing date for receipt of claim forms for the sheep annual premium; and if he will seek to extend it for farmers in serious financial difficulties.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: For the 1986 marketing year, the closing date for the receipt of claims for the first application period was 24 December 1985, and for the second application period, 10 April, 1986. I have no plans to seek to extend the most recent closing date, which is now well behind us.

Mr. Harvey: Will my right hon. Friend allow his usual good common sense to override the bureaucratic objection in this case in view of the fact that many farmers in my constituency are suffering financial penalties of up to £6,000 because of an oversight? In view of the major problem of confidence in the sheep industry as a whole, will my right hon. Friend now provide an assurance that there will be compensation in the wake of the decision to ban the movement and slaughter of lambs? Will he further provide a major and massive publicity campaign to restore faith in Welsh lamb and the industry?

Mr. Edwards: There were 155 late claims in the 1986 marketing year compared with 127 late claims in the previous year. The rules of the European Commission are extremely strict on this matter and, except in the case of force majeure, we are not able to deal with claims submitted after the application date. Of course, I share my hon. Friend's concern about the present circumstances arising from the restrictions we have had to impose on sheep in the area. We have said that we will consider compensation for specific farms suffering specific losses. This is a matter that we will be discussing further with the farmers unions. I am particularly anxious that we should be able to lift the restrictions on as large a part of the area as we can as quickly as possible. We are at present carrying out an extremently intensive monitoring programme and I hope to give some further results to the House this week.

Mr. Alex Carlile: Will the right hon. Gentleman tell the House what efforts the Welsh Office and he personally have made to persuade the European Community to be less obdurate in the matter raised by the hon. Member for Clwyd, South-West (Mr. Harvey)? Does he appreciate that many farmers throughout rural Wales are losing a great deal of money as a result of the decision he has told us about, especially bearing in mind that some of the forms were misleading? Will the right hon. Gentleman confirm that he is now prepared to allow specific compensation for specific farms which have suffered specific losses as a result of the movement restriction, which is different from what was said by the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food in his statement?

Mr. Edwards: I have already said that we will consider specific compensation in specific cases. That is something we have made clear. On the hon. and learned Gentleman's second point, that is a rule that has persisted over a good many years in which there have been frequent exchanges between the Commission and the Government. The rules are absolutely strict and adamant. I do not think it is practical to make the changes the hon. and learned Gentleman proposes.

Sir Raymond Gower: Can my right hon. Friend explain the serious matter of the late claims, and will he consult the farmers unions in Wales and take steps to make sure it does not happen again?

Mr. Edwards: The forms set out the position and the rules absolutely clearly, and massive publicity is given. This is not a new rule that has suddenly been introduced.

It has been operating for a good many years and it is widely known by farmers. However we will continue to do everything we can to publicise the rules so that people are fully aware of them.

NHS (Financing)

10. **Mr. Coleman** asked the Secretary of State for Wales what recent representations he has received concerning the financing of the National Health Service in Wales.

Mr. Mark Robinson: My right hon. Friend consistently receives representations and petitions concerning the National Health Service in Wales, which cover many issues, including that of funding.

Mr. Coleman: Is the hon. Gentleman aware of recent revelations concerning X-ray facilities in hospitals administered by West Glamorgan health authority which are on the point of crisis because of staff shortages? Is he aware that the general administrator of that health authority has said that although approval has been given for the appointment of a consultant radiologist he cannot be appointed because there is no cash? Is he further aware that in the Neath general hospital, at times the X-ray department is unmanned? Those are just a couple of instances of what is happening in the National Health Service in Wales because of a shortage of cash. What is he going to do about it?

Mr. Robinson: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman is aware that the management of resources in the West Glamorgan health authority is for that health authority. If it has problems along the lines that he is emphasising, it is for the management to sort them out. I should say that since 1979 the resources available to West Glamorgan health authority have increased by no less than 36 per cent.

Dr. Roger Thomas: In the light of the Minister's initiative, which was mentioned earlier, will he consider employing extra gynaecological surgeons in Wales? There is a great delay these days in the second phase of investigation of cervical cytology. Women with positive results are having to wait longer and longer for the second stage to be carried out.

Mr. Robinson: With regard to the initiative that I announced earlier, we are looking at all possibilities that can help to decrease the length of the waiting lists. However, the initiative is aimed at things that we can do quickly and in the short term to bring down waiting lists.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Departmental Performance

18. **Mr. Freud** asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether he will state his most significant achievements as Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster over the last six months.

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (Mr. Norman Tebbit): To have ensured the continued efficient administration of the affairs of the Duchy.

Mr. Freud: Would the Chancellor welcome the setting up of a judicial appointments commission, which would minimise the personal patronage available to holders of his office and to the Lord Chancellor when appointing judiciary?

Mr. Tebbit: That question should be primarily one for my noble Friend the Lord Chancellor, but for my part I have to say that it would be such a breach with the past and with the system that has worked extremely well in the county palatine that I would not myself welcome it in the Duchy.

Mr. Viggers: Does my right hon. Friend agree that among his many achievements, one of the most significant has been to expose the glaring inconsistencies of the political party that has effectively voted "Don't know" on nuclear disarmament?

Mr. Tebbit: I have tried to tell the people of the Duchy about those matters. In particular, I should welcome the opportunity perhaps even to lead some sort of group to discuss those matters in the Duchy, in which the leaders of the Liberal and Social Democratic parties could have another one of their standing punch-ups on whether they are unilateralists, disarmers or would-be buyers of cruise missiles.

Engagements

19. **Mr. Winnick** asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many official engagements he has carried out since he last answered oral questions.

Mr. Tebbit: Twenty-eight. That figure does not include meetings of Ministers which I have attended, nor engagements in my capacity as chairman of the Conservative party organisation.

Mr. Winnick: That is very interesting, but is the right hon. Gentleman aware that there is a certain amount of sympathy among the Opposition, surprising as it may seem to him, about the way in which so many of his Cabinet colleagues are rubbishing him and even spreading the word that the Prime Minister now regrets appointing him to his position as chairman of the party? Does not the right hon. Gentleman's rude, aggressive and abrasive style sum up this Government so well? If so, why are his Cabinet colleagues so highly critical of him?

Mr. Tebbit: It would not be appropriate for me to answer from this Dispatch Box on matters concerning my position as chairman of the Conservative party. In so far as anything that the hon. Gentleman has said today is relevant, or even anything that he has ever said in this place has been relevant, he is, as ever, talking rubbish.

Mr. Stokes: Will my right hon. Friend take comfort from the fact that at least we on the Conservative Benches are very happy indeed that he is Chancellor of the Duchy and will not lose any sleep over it at all?

Mr. Tebbit: I thank my hon. Friend for his remarks. What I find even more interesting is the support that I seem to be getting from some Opposition Members, particularly in that, as I understand it now, there are some Opposition Members, including some on the Front Bench, who, far from hating Tebbit's law, are beginning to think that it was a popular thing and that they had better not threaten to repeal it.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Will the Chancellor of the Duchy consider it part of his duties to visit in the forthcoming period St. Michael's Wyre in the county of Lancaster and also the site of the Abbeystead pumping house? He will be aware that this week there will be a debate in which the

issue of compensation for the bereaved and injured can be raised for the first time. People there were led to believe that the Government would take a continuing interest. The right hon. Gentleman's predecessor went there on a visit. The people now look for a fulfilment of their expectations and of the Government's promises. The right hon. Gentleman's visit would be much welcomed, if he could deliver practical solace to them.

Mr. Tebbit: I shall take good care to look into that matter, but I would be surprised if it fell within my ministerial responsibilities.

Ministerial Visit

20. **Mr. Silvester** asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he next plans to visit the Duchy.

Mr. Tebbit: On 23 September of this year.

Mr. Silvester: As my right hon. Friend is reported as saying that it is possible that the English development regions may feature in any future manifesto, would he use his position as Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster to speed that up and set up a development board for the north-west, including the Duchy, which would add further to the improvements that the Government have made in the north of England?

Mr. Tebbit: I am always surprised to read the things in the press that I am alleged to have said or not to have said, or what other people are alleged to have said about me. I do not recollect saying what my hon. Friend attributes to me. However, the Government will continue with their policies designed, above all, to restore the position of the regions, just as much as we have restored competitiveness to many other parts of British industry.

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

Annual Report

22. **Mr. Peter Bruinvels** asked the hon. Member for Wokingham, as representing the Church Commissioners, what was the cost of producing the most recent annual report of the Church Commissioners; and what was the comparable cost over the past five years.

Sir William van Straubenzee (The Second Church Estates Commissioner, Representing Church Commissioners): I will publish in the *Official Report* the cost in each of the last five years. The cost of the 1985 report and leaflet is estimated to be £27,000. The average cost for the same period was just under £26,000.

Mr. Bruinvels: In congratulating my hon. Friend on the way in which he presents the reports of the Church Commissioners to the House of Commons and on the way in which the reports are produced, and noting the interest in the Church Commissioners—in 1981, there were two questions to them, and in 1985 there were 48 oral and written questions—may I ask him to develop the annual report to include the recommendations and justifiable fears of the Central Board of Finance, which is concerned over the operation of the General Synod, which now costs more than £8·5 million in budgeted expenditure. Does he agree that the Synod is meeting too often and taking on too many responsibilities? Could he include in the annual report some of the major achievements of the Synod and some of the problems, which would justify the belief that the Synod should not meet as often as it does?

Sir William van Straubenzee: I must make it clear that the commissioners have no responsibility for the General Synod. Without discourtesy to my hon. Friend, I believe that it would not be appropriate to comment on that matter, especially as the Synod will meet soon and he is a dishtinguised member of it. As for the annual report of the commissioners, I am happy to say that our administrative expenses are 4·9 per cent. of total income.

Mr. Frank Field: I thank and congratulate the commissioners on increasing the amount of information that they publish in their reports about their activities and the range of their portfolio. As the report is laid before Parliament, am I right to assume that the commissioners are accountable to Parliament? If they are not, to whom are they responsible?

Sir William van Straubenzee: I am obliged to the hon. Gentleman for his courteous comments about the annual report. It has received an independent award for the manner in which it explains the commissioners' work. The strict position is that the commissioners are an independent statutory corporation, but with responsibilities to this House and to the General Synod. As the annual report shows, the commissioners invariably consult widely in the Church and elsewhere before taking decisions with social and ethical implications.

Following are the figures:

Cost of the Commissioners' Annual Report and Leaflet

	£
1980	25,900
1981	26,383
1982	24,330
1983	25,823
1984	27,265
1985	*27,000

* Estimate.

Expenditure Plans

23. **Mr. Greenway** asked the hon. Member for Wokingham, as representing the Church Commissioners, to what purposes the Church Commissioners intend to devote their increased income over the past year; and if he will make a statement.

Sir William van Straubenzee: The commissioners' investment income rose by 11·7 per cent. in 1985 to £93·5 million. That compares with a 6·1 per cent. increase in the retail prices index. Eightytwo per cent. of this income was spent on stipends, pensions and housing for the clergy.

Mr. Greenway: The Church Commissioners are to be congratulated on their prudence. How much of the increase in income has come from investments in South Africa? Can my hon. Friend confirm that all bishops and clergy are paid by investments which are held partly in South Africa? Will he also confirm that the Church Commissioners and the Archbishop recently said that we cannot take investment decisions as a form of protest while calling for economic sanctions against South Africa? Can my hon. Friend explain this?

Sir William van Straubenzee: I would want to make it extremely clear that the commissioners do not invest and

never have invested in South Africa. They have investments in several companies and they have made a careful statement about this matter in the annual report, which we have just discussed. On the best calculation, rather less than 0·5 per cent. of their income is so derived. I hope that my hon. Friend will forgive my not going further into the matter, but the Church will be having a debate on this matter today week.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Emoluments

24. **Sir John Biggs-Davison** asked the Lord Privy Seal if he will publish figures showing the information available to him as to the emoluments of legislators in other Commonwealth and European Parliaments, in comparable terms to those of right hon. and hon. Members.

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen): I am arranging for the publication of a table in the *Official Report* setting out the salaries and principal allowances received by legislators in a number of other Commonwealth and European Parliaments.

Sir John Biggs-Davison: I thank my right hon. Friend for undertaking to do that. Will not fair-minded people find the comparison impressive, and should it not be more widely known, especially, perhaps, by the press, that this House has resolved to decline the full awards which were recommended by an independent review body?

Mr. Biffen: My hon. Friend is quite right. There will be public interest in the table when it is available. I think that the press would probably wish to pass on the point that he mentioned.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: Does my right hon. Friend have any plans to reduce the salaries of right hon. and hon. Members and to recommend an increase in the salaries of Members of the European Assembly, following the Government's plan to force through with a guillotine, which appears to be a constitutional outrage, a transfer of work done in this House to the rather absurd and costly European Assembly?

Mr. Biffen: I am always alert to constructive suggestions and I listened to all that my hon. Friend had to say. I think, however, that his suggestion would be regarded as provocative.

Following is the information:

Country	*Salary*	*Allowances*
UNITED KINGDOM *House of Commons*	Basic salary of £17,702. Maximum salary of £18,655 for those who draw the London allowance of £953 per annum, which is taxable. Whole of salary taxable.	£13,211 secretarial allowance. £1,321 to meet cost of secretarial pension scheme; £6,606 to employ temporary assistance in event of illness of secretary; all maxima. £7,133 (max) subsistence allowance £200 allowance to help in drafting private Members Bill. £2,202 to assist in clearing up affairs of a deceased, retired or defeated MP (year beginning April 1985).
AUSTRALIA *House of Representatives*	A$44,519 (£19,532). All taxable.	Electoral allowance of A$15,869 (£6,962) for a constituency of 5,000 sq km or less. Allowance of A$23,010 (£10,095) for a constituency greater than 5,000 sq km. Not taxable.
BELGIUM *Chamber of Representatives*	BF1,872,381 (£27,274), half of which is a tax-free allowance for expenses. BF936,190·5 (£13,637).	Half of salary, BF936,190·5 (£13,637) is a tax-free allowance for expenses.
CANADA *House of Commons*	C$56,100 (£26,638). All taxable.	General allowance of between C$18,700 (£8,879) and C$24,700 (£11,728) varying by size and distance of constituency from Ottawa.
DENMARK *Folketing*	204,400 kr (£16,437). All taxable.	General allowance of between 22,000 kr (£1,769) and 64,000 kr (£5,147) according to distance from Copenhagen. Allowance of 91,200 kr (£7,334) for secretarial assistance.
FEDERAL GERMAN REPUBLIC *Bundestag*	DM98,688 (£29,350). DM58,980 (£17,540) is tax-free.	
FRANCE *National Assembly*	402,188Fr (£37,526) of which 45 per cent. 180,985Fr (£16,887) is tax-free.	45 per cent. of salary, 180,985Fr (£16,887) is regarded as tax-free expense allowance. 207,972Fr (£19,405) allowance for office expenditure. 235,728Fr (£21,995) allowance to employ secretarial assistance.
GREECE *Chamber of Deputies*	2,611,660Dr (£12,244) for Athens MPs. 2,730,371Dr (£12,801) for others. Taxable	108,000Dr (£506) general allowance.

Country	Salary	Allowances
ITALY *Chamber of Deputies*	L86,853,120 (£37,705). Tax is payable on 70 per cent. of the gross salary after deducting social security contributions (18 per cent.). Taxable salary is L58,979,328 (£25,610).	Tax-free allowance of L10,044,000 (£4,360).
LUXEMBOURG *Chamber of Deputies*	LF1,380,000 (£20,102) half of which LF690,000 (£10,051) is tax-free.	Half of salary, LF690,000 (£10,051) is tax-free and regarded as an allowance for expenses.
NETHERLANDS *Second Chamber*	Fl99,470 (£26,280). All taxable.	General allowance of between Fl14,813 (£3,913) and Fl29,624 (£7,827) according to distance of home from The Hague. Travel allowance of Fl10,090 (£2,666). All taxable.
NEW ZEALAND *House of Representatives*	NZ$45,000 (£15,694). All taxable.	Expense allowance of NZ$4,000 (£1,395). Constituency allowance of between NZ$6,500 (£2,267) and NZ$14,000 (£4,883). Day allowance of NZ$27 (£9) for every sitting day attended and allowance of NZ$40 (£14) for every night away from home. All allowances tax-free.
PORTUGAL *House of Deputies*	1,363,200Es (£5,950). All taxable.	Taxable allowance of 1,380Es (£6) per day of attendance for Deputies living in Lison and 4,140Es (£18) per day of attendance for Deputies living outside Lisbon. Non-taxable allowance of 2,272Es (£10) per day of attendance for Deputies who are members of Parliamentary Committees.
REPUBLIC OF IRELAND *Dail Eireann*	IR£17,978 (£16,152). All taxable.	Subsistence allowance of IR£31 (£28) per night for sittings for MPs living 20 miles or more from Dublin. IR£19 (£17) day allowance for MPs living within 10 miles of Dublin.

Note: The figures in brackets in £s are converted from local currencies at rates of exchange at the close of 25 June.

Manpower

25. **Mr. Peter Bruinvels** asked the Lord Privy Seal what is his latest estimate of the total number of people working *(a)* full-time and *(b)* part-time in the House of Commons; and what was the comparable figure five years ago.

Mr. Biffen: On 1 April this year there were 772 full-time staff and 157 part-time staff in post in House Departments. The comparable figures on 1 April 1981 were 745 and 154 respectively. The number of people holding passes as Members' secretaries or research assistants is currently 1,165, of whom 429 are classified as temporary. No comparable figures are available for 1981.

Mr. Bruinvels: I thank my right hon. Friend for revealing some illuminating figures. As we work in a village atmosphere, and as there appears to be a growth industry in part-time and full-time employment, is my right hon. Friend satisfied that there is no abuse of the allocation of passes or of the vetting system to bring in research assistants? May I draw my right hon. Friend's attention to the number of temporary passes that are issued on a daily basis for people who come to do repairs in or around the House or for research assistants from America who are, perhaps, not doing the work that is expected of them?

Mr. Biffen: My hon. Friend will appreciate that on 29 January this year the House had a most rigorous debate about research assistants and what was a legitimate number. The House took a certain view, which I know will not have been congenial to my hon. Friend. One tries to secure a proper control over numbers and have regard to security aspects, although there is a convention that we do not talk about security on the Floor of the House.

Mr. Winnick: Although the Leader of the House could not agree publicly, is he aware that a large number of people believe that we would be far better off as a country if the Prime Minister worked part-time instead of what she is doing now?

Mr. Biffen: The hon. Gentleman must have used the whole of the past fortnight to crank up that highly original comment. I am absolutely worsted for words. I am sorry.

Mr. Hind: Has my right hon. Friend had the opportunity today to read a report published on the number of letters and items that are received by Members of Parliament? Is he aware that each Member of Parliament receives about 10,000 letters a year? As a consequence, will he consider the need to increase the amount of secretarial and research assistance that should be made available, especially to hon. Members who represent areas of high unemployment?

Mr. Biffen: As my hon. Friend will appreciate, that is a matter for separate consideration, since I have made it clear that the secretarial allowance will be further reviewed.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Does the Leader of the House have available now, and if not, could he publish later, the figures by Department of those who applied for full-time jobs in the House now and five years ago?

Mr. Biffen: I am not sure whether that information is available, but I shall certainly investigate, and if it is I shall publish it.

Mr. Stokes: In case my right hon. Friend gets the matter out of proportion, did he read recently in the newspapers that hon. Members in the main have received only one or two letters each about the present position in South Africa?

Mr. Biffen: I admire, as ever, the shining ingenuity of my hon. Friend. I do not think that his question can conceivably arise from the question tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels), but I am sure that he makes a fair point.

WALES

Housing (Senior Management)

13. **Sir Anthony Meyer** asked the Secretary of State for Wales what response he has had to his circular on housing for senior management in Wales.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Mark Robinson): None, Sir. The circular was issued on 17 June following consultations on a draft version.

Sir Anthony Meyer: To prevent any stupid vote-catching complaints that the circular is favouring the rich, will my hon. Friend point out the need to attract top-class entrepreneurs to Wales to create the jobs that we so badly need there?

Mr. Robinson: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. The purpose of the initiative is to create a good pool of housing for top industrialists.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: In assisting people to respond to this obnoxious, waffly circular, could the Minister say what research his Department, or anyone, has undertaken to substantiate the demand that could exist for this type of housing?

Mr. Robinson: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State decided to issue the circular on the basis of the many representations made to him on this subject.

Sir Raymond Gower: Is not one of the major difficulties in this case that many of these houses are required in sensitive areas, for example, in areas of particular beauty? To that extent, will my hon. Friend hold consultations with the housing authorities on this matter?

Mr. Robinson: If my hon. Friend reads the circular, he will see that we cover that point. Obviously we are not looking to build such houses in areas of outstanding natural beauty.

Mr. D. E. Thomas: Will the Minister tell the House which planning authorities in Wales supported the draft circular when he sent it out?

Mr. Robinson: We received a considerable response to that consultation, and about half the representations were in favour and about half were against. The majority of representations against the draft circular came from local authorities.

South Glamorgan (Patient Costs)

14. **Mr. Gwilym Jones** asked the Secretary of State for Wales how the average cost of treatment per patient in South Glamorgan compares with the equivalent cost in neighbouring health authorities and for all health authorities in Wales; and what assessment he has made of the implications of differing average costs of patient treatment for the numbers of patients treated in different health authority areas.

Mr. Mark Robinson: With regard to comparative costs, I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave him on 26 June. As to the implications for differing costs, the National Health Service director for Wales is discussing costs per standardised unit of work and cost improvement schemes with each authority during the current round of annual reviews.

Mr. Jones: While I would not suggest that unit costs are all-important, they are relevant. Does my hon. Friend accept that if South Glamorgan health authority could achieve the same unit costs as the all-Wales average, according to figures which he has supplied to me, it would manage to treat an additional 10,000 patients a year?

Mr. Robinson: I note what my hon. Friend says. Obviously, the performance of south Glamorgan will be discussed in the annual reviews.

Surgeons

15. **Dr. Roger Thomas** asked the Secretary of State for Wales what are the numbers of *(a)* general surgeons and *(b)* surgeons in other working specialties in each authority in Wales for every 100,000 population; and how these figures compare with (i) Scotland, (ii) the English regions and (iii) the other countries of the European Community.

Mr. Mark Robinson: As at 30 September 1985, health authorities in Wales employed the equivalent of 2·1 whole-time consultant general surgeons and 6·3 whole-time consultants in other surgical specialties per 100,000 of the population. As the comparisons requested are detailed, with permission, Mr. Speaker, I will circulate a table of figures in the *Official Report*.

Dr. Thomas: Will the Minister consider promoting experienced neo-surgical registrars to reduce these waiting lists?

Mr. Robinson: That is a factor that we can take into consideration in looking at this initiative.

Such information as is available for Wales, Scotland and England relates to 30 September 1985 and is given in the following tables. Comparable information for other countries of the European Community is not available.

Following are the figures:

(a) Consultant whole-time equivalents per 100,000 population at 30 September 1985: health authorities in Wales

	General surgeons	*Other surgical specialties*
Clwyd	1·7	5·4
East Dyfed	2·8	6·2
Pembrokeshire	3·7	5·3
Gwent	2·0	6·0
Gwynedd	2·6	5·2
Mid Glamorgan	1·7	4·9
Powys	0·5	2·3
South Glamorgan	2·3	10·2
West Glamorgan	2·0	7·6
Wales	2·1	6·3

(b) Consultant whole-time equivalents per 100,000 population at 30 September 1985: Scotland, England, English Regions

	General surgeons	*Other surgical specialties*
Scotland*	2·8	9·3
England	1·8	6·5
English Regions:		
Northern	2·1	7·3
Yorkshire	1·7	6·4
Trent	1·5	5·7
East Anglia	1·5	7·2
North-West Thames	1·9	5·6
North-East Thames	2·0	7·6
South-East Thames	2·0	6·9
South-West Thames	1·6	5·7
Wessex	1·4	6·0
Oxford	1·8	5·9
South-Western	1·7	6·4
West Midlands	1·9	6·6
Mersey	1·9	6·2
North-Western	2·0	7·1

* Figures for Scotland are provisional.

In the above tables, "other surgical specialties" includes: Ear, nose and throat; traumatic and orthopaedic surgery; ophthalmology; radiotherapy; urology; plastic surgery; cardio-thoracic surgery; dental surgery; othodontics; neurosurgery; obstetrics and gynaecology; paediatric surgery.

Sheep Industry

16. **Mr. Geraint Howells** asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he is satisfied with the present state of the sheep industry; and if he will make a statement.

The Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Nicholas Edwards): Hon. Members will be aware of the measures that we have taken recently to restrict the movement and slaughter of sheep in certain parts of Wales. It is too early to assess the impact that these restrictions will have on the industry. However, I will repeat the assurance that there is no danger to public health and no reason for consumers to refrain from purchasing and eating lamb.

Mr. Howells: Can the Secretary of State put the minds of farmers at ease by saying that he does not think there will be any need to extend the restrictions to other parts of Wales?

Mr. Edwards: There is no evidence of any need to extend the restrictions to other parts of Wales. We are carrying out intensive monitoring, with the object of taking the area of Anglesey south of the A5 and the whole of Clwyd out. I hope that if the results prove satisfactory later this week—it must depend on the testing—other areas can be taken out. We are carrying out another programme, which will be under way this week, of spot sampling across the whole area to see whether we can address other specific areas and take them out as quickly as we can. We are having to do an intensive programme of monitoring because we must be certain, as we take areas out, that it is safe to do so. I assure the hon. Gentleman that we are devoting all available resources to this programme.

Mr. Barry Jones: Will the right hon. Gentleman agree to publish the results of the latest tests as soon as possible, bearing in mind the public anxiety? As over 1 million lambs under one year old and some 5,000 farm holdings are concerned, will he give a categorical assurance that there will be urgent and generous compensation? Does he agree that in the farming community there is grave disquiet over this matter?

Mr. Edwards: I instructed my officials this morning that I would wish to publish the latest results this week, and certainly as quickly as we can. We want to make all the information available. The hon. Gentleman raised the general issue of compensation and pointed out that there are over 1 million lambs in the restricted area. That fact emphasises the difficulty of defining methods of compensation that are fair both to those in the areas and those outside, who will also be affected by any changes in the market. These are complex and difficult questions that we shall have to discuss with the unions. I repeat the assurances that have already been given by Ministers about our considering specific compensation for specific cases.

Mr. D. E. Thomas: Does the Secretary of State accept that discussions with the unions and the complexity of the matter are no reasons for not announcing clearly to the House, in a statement, the basis of and guidelines for compensation? Does he understand that there is urgency among farmers, particularly in my constituency—the area worst affected? Is it not time that he made a statement? He is Secretary of State for Wales and has responsibility for this matter, but he is the only Minister with responsibility under the order who has not made a statement about it.

Mr. Edwards: I am now answering detailed points at Welsh Question Time, which seems a good way to deal with the matter. We shall publish all the information as it becomes available. The hon. Member knows perfectly well that compensation is a complex matter. We have given certain assurances. The sheep variable premium provides an underpinning, and we shall have to consider the circumstances if, for example, lambs grew so fat that they did not qualify for the premium. These are difficult issues and the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) will know that sheep farmers in the Lleyn peninsular, for example, just outside the area, may be affected by market changes. Therefore, we have to discuss with the unions a basis for compensation that covers those both inside and outside the areas who suffer specific and identifiable loss.

Sir Anthony Meyer: Will my right hon. Friend reflect on the fact that others, such as abattoir owners, will be affected? Perhaps even more important than compensation, is it not necessary to restore public confidence in the healthiness of Welsh lamb, which is the best that there is?

Mr. Edwards: We shall consider compensation for specific cases for sheep producers. I caution my hon. Friend about the suggestion that we should spread compensation to other areas that may or may not be affected. I cannot give any such undertakings. I can continue to give, and this is the object of the restrictions, the absolute assurance that it is safe to eat lamb and that people can go on eating Welsh lamb in the knowledge that we have introduced these restrictions so that we can maintain that assurance.

South Africa

3.35 pm

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 10, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the situation in South Africa, particularly with regard to the BBC's role in reporting it."

It is important that an objective assessment should be available to the nation about what is happening in South Africa. Many people feel that we are not now getting it through the BBC. It is particularly important that we debate the matter because of the obsessive and possibly, therefore, misleading view of the BBC on the issue.

I imagine, Mr. Speaker, that, like me and many other hon. Members, you have yet to receive a single letter on the subject of South Africa, yet for the last fortnight—day in and day out—the BBC has been boring on with little else. The events in South Africa are important, tragic and complex. However, there are many other issues of at least equal importance, not least the Single European Act, yet this and many other issues do not get even a dicky-bird on the BBC.

I am sure that the demonstrating and the posturing classes are much exercised by their concern over South Africa, particularly the extreme Left councillors in Brent and Northampton who are indulging in anti-South African jamborees at ratepayers' expense—possibly illegally. However, I can assure you, Mr. Speaker, that South Africa is not a topic of constant conversation on the Northampton omnibus.

The matter is urgent because the myth-building potential of the BBC, if it continues to use its apparent bias, means that unless we have a debate we shall be unable to gain an objective view of the situation. There are daily interviews with Bishop Tutu, who favours sanctions, yet the screen is denied to Bishop Mokoena, who is against sanctions. Is he less Christian, or does he have fewer followers? The nation's sitting rooms are papered with flickering pictures of Winnie Mandela, the promoter of the unique barbarism of dangling burning tyres around the necks of living victims, yet we see only glimpses of Chief Buthelezi and there is oblivion for the courageous white opposition leader, Helen Suzman.

Why this virtual censorship, a policy that the BBC claims to abhor? Is it because they oppose sanctions? When the general, all-purpose, stand-up comic the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) was questioned on his meeting with South African businessmen, why was he not asked whether they favour sanctions? Is it that there is a BBC case? Is there, outrageously, a corporation point of view? Or is its approach motivated merely by an institutional "megasulk"—part of a vindictive crusade against any policy advocated by the Prime Minister, and in particular her positive and courageous stand on South Africa? Is it retribution or revenge for her approach to Peacock? I think we ought to know.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: I shall take points of order afterwards.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): They really should come before.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I know that Mr. Erskine Skinner knows about these things, but the hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 10, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he thinks should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the situation in South Africa, particularly with regard to the BBC's role in reporting it."

I have listened with care to what the hon. Member has said, but I regret that I do not consider the matter that he has raised is appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 10. I cannot therefore submit his application to the House.

Later——

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Hon. Members have the right to move an application under Standing Order No. 10, but no different views can be heard. At this sensitive moment, after what has happened, it could be thought by those who do not know our parliamentary procedure that only one view about South Africa exists in the House. Is there any way in which hon. Members can protest at the way in which an hon. Member has put forward the South African authorities view, using the House of Commons to spread propaganda, when there is no opportunity for the expression of the alternative view which, I believe, is shared by the overwhelming majority of the British people?

Mr. Speaker: Frequently, in applications under Standing Order No. 10, views are expressed with which the rest of the House does not agree. There is no opportunity to put a counter argument during a Standing Order No. 10 application. I have no doubt that other opportunities will arise in the days to come, as they did last week.

Mr Skinner: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. There is an additional matter which I wanted to raise earlier so as to save your time.

Normally Standing Order No. 10 applications are made by Members who want to raise an issue which is of public importance because they want to generate some propaganda for their cause. The hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow), however, was able to inveigle a Standing Order No. 10 application to stop the BBC getting across a message which he did not want to be publicised. In effect, he was saying to the BBC and the media generally, "Do not give us any statements about what is happening in South Africa because that does not matter. We should be discussing the World Cup and goodness knows what else." The hon. Gentleman then went on to put the opposite point of view.

I suggest, Mr. Speaker, that when Standing Order No. 10 applications are made by those who do not want an issue to be publicised they should not be allowed to get past their first sentence. If some Opposition Members were doing this, it is my guess that their applications would be regarded as trivial and unimportant. The hon. Member for Northampton, North argued the opposite of what he really wanted to say. He said that he wanted a debate, yet in reality he wanted to stop others talking about South Africa.

Mr. Speaker: I have no idea what the motives of the hon. Member for Northampton, North were. That is not a matter for me.

European Communities (Amendments) Bill

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You will recall that the right hon. Gentleman the Lord Privy Seal startled the House at 2.30 last Friday when he announced the Government's petulant decision not only to introduce a timetable motion on the European Communities (Amendment) Bill that had had only three days in Committee but that the guillotine motion would be moved out of prime time at 10 o'clock on Tuesday night.

That affront has now been compounded by the terms of the motion of the Order Paper today, allotting a derisory two hours for completion of the Committee stage and one hour for Third Reading. This will not allow time even for votes to be taken on the outstanding amendments.

Since the Bill further reduces the powers of Parliament and the rights of British people, is this not to treat the House with total contempt? Is it not a flagrant abuse of power by the Executive? Is it not unprecedented for a timetable motion on a constitutional measure to be moved at the end of a parliamentary day? Is it not unprecedented for a timetable motion drastically to truncate the remaining time available for debate?

You, Mr. Speaker, are the custodian of the rights of Back Benchers and of the House itself. The precedent that the Government seek to establish in this motion on an important constitutional measure is dangerous to us all. Once created, it would make a shameful reference point for every successive Government. Is there any way in which you can prevail upon the Government not to pursue these arrogant and undemocratic procedures.

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen): It might be helpful to the House if I were to respond immediately. The right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) makes a valid point that I accept at once, but the motion is amendable. The best way I can help the right hon. Gentleman is to suggest that we can possibly look at the matter through the usual channels.

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): While I appreciate that you, Mr. Speaker, have no responsibility for Government motions, would it be possible for you to establish before tomorrow, first, whether it is in order for a motion to be moved on which it is not possible to complete the remaining stages? I think that any Clerk would agree that that would not be possible. Secondly, is it in order to move a guillotine motion without any reference to the Business Committee? We know that is because, obviously, there is not enough time that the Business Committee could allocate. Thirdly, is it in order under paragraph 8 of this motion to have an arrangement whereby hon. Members will be deprived even of the opportunity of voting on vital amendments? Is it possible to establish before tomorrow whether it is in order for such a constitutional outrage to be moved and placed before the House?

Mr. Speaker: Without passing any comment on what the hon. Gentleman said in his final sentence, I say to him and to the whole House that the motion is amendable and the House will have heard what the Leader of the House said about discussions. It may well be that the House will decide a rather different motion when the matter is debated.

Mr. Ron Leighton (Newham, North-East): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. It is all very well to have discussions through the usual channels, but from your high office, Mr. Speaker, what can you do to safeguard the rights of Back Benchers? It is a monstrous abuse of parliamentary procedure not only that time is not to be allowed to debate the issues but that there will not even be time to vote on the issues raised in the Bill. Do you, Mr. Speaker, not have a say?

Mr. Speaker: Sadly, it is not a matter for me. As the hon. Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) said, I am not responsible for Government motions on the Order Paper. I am responsible for the selection of amendments, and I shall bear these exchanges very much in mind.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): I should like to take up the point about time, Mr. Speaker. We have already debated this in Committee, and the Chairman of Ways and Means, acting on behalf of the Chair, has selected a number of groups of amendments. On my calculation there are at least eight groups upon which votes can be taken and another two or three groups on the clause stand part debate.

As has been pointed out, the terms of the motion that the Table and you, Mr. Speaker, have permitted to be tabled would prevent some of those votes if hon. Members exercised their right to vote and did not speak on the earlier debates. How is it possible for such a motion to be in order when it prevents even the Question from the Chair being put on the subject that the Chair has already selected for debate? Surely this is a unprecedented motion which requires to be looked at carefully by the Chair. As the protector of the minorities in the House and, indeed, the rights of Parliament against other persons in assemblies who would wish for our power, Mr. Speaker, you have a duty and an opportunity to see whether this is in order.

Mr. Speaker: I am not responsible for the selection of amendments at Committee stage. That is a matter for the Chairman of Ways and Means. The Leader of the House has heard all that has been said about this matter. I think that he appreciates the anxiety expressed about the question of time. *[Interruption.]* From the point of view of the Chair, I can add nothing to what I have already said, which is that it is in order for a motion to be placed on the Order Paper, and that that motion is amendable.

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You will be aware that the remaining amendments to be considered in this most important business deal with different and specific matters, some of them constitutional and some of them policy matters. You may also be aware that many of us, myself included, have not yet sought to speak on this matter, but may well be anxious to speak on one or other of the specific issues still to come. Therefore, when you, Mr. Speaker, consider the nature of the amendments which may be put down to the motion that will be considered by the House, will you bear in mind the desire of hon. Members to speak on and, following the point that has already been made, to vote on separate and importantly distinctive matters which are contained within this important Bill?

Mr. Speaker: Yes.

Mr. Eric Deakins (Walthamstow): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. You are the guardian of the rights of Back Benchers in the House, irrespective of what the

[Mr. Eric Deakins]

Government may do. There are, according to the Chairman of Ways and Means, up to 10 separate debates left for the Committee stages. As only two hours have been allocated, if my arithmetic is correct, there will be an average of 12 minutes per major debate. There is one debate in which we ought to be considering the whole subject of European union and economic and monetary union, and that in 12 minutes.

Is not that an abuse not merely of the rights of Back Benchers but of the constitutional process? Does that not create—I say this advisedly to the Lord Privy Seal—a dangerous precedent for a future Government who might come forward with a guillotine motion allowing, say, only two or three minutes per series of debates? At what stage, Mr. Speaker—I ask you in all sincerity—would you, and the authorities of the House generally, feel that the procedures of the House were being abused by this sort of timetable motion?

Mr. Speaker: That is not a matter for me.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. There may be some confusion outside as to why there is so much anger amongst hon. Members on this issue. I am sure that you, Mr. Speaker, will recall that when the Leader of the House announced on Friday his intention to table a guillotine motion he was asked, and appeared unable to reply, when in the past any Government who had not at any stage sought to move a closure motion had sought to introduce a guillotine motion.

You, Mr. Speaker, will recall that on Thursday night and early Friday morning the Government at no stage sought to move a closure motion. On Friday the Government failed miserably to muster anywhere near 100 Members to secure progress. They are now proposing to introduce a guillotine motion to steamroller through important business in a thoroughly disgraceful way. I ask the Leader of the House and you, Mr. Speaker, to protect the right of Back Benchers to speak on these matters, and a number of us have not sought to speak on any occasion so far.

The guillotine motion is a constitutional outrage and a parliamentary abuse. I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will respond to the views that have been expressed today and will give the House a reasonable opportunity to debate this important matter.

Mr. Merlyn Rees (Morley and Leeds, South): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. There has been much protest from both sides of the House, and when the Leader of the House said, "Let's discuss it through the usual channels", I muttered to myself, "Good old Leader of the House; he's a decent chap. That is what one would expect from him." Ten minutes later I do not know what on earth it means. Could it be explained what the two sides will discuss? Why are we all feeling so pleased about it?

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate that there are to be discussions through the usual channels and I am grateful for that because I have been unable to take part in these debates for quite "armless" reasons. I also appreciate that the distinction between this Bill, a vital constitutional issue which it is proposed to steamroller through, and the Shops Bill, on which the Government announced in advance that there would be no guillotine, is a matter for the Government. But a question for you, Sir, is what other opportunities we, as Members of the House, have to discuss the abdication of our rights and responsibilities to the EEC, which is implicit in the treaty, apart from the Bill, which is being truncated in this fashion?

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Perhaps I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that the problem on Friday was that the Government could not find enough Common Market slaves to cut short the debate on the previous Thursday night. At 12.13 am, the Government asked leave to report progress. Long before that, Mr. Speaker, it had been said within your hearing that the debate would go on all night. The Government decided to get rid of nine hours of debating time. They even left the ex-leader of the SDP, the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Jenkins), without any chance to initiate his Adjournment debate as he was putting a supplementary question to the Liberals somewhere else. Of course the right hon. Gentleman should have been in the Chamber defending the Common Market because he was a champion of it. It was rather remarkable that he was absent. However, nine hours of debating time were lost not because of filibusters or long speeches from Opposition Members but because the Government could not find enough hon. Members to stay up and to vote in the Lobby in favour of closure motions.

Now, in your name, Mr. Speaker, the Government say that the House will have to have one hour in which to debate Third Reading and that there will be two hours for the Committee stage. Although I did not support the change, the House recently agreed that speeches could be limited to 10 minutes during debates in which many hon. Members wished to speak. But now you—or whoever is in the Chair—are in the nauseating position of having to stop hon. Members speaking after two minutes, never mind 10.

This constitutional issue means that the Common Market takes away powers not only from Back Benchers but from the Chair. Thus, I suggest that you have an interest in seeing that the constitutional position is upheld, and in ensuring that debate is not limited to three hours.

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Have you not been placed in an invidious position in having to deal with these points of order? As I said on Friday, the Leader of the House has completely ignored your previous ruling that points of order should not be used as a method of making statements. We should have had a business statement today so that the Leader of the House could be answerable to the House. Instead, we have had a succession of disgraceful attempts to avoid interrogation by hon. Members.

At 11 am on Friday the Leader of the House raised a point of order and threatened the House with what he would do at 2.30 pm if we did not come to heel. At 2.30 pm he raised another point of order and announced that he would introduce a guillotine. Today, in response to a point of order, he has again left you to answer the questions and has failed to make a statement. Now that we have seen the terms of the guillotine motion and the

truncated nature of the debate allowed under it, it is clear that the Leader of the House should have made a full business statement to the House today.

Mr. Speaker: I have allowed points of order on this important matter, which affects the rights of the House, to continue under the guise of a statement. I thought that that was the right thing to do, as the Leader of the House was helpful in rising immediately after the point of order raised by the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore). I am sure that the Leader of the House will have heard the views expressed, and I hope that something will come out of the discussions that are to follow.

Community Radio Experiment

3.48 pm

Mr. Gerald Kaufman (Manchester, Gorton): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I wish to draw your attention to an abuse of the rights of the House which, although not of the dimensions of the issue to which hon. Members on both sides of the House have already referred, is nevertheless an issue to which you have previously adverted, and commented upon adversely. According to page 4079 of the Order Paper, a written question has been tabled by the hon. Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth), which has next to it a symbol meaning that it was tabled on Friday. It asks the Secretary of State for the Home Department

"whether he will make a statement about the community radio experiment."

Two matters arise from that question which I should like to put to you, Mr. Speaker. First, no sooner had it been tabled than the Home Office and the Government machine began distributing the contents of the reply to the press in terms of a briefing. Since yesterday the press has been full of the purport of the reply which the hon. Gentleman will receive later this afternoon. It is that the Government have decided to abandon the experiment in community radio, despite the fact that only last month the Minister of State said that the Government were keen for the experiment to proceed.

On previous occasions, Mr. Speaker, you have said that it is not acceptable to the rights of the House for the Government to make an important announcement by means of a planted question and, before the House has had the opportunity to see the content of the question—which is the property of the House—for the answer and ancillary information to be communicated to the press in an effort to lay down a trail to deal with adverse criticism arising from the Government's decision.

When a major policy statement is made by the Government on a matter about which they spoke a great deal last year and to which they have attached great importance, is it not disgraceful that they should act by means of a planted written question instead of the Home Secretary having the courage to come to the Dispatch Box and tell the House about abandoning the policy which they trumpeted so loudly?

Mr. Speaker: I have not seen any briefing which might have been given to the press. It certainly was not given to me. I often see questions tabled for written answer. This question asks the Secretary of State to make a statement on the community radio experiment. I have no idea what that statement will be. We shall know later this afternoon.

Mr. Clement Freud (Cambridgeshire, North-East): Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker. I remind the House that your ruling is that when a statement is made by a Minister at the Dispatch Box the cancellation of a project so announced should come from the Dispatch Box. I agree with what the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) said, because the newspapers have leaked exactly what is to happen to community radio. It is deplorable that the hundreds of people who have worked hard and spent hours applying for licences, encouraged by the Home Secretary, should receive their reply in such a shoddy manner.

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): As the hon. Member involved in this, may I say that I hope that no one

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is impugning my position because I am as entitled as any other hon. Member to ask a question such as this, particularly since the local commercial radio station in my constituency is concerned about the issue. Since I have no knowledge of the answer to the question, I am waiting for it as eagerly as other hon. Members. I hope that I shall have the opportunity to question the Home Secretary on the answer to my question.

Mr. Speaker: I do not think that I can say any more. The article is by a Mr. Simon de Bruxelles and I have no idea how reliable it is.

BRITISH COUNCIL AND COMMONWEALTH INSTITUTE SUPERANNUATION BILL

Ordered,

That the British Council and Commonwealth Institute Superannuation Bill be referred to a Second Reading Committee.—*[Mr. Neubert.]*

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Mr. Speaker: With the permission of the House, I shall put together the Questions on the two motions on draft statutory instruments.

Ordered,

That the draft Apple and Pear Development Council Order 1986 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Social Need (Northern Ireland) Order 1986 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Neubert.]*

Defence

[FIRST DAY'S DEBATE]

4.12 pm

The Secretary of State for Defence (Mr. George Younger): I beg to move,

That this House approves the Statement on the Defence Estimates 1986, contained in Cmnd. 9763.

Mr. Speaker: I have selected the amendment in the name of the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Younger: The provision of national security is the first task of any Government, and the defence plans of any responsible Government are bound to take a significant slice of the country's resources. It is important that those plans should be described and explained in detail, both to Parliament and to the taxpayer. As has become a well-established practice, this year's "Statement on the Defence Estimates" describes the nature and extent of the threat to the United Kingdom's security; sets out the policies of the Government and our allies in response; reports on the condition, strength and activities of the services; accounts to Parliament for the management of the defence budget and the Ministry of Defence; and provides a comprehensive range of background facts and figures.

However, national security depends to a very large extent on stability and continuity in defence policy. We must also move with the times. We must not only tailor our defence efforts to changes in the threat to our security; we must take account and advantage of developments in technology. Such changes can—indeed must—be based on continuity. A process of continuous upheaval and uncertainty could only reduce rather than add to our security. This evolutionary approach is graphically illustrated in successive statements from the Government. Their underlying theme is one of steadily improving defences within a consistent and stable framework of policy. Over the years, they have set out the essential background to our defence commitments and the rationale for the resources we devote to defence.

To hear some of this Government's less well-informed critics talk, one would gain the impression that our defences were on their last legs. Nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, defence has harvested the huge benefits that have flowed from the seven successive years of our commitment to the NATO real growth aim. We stuck to that commitment because it was imperative to repair the deficiencies that we inherited and to take account of developments in the threat we face. These developments are spelt out in successive statements. As the White Paper makes clear, Soviet military spending is accelerating. The Soviet Union has kept up its programme of modernising and improving its nuclear weapons, its land and air forces in Europe, and its increasing powerful navy. Unlike NATO, it maintains, and has dramatically increased, its ability to engage in chemical warfare on a large scale. Furthermore, Soviet weaponry is now growing in sophistication as well as in numbers: high quality is being added to sheer quantity.

NATO's response is well known and has been made very clear. We do not need to mirror the Warsaw pact's forces in every respect in order to preserve our own security. The NATO approach has been, and remains, consistent. It is the "twin track" of maintaining sufficient

military capacity to deter aggression combined with realistic, balanced and verifiable measures of arms control. I shall return to arms control a little later in my speech. For the moment, I want to concentrate on Britain's contribution to NATO which, as the White Paper reminds us, is a formidable one, and second only to that of the United States. In every respect, things are incomparably better than they were when we first took office. We are better organised. We have carried through the radical overhaul of defence organisation begun by my right hon. Friend the Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine)—I pay tribute to my right hon. Friend for his outstanding achievements in this area — and consolidated the improvements that have been realised in the management of defence resources.

Our service men and women are better rewarded. We have transformed their pay and conditions of service to reflect the esteem in which they are held by this Government and by society as a whole. We have better reserves and we are expanding their numbers, increasing their rewards, and widening the range of roles that they can perform. Further, the services are better equipped. Indeed, we are planning this year to devote some 45 per cent. of the defence budget to equipment.

The results of our concentration on more and better equipment are plain to see. Let me remind the House that in the last financial year alone we ordered four major and three other warships, 16 naval aircraft, Challenger tanks to equip a sixth regiment, six regiments' worth of Challenger armoured repair and recovery vehicles, 18 battalions of Warrior and Saxon armoured personnel carriers, three regiments of the new multiple-launch rocket system artillery, and 130 RAF trainer aircraft. Among many other items, we brought into service 13 warships, as well as a number of smaller vessels, 21 naval aircraft, a regiment of Challenger tanks, two battalions of Saxon armoured personnel carriers, four batteries of air defence missiles, 48 RAF aircraft and much more, from small arms to Sea Eagle missiles.

Major decisions, which I shall be taking later this year, include the provision of airborne early warning, for which competitors are due to submit firm prices by 7 July, and a decision on the way ahead for our amphibious capability.

By any standards, our achievement over the past seven years has been impressive. The ending of our commitment to real increases in defence spending does not mean that the achievements are over. Our programmes to update and re-equip the armed forces will continue. But we have to be realistic. Real growth at that pace could not have continued for ever. As the statement makes perfectly clear, and as the Select Committee on Defence has noted in its report published last week, we anticipate a slight decline in the defence budget averaging about 1½ per cent. a year for three years, excluding the planned reduction in Falklands expenditure. We have enjoyed seven years of growth; we must now capitalise on the gains we have made.

I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Member for Spelthorne (Sir H. Atkins) and his Committee on their report on the White Paper. Considering the speed with which they were obliged to consider the White Paper, take evidence on it, and draft their conclusions, the Committee has come up with a report that is a model of clarity and concision.

I should particularly like to thank the Committee for the realistic and balanced way in which it has addressed the question of matching programmes to resources. This is not a new idea, nor is it a technique of despair, only resorted to in a time of crisis. It should be, and is, the normal method of managing a large and complex budget that contains a variety of very different programmes.

This is the sensible and prudent way in which a responsible Government manage their affairs. Of course, from time to time it necessitates the taking of difficult decisions: it always does. We are perfectly prepared to face up to these. However, it would be quite absurd to exaggerate them and draw conclusions of doom and gloom. No such conclusion has any realistic justification.

Those who say that the budget must keep for ever going up and up if we are to have adequate defences are both wrong and unrealistic. Our defence budget is running at a level about 20 per cent. higher in real terms than it was in 1979. That is not all. Within that much larger budget, equipment has risen from 40 per cent. to 45 per cent. We spend a higher proportion of our budget on equipment than anyone else in NATO. Moreover, we are profiting substantially from our sustained drive to improve the output we get from defence spending. The White Paper draws attention to the remarkable increase in competition in the procurement of equipment. Two years ago, about 38 per cent. by value of equipment contracts were placed subject to competitive forces. The figure is now well over 60 per cent. Furthermore, only about 9 per cent. of contracts are now placed on the old cost-plus basis.

We are confident that the result of such greatly increased competition will be substantial reductions in tender prices and much better value for money for the Ministry, and for the taxpayer. As the Select Committee rightly observed, it is, of course, difficult to quantify the precise savings that we make. The reason should be obvious. In most cases it is hard to calculate precisely what has been saved, because nobody knows what we would have had to pay in the absence of competition.

Although I accept that the examples quoted in the White Paper, and in the Select Committee's report, are of necessity illustrative, they vividly show that the policy is biting. Thus, competition for the production of the Warrior armoured personnel carrier saved about £100 million, or 12 per cent. of the previously estimated costs. The introduction of competition for the supply of missile pallets, which we had previously bought non-competitively, has led to the price being cut by half. We have saved 20 per cent. of the estimated costs of Challenger armoured repair and recovery vehicles; £20 million of the costs of Upholder class submarines—and there are plenty of other examples.

Competition is not the end of our efficiency drive. We are continuing to transfer resources from the tail to the teeth — for example, about two thirds of naval manpower is now in the front line. Naval support staff numbers have been cut by about 6,000; the Army's "lean look" exercise is resulting in increased efficiency and the RAF's programme of contractorisation is well advanced.

We have reduced the numbers of United Kingdom-based civil servants by 77,000—about 30 per cent.—since 1979, and further reductions are planned. Ten years ago, there were 79 civil servants to every 100 personnel in the regular forces; five years ago there were 69, and today the figure has come down to 53. These reductions have not come about easily. As well as putting more work out to the

[Mr. Younger]

private sector, the Department has had to work hard at improving efficiency in working practices and eliminating inessential tasks. I am sure that the whole House will agree that the success of our Civil Service in carrying out its tasks with great efficiency while reducing its numbers by no less than 30 per cent. is by any standard a remarkable achievement. It reflects very great credit on their skill and dedication, and I should like to thank them all, at every level.

Efficiency improvements are continuing to flow in. And they are not simply once-and-for-all measures. Their effects will be permanent, and will serve to benefit the country not just for the lifetime of this Government, but during those of our successors. Other factors are working in our favour. Falklands-related expenditure is continuing to fall; we are currently enjoying the benefit of lower energy prices; and defence is sharing the dividends of the Government's successful counter-inflation policies.

I trust that it will not have escaped the notice of those who like to lambast the Government with the supposed burden of Trident that, notwithstanding misleading newspaper headlines, the cost of that programme has substantially decreased in real terms. All these things are helping. Nevertheless, we are having to manage the change in our budgetary profile from several years of real increases to a few years of slight decline. This year, I have had to look very carefuly at our programme so as to ensure that commitments and resources are properly matched.

Mr. Lewis Carter-Jones (Eccles): Does the right hon. Gentleman's argument apply to helicopters?

Mr. Younger: My argument applies to all the activities we undertake, as well as to ships, helicopters, and all other forms of equipment. Decisions on those will be announced when they are taken.

This scrutiny has been hard and realistic. I began it with no pre-conceptions. It is not yet complete—indeed, as I explained earlier, it is a continuous process. As I have assured the House, there is no question of having to withdraw from any of our major commitments or any major part of them. In order to manage the transition from real growth I shall inevitably have to take some difficult decisions.

We are having to take difficult decisions about order dates. Since the process of scrutiny is a continuous one, I cannot give the House a catalogue of final decisions, but I can give an indication of some of the decisions that flow from the exercise. In general, in order to minimise the impact on the front line, I have sought economies in the support and works areas, and in minor projects.

However, it has been necessary to go further than that. To take some examples, in the case of the Navy, we will not proceed with plans we had to retrofit new towed array sonars to type 22 frigates, which will continue with existing towed arrays. In the Army, we will not be proceeding with LAW mine, and we are reducing the provision for future mine systems. In the Air Force some adjustments are likely to the time-scale and production quantities for some weapon systems and, for example, the size of the second batch of Harrier GR5s—for which a quantity of long lead items has recently been ordered — is under consideration. A decision will be taken towards the end of the year.

The diversion of aircraft and weapons in support of the major sale of aircraft to Saudi Arabia will also have some temporary effect on the RAF programme and, in particular, will lead to a short delay in the build-up of the Tornado GR1 reconnaissance force.

As I have implied, other difficult decisions will be necessary. We will take these as and when we have to but, clearly, I shall have to take the greatest care when deciding on the size and timing of all orders for the foreseeable future. However, there is no question of wholesale deferrals. We shall take decisions, in the normal way, as they come up. For example, we attach great importance to the provision of effective self-defence for individual ships against aircraft and missiles. Our programme for enhancement of this capability has been continuing. Earlier this financial year we placed orders for a further seven Phalanx and Goalkeeper close-in weapons systems. We shall be issuing a preliminary inquiry this week to shipbuilders who wish to be invited to tender to build up to another four fleet minesweepers. Orders are likely to be placed next year. We are about to place a contract for the full-width attack mine fuse, which will dramatically increase the effectiveness of our barrier mines.

Sir Antony Buck (Colchester, North): Everything that my right hon. Friend has just said has been good news——

Mr. A. E. P. Duffy (Sheffield, Attercliffe): What good news?

Sir Antony Buck: Yes; I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will agree that what my right hon. Friend said about new equipment was good news, because the hon. Gentleman is devoted to the Navy, just as I am. However, some of us are a little disconcerted about my right hon. Friend's comments on the towed arrays for the type 22. Will my right hon. Friend assure us that the equipment that will be provided for the type 22 will make this rather expensive ship—these days all ships are expensive—fully effective, and that he is not being penny wise, pound foolish?

Mr. Younger: I appreciate my hon. and learned Friend's strong interest in this matter. Of course, we would greatly have preferred to have the advanced capability towed array. It is one measure which we have been able to take to save money. There will still be an effective towed array, which has been proved in practice, but we shall have to forgo the improvement for which we had hoped.

Sir Patrick Wall (Beverley): My right hon. Friend has not said anything about the ordering of the type 22 frigates. Unless they are ordered soon, my right hon. Friend will not be able to keep his promise to keep 50 destroyers and frigates at sea.

Mr. Younger: I appreciate my hon. Friend's remarks. If he will wait, I shall come to that subject later.

In addition to the formation of a 12th Armoured Regiment in BAOR, which we announced last year, the introduction of the Warrior armoured personnel carrier will permit us further to strengthen the capability of 1(BR) Corps by the re-mechanisation of 6 Brigade starting in 1988.

I appreciate the interest among many hon. Members on both sides of the House in the future frigate ordering programme. The House will be aware that we are currently considering tenders for follow-on type 23 frigates. Progress is being made in the negotiations, and I shall

make an announcement as soon as I can, certainly before the recess. I reaffirm also that we shall be maintaining about 50 escorts in the destroyer-frigate fleet. Our shipbuilding programme is the biggest it has been in recent years.

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead): I think that there is widespread support on both sides of the House for the idea that work should be provided for Swan Hunter, if that is at all possible. The Government have made a clear statement that the O2 of the type 23 sequence will go to Swan Hunter if its bid is competitive. In answer to parliamentary questions, the Government have said that they will judge that competitiveness on the basis of bids made by other yards for the sequence of boats from the O3 onwards. May we have an assurance that, if the Government have gone back to Swan Hunter's on its original bid for the O2 and invited it to change its final bid, that shipyard will not be allowed to change its bid for the O3 onwards now that final bids are in from the other yards?

Mr. Younger: I appreciate the hon. Gentleman's point. He is substantially right in all that he has said, but it is not quite right to say that Swan Hunter has been offered the opportunity to put in the best bid. The company has been offered the order for the type 23 frigate No. O2, provided it can match the price elsewhere. This decision was taken last year as a special gesture to Swan Hunter, which was disadvantaged by a previous decision, of which the hon. Gentleman is well aware. That is the position. At the moment, negotiations are proceeding with Swan Hunter. I hope that it is able to meet the conditions that we have put on the order and feels that it has been fairly treated in this matter.

Mr. Frank Field: Does the right hon. Gentleman accept that, by going back to Swan Hunter with information about the bids from the other yards for the O3 onwards, he will in effect have been telling Swan Hunter what the bids were for the other orders? It is therefore important that an undertaking is given that, now that final bids are in for the O3 onwards—not O2—there should be no revisions by any of the shipyards, including Swan Hunter.

Mr. Younger: Again I see the hon. Gentleman's point, but it is not quite an open competiton in the sense he has suggested. This is a special offer, if one likes to put it that way, to Swan Hunter for a special reason. It was given a special offer—if it could match the best price, it could have the order. There is no question of Swan Hunter being given any secret information from other yards. It is a question whether it can match that price. That decision may have been right, or it may have been wrong, but it was a clear decision. I hope that the House will appreciate that it was made in the best interests of Swan Hunter, giving it an opportunity to recover from what it regarded as an adverse earlier decision.

Mr. James Couchman (Gillingham): Is my right hon. Friend aware of the concern of the principals of Swan Hunter that, as a follow-on yard, it will be disadvantaged with respect to the flow of information from the lead yard unless his Department takes firm control? The principals are concerned that they will have to pay for the information which would come from the lead yard for follow-on orders.

Mr. Younger: My hon. Friend is correct. That is one of the concerns that have been expressed to us. We are negotiating on this matter with the company. Although I shall not say any more about those negotiations, I stress that the system of having a lead yard and different yards which build the follow-on ships and follow-on equipment is well tried. We shall try to ensure that it is fairly and properly applied, just as it usually has been in this case.

Sir David Price (Eastleigh): I should like to represent the interests of another shipyard which is involved in this matter. Does my right hon. Friend realise that he must be even-handed in his dealings with all the yards? We all accept the idea of first of clubs, but from then on my right hon. Friend should not just accept one yard, giving it special treatment compared with the remainder. Many yards in the United Kingdom have the same problems of unemployment, and so on. My right hon. Friend must go a little further in reassuring the House of a "fair do". That is a simple concept.

Mr. Younger: I appreciate my hon. Friend's point. I draw a distinction between the special position of Swan Hunter and the type 23 frigate 02. The decision was taken last year because of an earlier decision elsewhere that the company would have a special opportunity to bid for the 02 on certain terms which I have described. As far as the rest of the ordering, except that order, is concerned, I assure my hon. Friend that there will be absolute fairness between the various yards which submit bids. I hope that that reassures my hon. Friend.

Mr. Nicholas Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, East): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Younger: This must be the last time that I give way.

Mr. Brown: It is the last intervention, I assume, from the Labour side of the House. Can the right hon. Gentleman tell us how many frigates he intends to order this year?

Mr. Younger: That would be to anticipate the announcement I hope to make before the summer recess. The hon. Gentleman would not expect me to anticipate that announcement today, although he might hope that I shall.

The result of all our efforts will be a realistic programme that will allow us to maintain our present all-round contribution to NATO. The White Paper makes clear the scale and diversity of that contribution. Among our NATO allies, only the United States maintains a greater range of commitments. Furthermore, as the White Paper emphasises, none of our four main NATO commitments can be seen in isolation from one another. All are interrelated. All are irreplaceable. The elimination or serious reduction of any one of them would seriously weaken the Alliance.

We do not take the insular view that our security interests stop at our back door. Not only do we retain formal responsibility for the defence of our dependent territories but we have world-wide political, economic and trade links. We therefore have a legitimate interest in promoting stability throughout the world, and our out-of-area capabilities and deployments make their own contribution to the security interests of the Alliance.

The House will know that a Royal Navy task group is currently circumnavigating the world and taking part in a series of exercises with our friends and allies. The task

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group has already visited Venezuela, the United States and Canada and has just completed a successful contribution to exercise RIMPAC in the Pacific. I am also glad to be able to announce today that HMS Illustrious, which was damaged by fire earlier this year, will be rejoining the group later this summer. On the final leg of the deployment, in November and December, the group will be involved in an important exercise in Oman, which will demonstrate our ability to respond rapidly to a crisis anywhere in the world by strategic air deployment.

Our all-round contribution gives this country a strong and influential voice in NATO. It enables us to play a leading part in all matters affecting our national security. It ensures that we have a major say in formulating NATO's policies. The White Paper illustrates this point. It describes the prominent part we are playing in promoting more and better equipment collaboration, both with our European allies and more widely within NATO. We also hold a central position in NATO defence planning, including, particularly, our strong support for efforts to improve the Alliance's conventional defences. As the House will be aware, Britain is the first country outside the United States to have received substantial contracts for research under the strategic defence initiative. Last week contracts were concluded worth over $14 million to British companies and research establishments. I am confident that more are on the way in the near future. This is, I think, a very encouraging start.

It is, after all, only six months since the memorandum of understanding that covers British participation was signed. This is a very short time in the context of the SDI research programme as a whole. There is a very long way to go in SDI research, and there are plenty of opportunities for other British firms, universities and institutions to join in. I hope that they will take advantage of the tremendous possibilities that exist.

I note, with some surprise, that Opposition parties are now committing themselves to oppose those contracts and the high-technology jobs that they will safeguard. I only hope they realise that their policy would result in the research programme for SDI continuing unabated with no participation for British industry, a drain of British skills to the United States, and no British influence at all in the conduct of the SDI research programme. Perhaps with that in mind the House will agree with me that the actions of today's Opposition make the Luddites of old like wizards of high technology by comparison.

The White Paper also reaffirms our belief in, and support for, effective measures of arms control. We have long emphasised that strong defence and realistic arms control go together. We have also set out very clearly what arms control cannot do. It is not an alternative to defence; and it is not a quick and easy route to better East-West relations. However, when both sides are prepared to negotiate seriously with the aim of reaching balanced and verifiable agreements it can achieve very real benefits. This is our aim and the West has on the negotiating table radical and serious proposals for achieving it—50 per cent. cuts in the superpowers' strategic arsenals; total elimination of the whole class of long-range intermediate nuclear missiles; a global ban on chemical weapons, reduction in conventional forces in Europe, beginning with the crucial central front; and the introduction of a wide range of significant measures to improve confidence and stability in Europe. We hope that the Soviet Union is prepared to take an equally constructive attitude.

In recent weeks the Soviet Union has tabled a range of new proposals at the bilateral US-Soviet talks in Geneva. We would very much welcome it if that was indeed a sign that it was now prepared to take a more constructive approach. President Reagan gave a cautious welcome to the proposals in his Glassboro speech 10 days ago. I know from my discussions last week with the US Administration that they are considering them very carefully. If the Russians are now indeed ready for serious negotiations, they will not find lacking a positive response from the United States.

In the meantime, we support adherence to treaties and agreements that already exist. We applaud President Reagan's decision to dismantle older weapon systems to remain within SALT 2 limits; we urge the Soviet Union to respond constructively, and, as I stressed in the United States last week, we hope that both sides will continue to observe the SALT agreements in the future.

This country is directly involved in talks at the various forums for multilateral arms control at Geneva, in Stockholm, and in Vienna. Perhaps I can highlight just two points. The first concerns chemical weapons. At the Geneva conference on disarmament we are working hard for a verifiable worldwide ban on those dreadful weapons. We abandoned our offensive chemical warfare capability in the late 1950s. The United States has produced none since 1969. The Soviet Union has responded to that example of one-sided disarmament not by reciprocating, but by exploiting its 17-year monopoly to the hilt.

There is an important point here that needs answering. If there were any validity in the unilateralists' theory that one-sided disarmament would produce an equivalent response from the other side, the West's one-sided chemical warfare disarmament would surely have proved it. The Soviet Union has had no need whatever to produce chemical weapons for over 17 years, yet it has carried on regardless. Nothing could prove more clearly that one-sided gestures are futile, and that negotiations will succeed only when backed by strength. Those are the circumstances in which the decision has been taken for the United States to modernise its own chemical weapon stocks if no arms control agreement is reached. Our primary goal must still remain a global ban.

Secondly, the House will have noted that NATO has established a high level task force on conventional arms control to look at ways of strengthening stability and security in Europe through the increased openness and the establishment of a verifiable, comprehensive and stable balance of conventional forces at lower levels.

We welcome Eastern recognition of long-standing Western concerns about conventional disarmament in the Budapest statement of 11 June. While there are a number of questionable elements in it—such as the presumption that parity in conventional forces already exists in the whole of Europe—we shall be considering the Eastern ideas carefully, both nationally and in the high level task force. In the meantime, there is ample opportunity for the Warsaw pact's words to be reflected in a practical and positive way in the negotiations at Vienna and Stockholm.

The Government's approach to arms control, like our approach to the defence of this country's vital interests, is firm, logical, consistent and realistic. Not only the British

people, but our allies, have the utmost confidence in our ability and willingness to defend western values and to secure peace with freedom in Europe.

Mr. Gavin Strang (Edinburgh, East): Before the right hon. Gentleman leaves the general area of arms control I should like to ask him about one issue he has not addressed—the British Government's attitude towards a comprehensive test ban in view of the test last week and the continuance of the moratorium. The British Government have always argued that their only objection to a comprehensive test ban is the need for adequate verification and that if that could be achieved they would certainly settle for a comprehensive test ban treaty. In view of the statements in recent months, which suggest that the Government are moving towards the American position —even if they could have adequate verification they still would not want it—could the Secretary of State tell us where he stands? Is it still Government policy to try to have a comprehensive test ban treaty?

Mr. Younger: I am glad to respond to that. I can confirm that it is still very much the Government's position to do everything we can to aim for a comprehensive test ban treaty. As long as that fails to be negotiated, tests have to continue in order to maintain the capability and safety factors of present weapons. Our ultimate aim remains unchanged, to have a comprehensive test ban treaty. It is still the case that verification and so on is the most severe obstacle to achieving that. I hope that it can be overcome as quickly as possible.

I referred earlier to defence as the prime responsibility of any Government, and I must return to that point now. It is far from easy for any Government to fulfil this requirement. It is necessary to allocate funds which could so easily be needed in other fields of government to face up to the reality of the various dreadful types of weapons with which we are threatened; it is necessary to choose priorities, which is never easy. But those hard facts have to be faced, and a Government with any claim to be responsible have to face up to them.

It is precisely in this respect that the present stance of all our Opposition parties falls so lamentably short as the amendments tabled to today's motion so amply and frankly demonstrate. It is bad enough that we face a so-called "alliance" which has two defence policies that are in complete conflict with one another. Liberals, on the one hand, wish to ban all nuclear weapons and many support the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. The Social Democrats, on the other hand, recognise the danger of that and support a nuclear deterrent, but they do not know what, except that they will cancel the Trident programme. That shambles is only made worse by the current position taken up by their leaders—that as they do not know what to do, they must take more time to think about it. The plain fact is that there is no such time available. The decisions we took to initiate the Trident programme were taken in 1980 to fill a need in the mid-1990s. That is the sort of lead time which one has to face up to for highly complex products. In that matter, the alliance is simply left behind. It is too late to think about that now.

But the Labour party, which has at least taken up a position, has chosen one which would be gravely damaging to Britain and NATO, and, I fear, even more fatal to itself. Abandoning the Polaris fleet which is our ultimate defence now, and the Trident programme which will replace it, is a policy fraught with danger. The Labour party's policy would leave us with no deterrent to an attack by vastly superior conventional and nuclear forces, other than a big build-up of conventional arms, probably requiring conscription, which would not only be far more expensive than Trident but quite inadequate to redress the conventional imbalance that it sought to meet. Labour would add to the abandoning of Polaris and Trident, we understand, the removal of all United States nuclear bases from Britain. The effect of those policies really cannot have been thought through by anyone in the Opposition, and it is high time it was.

I have no doubt that the United States response would be a greater likelihood of reduction of its contribution to the defence of Europe both in men and money. It is the biggest contribution of all. Those reductions would be followed by others, to the great weakening of the NATO forces in the face of an ever-strengthening threat. I accept that that policy may be helpful in patching up the deep divisions in the Labour party, but it simply will not do for a party which, presumably, aspires to become a Government. I just do not believe that the British people, if they were ever faced with such a dangerous and unworkable policy, would contemplate supporting it for one moment.

This is, of course, for the Labour party to decide—not me—but I hope that it will listen with great care to what is said in the debate, because there is still time for Labour Members to think again and draw back from a policy that is likely to be so damaging.

Mr. Donald Stewart (Western Isles): I have listened to the Secretary of State's comprehensive review. I appreciate that it is not entirely within his departmental remit, but the right hon. Gentleman has not referred to the shrinkage of the merchant service in recent years, which is an important part of the defence equation. What do the Government intend to do about that?

Mr. Younger: I entirely agree with the right hon. Gentleman that that is a most important point. I can only say that I cannot include every aspect of this large White Paper in one speech, but I can assure him that that matter gives rise to great concern. We are watching carefully the state of the merchant fleet with particular regard to the types of ships that we are likely to need for any future defence purpose. The present situation is that there are sufficient such ships for our needs, except for one or two particular categories. However, we are keeping the matter closely under review. I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will accept that.

As I have said, defence is the most important long-term issue that any Government face.

Mr. Paddy Ashdown (Yeovil): The right hon. Gentleman appears to be moving towards his conclusion. I wanted to intervene because he roundly attacked the inconsistencies, as he sees it, of the Opposition parties. He claimed for the Government stability, consistency and genuine continuity of policy stretching over the years.

Earlier the right hon. Gentleman carefully explained to the House that he was cutting overall defence expenditure by one and a half percentage points, and perhaps five or six percentage points over the next five years. I should like to draw his attention to the answer given by his

[Mr. Paddy Ashdown]

predecessor to last year's Select Committee on Defence, when it was put to him that that might happen. His predecessor said:

"I would think that is an unthinkable denial of resources in the defence budget. There are no plans or any discussions or even information that such a thing could come about."

In the light of the fact that the right hon. Gentleman has announced that such a thing has just come about, how on earth does he square that statement with his predecessor's clear answer, taken on the basis that it could not be, as we must say in the House, a deliberate deceit?

Mr. Younger: I suggest to the hon. Gentleman that one thing he would be well advised not to try to do would be to reopen the subject of the divisions in the alliance on defence. That would be much better swept under the carpet, if the hon. Gentleman could find a carpet big enough.

With regard to the hon. Gentleman's precise point, there is nothing new in any of this. It was clear as from last year what the trend of expenditure would be in the defence budget. What I had to do, which my predecessor did not have to do because it was not yet in the time scale for him to do it, was deal with this year's review of the budgeting expenditure and bring it into line with the expenditure in the White Paper. There is nothing new about that. It is well known. The Select Committee has given an extensive description of it.

The hon. Gentleman's energies would, on reflection, be better directed to going back to his colleagues in the Social Democratic party and trying to get some agreement out of them about a joint policy for the alliance, because two parties that have two different defence policies may be giving choice, but it is a choice that the British people will find confusing.

As I have said, defence is the most important long-term issue that any Government face. It is not a subject for flippant sloganising, and it is not susceptible to glib solutions. Security can be achieved only by sustained efforts to provide the forces that are necessary. The Government are facing up to their responsibilities seriously and realistically, as the White Paper makes clear. Defence is one area of policy where there should be no changes of direction from year to year. There are no quick fixes in this White Paper. Instead, there is a clear message —continuity, consolidation and realism; and sustained effort in support of NATO and in defence of our peace and freedom.

Today we have before us two amendments tabled by two of the Opposition parties—or perhaps I should say three. They are revealing amendments because they attempt to lay before us the truly devastating and damaging alternatives, or non-alternatives, with which the country is faced. In view of those amendments, which I hope will be closely scrutinised in the debate, I ask the House to approve the motion on the Defence White Paper.

4.48 pm

Mr. Denzil Davies (Llanelli): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

"believes that the plans outlined in the Statement on the Defence Estimates 1986, Cmnd. 9673, and in particular the Government's plans to buy the Trident nuclear system, are leading to damaging cuts in Britain's conventional defence capabilities at home and abroad and in Britain's defence industrial base; calls upon the Government to cancel Trident and to use the money saved for more practical non-nuclear defence purposes; declares that the security and the defence of the United Kingdom will be best served in future by maintaining strong conventional defences within the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation and not by acquiring a new generation of nuclear weaponry of any kind; and calls upon the Government to take an active part in securing the removal of all nuclear weapons from the United Kingdom and the reduction and abolition of all nuclear weapons, and also to make plain its opposition to the production and deployment of chemical weapons by the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the United States of America and any other nations".

The Secretary of State has tried to paint a reasonably rosy picture of defence expenditure, but, as he knows—he has not tried to conceal it—it is clear that from now on expenditure for Britain's defences will fall. The figures were in the public expenditure White Paper and, of course, they are in the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1986", which we are now debating.

The calculation of the percentage amount of that fall, as often, depends on what assumptions are made, but they range from about 4·5 per cent. at one end to close on 7 per cent. at the other. Outside commentators and, I am told, perhaps even some internal Treasury sources have estimated that the fall, cut or reduction could be close on £1 billion a year. When that point was put to the Secretary of State in the Select Committee on Defence, he seemed surprised. However, the accuracy of the figure has never been convincingly challenged. Perhaps it will be challenged later in the debate but it has never been refuted.

As with all Governments, this Government's figures are based upon a number of optimistic assumptions and on wishful thinking. They are based on assumptions about inflation and the exchange rates. The inflation figures — and the Select Committee stressed the importance of these figures—may look reasonable at the moment. However, with the Chancellor running the money printing presses on a three-shift basis, and with wages in the private and public sectors increasing by twice or three times the retail price index, the short-term future for inflation does not look too good. With the balance of payments deteriorating, the value of the pound in the international exchanges can only decline. It will certainly not go up. As the Secretary of State knows, a rise in inflation and a fall in the exchange rates would make his problem worse.

A number of major commitments have not yet been costed. The cost of completing the Nimrod project, whether or not it is completed by GEC — and the Opposition hope and believe that GEC will be able to complete it successfully—has not been calculated. If it is not completed by GEC, there will be the cost of purchasing a new system from the United States.

The cost of replacing the Royal Navy's amphibious vessels has yet to be calculated. The Opposition believe that these vessels must be replaced.

Some of us were rather surprised to read the evidence given to the Select Committee by the Secretary of State regarding the European fighter aircraft. Apparently that aircraft has not been costed. The Secretary of State is hoping that the expenditure will not fall into the budget until well into the 1990s when no doubt he will not be Secretary of State for Defence. Even more surprising, it appears that all that we are committed to—and perhaps Conservative Members knew this—is a feasibility study. My hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) will deal with that point in detail

tomorrow. However, the thousands of workers in the aerospace industry need to be told what the commitments are and we need assurances about the building of the European fighter aircraft.

On other occasions the Secretary of State has told us that there will not be a fundamental defence review. We have been told that there will be stringent financial reviews, hard choices and difficult decisions. As we know, that is the language of cuts. However, we have been told that there will be no review.

I believe the Secretary of State. He would not dare, as he knows, for political reasons, have a fundamental defence review. We believe that if the Conservative party were to win the next general election a defence review would result. In the meantime, the Secretary of State, like the good soldier that he is, will soldier on. There will be selective cuts, and we have heard about some of them today. There will be programme delays and there will be what is known in the trade as salami slicing.

It was reported recently in *Jane's Defence Weekly*—and we have heard a list of cuts today—that 40 projects are under consideration for cuts or delays. The cuts will fall mainly on the budget for equipment. We believe and fear that the prime target again will be the ships of the Royal Navy. It is rumoured that the ghost of Sir John Nott is again beginning to stalk the corridors of the Ministry of Defence, striking terror above and below decks. The Government maintain—and we heard it again today from the Secretary of State—that they are committed to a Navy of 50 destroyers and frigates. The Under-Secretary of State has also made that claim, but we have noticed that he makes it these days with little relish or enthusiasm.

As the Select Committee made clear, there is no point in having 50 frigates and destroyers if most of them are in a naval museum or if they are unable to venture out much further than the Isle of Wight. To maintain a modern 50-warship Navy, the Government must order at least three type 23 frigates a year. We got one in 1984. We did not get any in 1985, and we still have not had one in 1986, although great announcements are presaged for the end of this Session.

Unless the Government speed up their ordering quite drastically, our sailors will have to go to sea in the 1990s with the technology of the 1950s and 1960s. The costs of maintaining an aging Navy will of course be an additional burden on the defence budget, and the prospects for our warship building yards, especially on the Tyne and on the Clyde, will be grim.

Under this Government we have already seen the virtual demise of Britain as a builder of merchant ships. Our Merchant Navy is declining rapidly and, unless orders start coming quickly, we will soon become a naval nation with little or no capacity to build our own warships.

The real problem, which was hardly mentioned by the Secretary of State, is Trident. Over the next few years, the cost of Trident will increase rapidly and dramatically. At the same time, the total spent on defence will not only remain static but will actually fall. Within a falling defence budget, there will be an escalation in cost of one item which is completely sacrosanct and which will not be cut by the Government in any way.

Yes, of course the Government can afford Trident, but the price will be paid by the ships of the Royal Navy, by the aircraft of the Royal Air Force or by the tanks in the British Army, or through a combination of all three. Our conventional contribution to NATO and our front-line capability will be reduced and weakened at a time when the urgent necessity in Europe, especially after the lessons of the nuclear explosion in the Ukraine, is to raise the nuclear threshold. Some of the battlefield nuclear weapons in central Europe are a thousand times more powrful than the explosion in the nuclear power station at Chernobyl. If one or two of those battlefield nuclear weapons were used, friend and foe would be destroyed, and not just on the battlefield. The urgent necessity is to build our conventional strength and raise the nuclear threshold. The Government are reducing our conventional strength and thereby lowering the nuclear threshold in NATO and in Europe.

Cutting the non-nuclear equipment budget—which is where we believe the money for Trident will be found—would also put thousands of jobs in the defence industries seriously at risk, because 95 per cent. of those jobs are engaged in producing non-nuclear equipment. The damage is compounded because almost £5 billion of the contribution and the cost of Trident will not be spent in Britain. It will be spent in the defence industries of the United States. A type 23 frigate costs £110 million or £120 million, yet the shipyards and the warship yards on the Clyde and on the Tyne have to scramble for the few orders available. However, the Government are prepared to pour £5 billion into the defence factories in California and Texas which have done so well out of President Reagan's defence-led and deficit-financed economic boom.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement (Mr. John Lee): Will the right hon. Gentleman give employees in our naval warship yards an assurance that their jobs would be safeguarded under a naval programme initiated by an incoming Labour Administration? Will he give the same guarantee that he gave to workers at Vickers in Barrow?

Mr. Davies: Indeed. We have made it absolutely clear that, because we will switch the money spent on Trident to conventional——

Mr. Michael Mates (Hampshire, East): All of it?

Mr. Davies: Yes, all of it. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman should read the Opposition amendment.

Mr. Mates: No cuts?

Mr. Davies: I can give the Minister the assurance that he sought.

Mr. Lee: May I have it absolutely clear? All jobs in naval shipyards will be guaranteed by an incoming Labour Government through a naval building programme: is that what the right hon. Gentleman is saying?

Mr. Davies: The jobs will be preserved because we will be able to preserve the naval ordering programme and the present Government will not. I shall read our amendment out if the hon. Member for Hampshire, East (Mr. Mates) wants me to.

Mr. Mates: Yes, read it out.

Mr. Davies: We believe that the money saved by cancelling Trident should be used for non-nuclear defence. It should be used to maintain and preserve existing commitments. We do not believe that the Government can preserve existing commitments—a 50-warship Navy, a European fighter aircraft and the rest. It should be used

[Mr. Davies]

also to strengthen our conventional defences in NATO, to raise the nuclear threshold and, we hope, to prevent a nuclear war, or a war in Europe becoming a nuclear one.

Mr. Couchman: The right hon. Gentleman has just given some commitments to my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State and he made some statements regarding the extent to which Labour would transfer from Trident to conventional forces. How, therefore, does he explain that, on a platform which I recently shared with the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher), when the hon. Gentleman was challenged on how he would find money for his aspirations for the National Health Service, he said, "We will stop Trident"?

Mr. Davies: I will have to study what my hon. Friend said. I have just made the point clearly in the House of Commons, which is the right place in which to say such things.

Mr. Couchman *rose*——

Mr. Davies: No. This is a two-day debate. I have given way enough and the hon. Gentleman will have plenty of opportunity to make his speech. I have made the commitment absolutely clearly where it should be made ——here in the House.

We believe that the case against acquiring Trident or any other nuclear system for Britain does not rest only on financial and economic grounds. The issue is not just about modernisation, a word conveniently chosen by the Government to preserve what was again today described as continuity so that there is no debate about this fundamental issue.

The issue at the moment is whether it makes economic, military and political sense for Britain, bearing in mind all of the changes that have occurred in society, our place in the world and in the world itself since the end of the last world war, to acquire what I would describe as third generation nuclear weapons. The House knows that Mr. Attlee and Mr. Bevin acquired the first. I understand from my reading of the history books that there was not much debate about that then. Mr. Macmillan acquired the second generation; and ultimately—there is still time—the country will have to decide whether to go down that road for the third time.

It is absurd to pretend that this is a simple issue. There are financial and economic factors, and the effect on our non-nuclear defence exenditure must be considered. We have also to consider the morality, or otherwise, of nuclear weapons and the military credibility of a British nuclear system in a world of massive superpower nuclear superiority. There are also the political consequences for Britain of whatever decision is taken to be considered.

Perhaps because the issue is so complex and can never be entirely resolved by applying objective criteria, most debates in the House and outside tend, unfortunately, to become slanging matches. Those who are against the bomb are accused of being unpatriotic, and those in favour of it are sometimes accused of being the perpetrators or seekers after nuclear holocaust. It is obvious that neither picture is true of the overwhelming majority of hon. Members and people outside.

We agree with the Government at least in one respect. It is no good pretending that this decision can be put off much longer. It is no good hoping that the political dilemma can be avoided by waiting almost until the Polaris hulls are full of holes and the noise of their engines can be heard in the Kremlin. Nor is there any escape, as some seem to think, in the arms talks. We all hope that the talks will be successful, whatever that really means. Mr. Karpov and Mr. Kemplemann at Geneva might eventually be able to agree deep cuts in the strategic nuclear arsenals of Russia and America. They may agree to cuts of 50 per cent. I hope that they do. As the Secretary of State said, some optimistic noises are coming from Geneva, Washington and Moscow.

Even if Russia and America agreed deep cuts, they would still have massive nuclear capabilities and all of the questions about a British nuclear system would remain. Questions about morality, costs, and the effect on our conventional weaponry and the military capability of a British nuclear system would remain. There is no escape from making a decision. It is no good hoping that the Geneva talks will enable hon. Members to postpone a choice.

The Opposition's stance is clear. We do not believe that it makes sense, militarily or otherwise, for Britain to go nuclear a third time. I have mentioned the economic and financial case and the effects on our conventional defences, but there is a moral case. Many people might be surprised to discover that they agree even with President Reagan that nuclear weapons are immoral. There are many who travel the extra mile with the American Catholic bishops and conclude, as they did, that if nuclear weapons are immoral a defence policy based on them is also immoral. There are many people who share the late President Kennedy's abhorrence for what he called "a strategy of annihilation".

The military arguments that have been trotted out in respect of the British nuclear deterrent have not been wholly convincing. All of the best casuists and sophists at the Foreign Office and at the Ministry of Defence have not been able to make a cast iron case.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): The right hon. Gentleman and the Labour amendment make it clear that the Labour party does not believe in going on to the next generation of British nuclear weaponry. Will he make it clear whether, if Labour took office, it would decommission Polaris immediately?

Mr. Davies: I shall come to that.

The case for Trident has not been made strongly. We have had several facile phrases. We have been told about the second centre of decision-making. We have a seamless web. We have the weapon of last resort. That is a chilling phrase which conjures up a romantic but gruesome image of Britannia and her trident with her back to the sea and with Europe apparently in ruins and America either defeated or sulking in her tent. Then there was, and no doubt still is, the "peace in Europe for 40 years" brigade. That slogan was much favoured by the Secretary of State's predecessor, the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine). It had the slightly veiled hint that in reality it was the British bomb that had contained the hordes from the East. It ignored the effect on Europe of the post-war settlement and the fact that there had been other periods in European history when there had been peace for 40 years without nuclear weapons.

I suspect that, paradoxically, the British bomb was not contrived or conceived as a military weapon, and that that

is why it has been so difficult to find a military rationale for its existence. I believe that it was born out of the great conferences at the end of the second world war. It could be said to be a Yalta or Potsdam bomb, a "seat at the top table" bomb—these days we hear little about the top table—or, dare I say it, a "not naked in the conference chamber" bomb. Sadly for some and happily for others there has been no British presence at the superpower talks. The Secretary of State tried to trot out the conferences where Britain is still present, but there has been no British presence at talks about nuclear weapons since 1963. The players are now Mr. Karpov and Mr. Kemplemann. We believe that it would be foolish nonsense to conjure up images of past glories by spending £10 billion or perhaps more on a weapon which we cannot afford and which we would not dare use.

It is no secret that some hon. Members are opposed to Trident, yet believe that Britain can and should remain a nuclear weapon state. It is not the view of the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Mr. Steel). In an interview published in *Jane's Defence Weekly* on 15 March the right hon. Gentleman said:

"As far as we can tell you, there is no case for renewing the independent nuclear deterrent . . . We don't see any case for the British independent deterrent and that's a view the Liberal Party has consistently taken since the late 1950s."

He continued—I do not understand this—

"we prefer to be simply the servicing and the facility arrangement for the American nuclear deterrent."

It is no secret that some people believe that it is possible to cancel Trident and still acquire some sort of British nuclear weapon. They are indulging in escapism and fantasy. As Mr. William Rodgers, a vice-president of the SDP, pointed out in *The Times* of Thursday 12 June, such a view is a "fudge". He said:

"The real fudge is to say unequivocally that Trident should be cancelled but that Britain should remain a nuclear weapons state. The lacuna is obvious: how? The idea of submarine-launched cruise missiles has its supporters. But it was rejected by Labour ministers in 1978 and then by a Conservative Government. Most defence experts are sceptical.

If Trident is cancelled in two years' time, some £2·5 billion to £3 billion will have been spent . . . It is far from clear that the remaining sum would enable additional submarines to be built, new British warheads for cruise missiles to be developed and new missiles acquired, perhaps with French participation, all at significantly less than the cost of Trident."

The right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) may not agree with Mr. Rodgers. I have always listened with great interest to the right hon. Gentleman's speeches on defence and disarmament. He takes a great interest in the subject. However, I am afraid that on this matter the right hon. Gentleman is all at sea. He scatters words, ideas, and, metaphorically speaking, various nuclear systems around the Chamber like confetti, but we get little hard, practical analysis. We get many prescriptions, but there is no cure in sight.

Last year we started with the French M7 missile, then we had a various assortment of cruise missiles, American missiles on ships, submarines, land and air planes, and then Anglo-French missiles on ships, submarines, land and air planes. Now the ideas have become even grander and more dangerous. Recently in Bonn the right hon. Gentleman was quoted as saying that we needed a European bomb — a European deterrent — which is, interestingly, mentioned in the amendment on the Order Paper in the names of the leaders of the Liberal party and the SDP. They call for a European bomb and a sort of European nuclear club. It seems that the right hon. Member for Devonport has won after all.

Who will prepare and bring in this European bomb? I suppose that Britain would contribute, but I do not know about the French. Perhaps they will play and perhaps they will not. They are not a member of the military structure of NATO. Will the Danes contribute to this European bomb? Will the Dutch, the Belgians and the Norwegians take part? Will they be consulted for their views?

The most substantial question is whether the Federal Republic of Germany will take part. I should have thought that it was impossible to have a European deterrent without some sort of participation—perhaps it can be hedged around—by the most powerful economic and industrial country in Western Europe whose territory would be in the front line. Whichever countries participated, it would be impossible to have a European bomb without German participation. One could say that at least Franz Josef Strauss and his friends would be queuing up rapidly to sign and join.

The repercussions of a European bomb, which must be considered as they have been tabled in an amendment, are enormous for the stability of West Germany, for other European nations of NATO, for relationships between Western Europe and the Soviet Union, and for arms control implications of the non-proliferation treaty, the comprehensive nuclear test ban agreement and all the other agreements which have been negotiated since the war. That is too high and too dangerous a price to pay to exorcise the angst of the leader of the SDP.

We believe in, and we have tried to put forward, a comprehensive, clear defence policy, although the Secretary of State does not like it. It is that we should make a substantial conventional contribution to NATO and that we should spend the money that would otherwise be wasted on Trident on our conventional defences.

Dr. David Owen (Plymouth, Devonport): The right hon. Gentleman has not yet explained to the House how he justifies throwing the United States out of its nuclear bases here. How can he rely on a presence in NATO when NATO strategy is firmly based on conventional and nuclear deterrence? Has he seen what has happened to the ANZUS treaty which, in the past few days, has been effectively set aside because the United States was not prepared to be a member of a treaty organisation when one member of it had said that ships carrying nuclear weapons could not go through its ports?

Mr. Davies: I know two things. First, a Labour Government will contribute, as this Government are contributing, 95 per cent. of Britain's defence budget to NATO. That is a substantial commitment, and greater than that of the United States. That contribution will be valued by our NATO partners, and will maintain the influence within the Alliance that we have now.

Secondly, I noticed in the alliance amendment a reference to bases. I suggest that the time has come when the right hon. Member for Devonport should make his own, constructive defence policy and not try to escape by attacking the Labour party's defence policy.

I have made it clear that our policy means that there will be a strong conventional contribution to NATO. That policy is morally right for Britain and it makes military sense. We shall put that policy honestly and clearly to the electorate, and I believe that it will accept it.

5.22 pm

Sir Humphrey Atkins (Spelthorne): Before I come to my comments on the speech made by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence, I shall spend some time dealing with the speech made by the right hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies), speaking on behalf of the Labour party. Several points arise from his speech that I wish to explore. He has made it clear that it is Labour party policy to abandon the nuclear deterrent. I accept that this is the most fearful weapon that mankind has invented and I have no doubt that both he and I would be much happier if it had never been invented.

However, does the right hon. Gentleman believe that the Soviet Union does not look at it in that way? Does he think that the possession by the West of nuclear weapons does not give the Soviet Union pause for thought? If he believes that the Soviet Union would hesitate to attack an enemy when it knew that it would be retaliated in that way he is admitting that nuclear weapons are a deterrent.

As I understood him, and no doubt he will correct me if I am wrong, the right hon. Gentleman is saying that nuclear weapons are a deterrent to the Soviet Union but that we should not have them. In effect, he is saying that the West must rely on the United States or France for its deterrence. I find it difficult to understand how he and some of his colleagues can, at one and the same time, be offensive about the United States and say that we shall rely on that country for the deterrent. Perhaps the right hon. Gentleman would prefer that we rely on the French. Does he seriously believe that by deliberately weakening ourselves we should be safer? I cannot follow the logic of that argument.

The right hon. Gentleman was clear about what he would do with the money saved if we stopped all nuclear weapon programmes. I was delighted, because he was not so clear only six short months ago when he said that the Labour party would

"maintain conventional defence spending at present levels."—[*Official Report*, 30 January 1986; Vol. 90, c. 1126.]

Presumably he has changed his mind since then, as he said that he wants to increase expenditure on conventional defence. However, I must draw his attention to the fact that that is not what his noble Friend Lord Graham of Edmonton said in the other place last week. He was speaking on behalf of the Labour party, so I am not allowed to quote his words. However, he made it clear that, in the view of the Labour party in the other place, we were spending too much on defence. If the right hon. Gentleman does not believe me, I suggest that he consults the Lords *Hansard* for 25 June 1986, column 363. Perhaps the right hon. Gentleman is disowning the Labour party Front Bench in the other place. It is difficult to understand precisely where it stands.

If the right hon. Gentleman's latest remarks, contradicting what he said in January, are now the position of the Labour party, I wonder whether to do what he suggests would increase the level of deterrence. He says that if we save money on the nuclear deterrent, we could spend it all on something else. Last week, in the other place, a Government statement was made by my noble Friend Lord Glenarthur, which I am allowed to quote. He spoke of the alternatives that one could buy for the money that we spend on Trident over its life. He said:

"This will be the equivalent of about three armoured divisions on the central front or, in terms of the equivalent annual expenditure, half the amount we spend on service training, a third of the amount that we spend on BAOR, and a mere one-sixth of the amount that we spend on service pay and allowances". —[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 25 June 1986; Vol. 477, c. 370.]

My noble Friend asked the Opposition in the other place, and I now ask the right hon. Gentleman, whether he seriously thinks that, if he were sitting in the Kremlin, he would be more deterred by this country's possession of Trident or by our possession of three armoured divisions on the central front. I hope that this question will be answered by the end of the debate. I cannot say that three armoured divisions, however good they are—they would be very good if they were ours—would be a deterrent equal to Trident. The right hon. Gentleman has proposed that all nuclear weapons should be removed from the United Kingdom and that the ships that carry them should not be allowed to enter our ports. What effect does he think that that would have on the United States?

I had the pleasure and privilege of attending a conference in the United States three weeks ago and the hon. Member for Sheffield, Attercliffe (Mr. Duffy) was there with me. It was clear from what was said by eminent United States speakers, not service people but people from universities, that the attitude of the United States is not anything like as good we would like it to be. We were told from the platform that the United States, which, as we all know, contributes nearly three times as much to defence as all the European countries put together, is getting fed up with constantly being told by Europe that everything that it does is wrong.

We were told by one professor that a survey showed that attitudes in the United States were changing and that there was definitely a mood that Europe was a thoroughly tiresome place a long way away that cost America a great deal of time and effort. There was a question mark over whether it was really worth saving—*[Laughter.]* The hon. Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Wareing) can laugh. We and the hon. Member for Attercliffe, if he was there at the time, were told that not once but twice from the platform during the conference organised by the Supreme Allied Commander-in-Chief Atlantic. There is no doubt that Americans increasingly question, as the older ones among them die off, the need for them to be in Europe.

Another fact that I learnt when I was in the United States is that, increasingly, the people of the United States are turning away from the Atlantic. That is because, as I was told, for the first time more than 50 per cent. of the population live west of the Mississippi. When they look to the sea, they do not look this way; they look the other way. If Britain took a step such as has been described by the right hon. Member for Llanelli, the effect in the United States would be shattering. If the policy enunciated by the right hon. Gentleman were put into effect, the United States would before long withdraw from NATO. When the right hon. Gentleman propounds that policy, he should address himself to that difficulty.

I shall talk briefly about the report of the Select Committee on Defence, of which I have the honour to be Chairman, which was mentioned in kind terms by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. I shall make three comments on the many matters which the Select Committee on Defence sought to cover in the report now before the House.

My first point is how much I and all my colleagues welcome the attitude of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to the Committee and its activities. He has held office for only a few months, but he has been extremely candid with the Committee. We all recognise his determination to get to grips with the many proplems that face him. We mentioned many of those problems in our third report of last Session, including the consequences of the ending of the Government's commitment to increase defence expenditure by 3 per cent. per annum. Those problems have not gone away. The Minister knows that. He made it clear to the Committee that he knew and, furthermore, that he would grip the problems.

One example of the Minister's determination is the Nimrod airborne early warning adventure, started in 1977 by the Labour party, which has gone so unhappily wrong for so many years. My right hon. Friend made it clear that if the British system cannot be made to work in six months with a limited expenditure of money, he will have to look elsewhere. I agree with that. He must. Everyone hopes that he will not have to, because we would infinitely prefer a system manufactured by Marconi or another company which could be put in our aeroplanes and would work. The present system does not work. The Minister is right to put a time limit on the system because, as it stands, and as the Select Committee has been told by the Supreme Allied Commander-in-Chief Europe, it is a hole in the defences of NATO.

That is a decision that the Minister will have to take. As he has frankly admitted to us, he must take many others. I shall not discuss them all because they are in the report, but I speak for the entire Committee and, I am sure, for the entire House when I say how glad we are to have a Secretary of State who is determined to get to grips with the problems and settle them in the best way he can and as quickly as he can in the interests of Britain's defence.

Secondly, I mention the Merchant Navy, as I did in the debate last year, and, as the Select Committee's report did last year and this year. I make no apology for that. Although it may not officially be recognised as a defence asset, we all know that it is. I congratulate the Minister on having produced a table of figures in the White Paper and on addressing the problem in concert with his friends in other Government Departments. It is as well that he does that. Last year, I drew the attention of the House to the fact that the size of the Merchant Navy under the British flag was diminishing and said that the General Council of British Shipping had forecast by how much it would diminish in the ensuring year. That has happened almost exactly as forecast. It is more urgent now than it was a year ago that the Government should address their mind to what to do about it.

We all want a formal statement of Government policy, for which the Select Committee on Defence called last year, covering the areas of vital importance: the numbers of ships, the availability of ships, the legal powers over the ships and a range of similar matters. Every year, as the number of ships under the British flag diminishes, the more urgent it becomes for the Government to come to grips with the problem and consider what they can do to stop the decline, because, as the Government and everyone else knows, the vast bulk of our supplies, civil and military, still travel by sea and will for many years.

My final point about the Select Committee's report is that I am glad that my right hon. Friend directs his attention to service men's allowances. Ultimately everything that hon. Members and the Government do to defend Britain depends on the man in the field. If he is not treated well he will not perform well. As I am sure the Minister knows, there is a feeling throughout the forces that their employers, the Government, with our support, are not treating them in the matter of allowances as well as they should. I cannot say whether that feeling is totally justified. In some cases, it may be justified, but in other cases it may not. But it is essential that the Government should address themselves to the entire range of allowances to our service men.

The Government should address the matter quickly and produce an answer that is seen to be fair. As I have said before, the defence of Britain rests on the individual to whom one of the greatest British soldiers once put a name—it is the same surname as mine—in a general order. That soldier is the man upon whom our safety depends. If he—in the words of that famous soldier—when ordered will stand to his front and face the enemy, we shall be safe. He will do so if he is properly treated and properly led. None of us has much doubt that he is properly led. It is our business to see that he is properly treated. If he is not properly treated and, when the call comes, does not stand to the front and face the enemy, we shall have no one to blame but ourselves.

5.38 pm

Dr. David Owen (Plymouth, Devonport): The amendment tabled—but not accepted—by myself and my right hon. Friend the leader of the Liberal party draws attention to the underlying and fundamental anxiety on both sides of the House: that during the next three years there will be a reduction in real terms in defence spending of more than 4·5 per cent.

The Secretary of State's interesting speech sought to pray in aid the consistency within the Conservative party on defence. He should recall that we were given a solemn undertaking last autumn that defence spending would continue on the basis of level funding for the next few years. He does not do his case a service if he tries to deny that he must now grapple with the problems of a declining defence budget.

I do not deny that with cost efficiencies better value for money could be obtained, but we should not exaggerate the extent to which the Ministry of Defence can continue to make cost-efficient savings without serious cuts in its front-line effectiveness. This is a Ministry which, under successive Governments for more than 20 years, has looked for cost savings more zealously than almost any other Department. Although there was a good deal of fat on the system, we would be foolish to try to deny that it has now been cut to the bone.

On forward budgeting, it will be extremely difficult to find the resources for the new fighter aircraft replacement. It was right for us to go ahead with replacing the fighter aircraft. It was extremely important on European grounds. It was one of the first recent decisions which demonstrated that the Federal Republic of Germany was prepared, on defence matters, to seek a solution which would be in the overall interests of NATO, and not be persuaded by the French to stick solely with German-French collaboration. The decision augurs well for our fundamental defence need in the next few years, which is that Britain, France and Germany should work more closely together than hitherto to strengthen the European defence pillar.

[Dr. David Owen]

On a recent visit to Germany I visited the RAF and a Tornado squadron. I have never been to any part of the armed services where a single weapons system has been so enthusiatically received by everyone. It was praised at every level. There is no doubt that Britain has a fine aircraft, which is an extremely good example of European co-operation. I shall say more later about the future of European co-operation. Although we all agree that formidable obstacles lie ahead for European procurement, the Tornado aircraft is a fine example of what can be done.

We still await a decision about our amphibious forces. It appears as though the Minister believes that much can be done by using the hulls of Fearless and Intrepid. I have some sympathy for him searching for economies, in view of the strains which will be placed on all conventional forces.

Those ships were built in the days when ships were built to last. Perhaps we can extend their lives by an extensive refit. But many people, not just on both sides of the House but in the country, will not be happy to allow the Minister to give up the amphibious capability on the northern and southern flanks. It may mean some make and mend, but the Royal Marines have a special place in the affections of the British people and a proven record which we shall not allow to be sunk on the rock of inter-service rivalry.

The Secretary of State may have to come to the House and say that it will be impossible to build a 50-frigate Navy. In another place, a former Chief of the Defence Staff and Chief of Naval Staff said that the present build rate would not provide a 50-frigate Navy. I agree that it will not, however much sleight of hand is used. What worries me even more is that we are not maintaining the build rate for the hunter-killer submarine force. Those ships are the real new capital ships of the Royal Navy, and they are fundamental to our specialised naval contribution to NATO. Few other navies can contribute in this area, and it would be a great shame if Britain cut back its hunter-killer submarine fleet. It is important to the European balance in NATO that Britain should maintain those forces.

There is justified anxiety about the strain on the conventional budget. However, it is good to see that reductions have been made in the Falklands garrison. It must also be said that it is in Britain's defence interest to undertake negotiations with Argentina and lower the tension so that we can reduce the forces even further and reach, at least during the next few years, a modus vivendi.

When there is a new Government, serious negotiations should take place on the long-term future of the Falkland islanders to obtain peace in the south Atlantic. We cannot continue to pay the heavy costs of garrisoning the Falklands in perpetuity. None of us in the House would wish that commitment on our successors.

Mr. David Crouch (Canterbury): I was in the Falkland islands last week. The right hon. Gentleman's point is very pertinent. It took a little time to persuade the Falkland islanders, their committees and councillors of this point, but they are beginning to appreciate that a reduction in the threat from the other side would mean less criticism levelled at them of the cost of defending the Falklands.

Dr. Owen: I have always believed that the Falkland islanders can be persuaded, if we show leadership, that their best interests can, in the long term, be secured by peaceful relations between Argentina and Britain. It will not be easy in the aftermath of the war. The Prime Minister seems to believe that there cannot be negotiations or discussions on sovereignty because of the loss of life and injuries sustained in the war. She underestimates the armed services and the people who went to the south Atlantic. They went there to resist aggression. In making their sacrifices, they did not believe that, in a reasonable time scale, there could not be discussions, dialogue and eventually a peace settlement between Britain and Argentina. Armed force is used to make way for peace.

Mr. Nicholas Baker (Dorset, North): Does the right hon. Gentleman believe that we could have serious discussions with Argentina without saying that we shall give away the islands' sovereignty?

Dr. Owen: I believe that one of the prices of war may be that the direct transfer of sovereignty to Argentina is no longer negotiable. The solution will come through shared sovereignty, or an allocation of sovereignty to some international body, such as the United Nations, so that sovereignty is held by neither Britain nor Argentina. Because of possible military challenges, there would have to be substantial safeguards if sovereignty was passed to the United Nations. However, there are safeguards that could be used and this could be a more fruitful approach.

In view of the contributions made by the Secretary of State and by the right hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies), it would be wrong for me to avoid the central issue of nuclear policy. I agree with much of what the right hon. Member for Llanelli said. The issue has become too polarised. He must, however, face the massive differences that will occur if the Labour party — if ever in government — decides to disown the American nuclear guarantee and asks the United States to withdraw from its nuclear bases in Britain. That would undermine the core of the existence, philosophy and military doctrine of the NATO Alliance, which has always been firmly based on the need for conventional and nuclear deterrence. If we turn round and kick in the teeth—for that is how it will be seen by the Americans—the principal guarantor of the NATO Alliance, by asking them to withdraw their nuclear bases, we must not be surprised if that is the result.

We ought also to consider New Zealand's position. Only two days ago Mr. Shultz said that New Zealand,

"in taking the position, in effect, that United States Naval ships cannot call at New Zealand's ports, has taken away one of the essences of the military alliance that constitutes ANZUS."

For the first time it now looks as if Washington has taken a step formally to withdraw a United States guarantee to assist a treaty partner in time of trouble. There are ominous portents in that decision, deliberately taken. They are a warning to us in the United Kingdom of what would happen if the Labour party were ever to be returned to office and were to follow that course. Therefore, the right hon. Member for Llanelli, who singularly failed to answer the question that I put to him, must recognise that deep passions will be aroused and that there will be great concern and very considerable political argument, because what is at stake is the very existence of NATO.

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West) *rose*——

Dr. Owen: Whether or not Britain should retain its nuclear weapons is a different question and a different

kind of argument. Provided that Britain accepts that NATO should still retain nuclear and conventional deterrents and provided also that we are content to rely upon the United States nuclear guarantee, that is a perfectly credible intellectual position to adopt. However, the question that this House has to answer—and the right hon. Member for Spelthorne (Sir H. Atkins) whose Select Committee has done so much to enrich our debates posed it very openly—is whether we can continue to rely upon the absolute nature of the United States guarantee.

We must consider the changes that are taking place in the United States. At one time, one in four of the United States population had their origins in Europe. Now it is one in 10. There has been a massive shift of population towards the western and southern states. Nobody who knows and loves the United States cannot but appreciate that the Pacific orientation is much stronger than it was 10, let alone 20, years ago. We cannot assume in perpetuity that Senators and Congressmen will still be able to persuade United States voters and taxpayers to fund 300,000 members of the United States armed forces on the mainland of Europe. That element of United States forces is, I believe, the real nuclear guarantee. It is far more effective than land-based United States missiles on the continent of Europe. Missiles are not nearly so important as United States forces.

Mr. Hind: Does the right hon. Gentleman not feel that there is an intellectual conflict in the Labour party's position? It does not wish any nuclear weapons to be based on British soil, but within NATO it is content to call upon American nuclear forces to defend Britain, if necessary. In other words, it is all right to have access to the weapons but it is not all right to have them on British soil as British weapons.

Dr. Owen: I have already dealt with the logical inconsistency and moral weakness of the Labour party's case. The logic of disowning nuclear weapons—not only our own but those of our allies—leads progressively to the justification of neutralism and to a lesser commitment to NATO, and it leads eventually through a grave impact upon the cohesion of NATO to its dismemberment, as we know it now.

On the question of what should be the European role, there seems to be a growing acceptance in Europe that the European pillar within NATO must be strengthened and that the anxiety in the past that, if one talked about it, it might encourage the United States to pull out was unfounded. The arguments that one heard at the time of the Mansfield amendment—including the fear that if we became more independent in Europe that would feed American anxieties to withdraw—have been discredited. The urgent feeling that Europe should face up to its own defence responsibilities is widespread and there is considerable discussion about it.

The right hon. Member for Llanelli must face the fact that there are two European bombs at the moment. France is a nuclear state; so is Britain. The right hon. Gentleman seems not to realise fully the extent of the co-operation that now exists and that is building up all the time between the Federal Republic of Germany and France. The political parties in the Federal Republic of Germany do not wish Germany to become a nuclear state, but they recognise that if there is to be a strong European pillar of NATO defence, the Federal Republic of Germany, as a non-nuclear weapon state, must become more involved in nuclear strategy. This becomes even more important as France moves on from Pluton to a new missile, Hades, a nuclear missile with a range which means it can be fired from French territory over the Federal Republic of Germany into East German territory. This means that the Federal Republic of Germany needs to be involved in French nuclear strategy.

What has worried me over the last decade is that as this Franco-German understanding has emerged on all matters of defence, and increasingly on nuclear defence, Britain has been unable to develop a nuclear relationship with France, or with the Federal Republic of Germany—though perhaps inevitably less so on nuclear weapons. A great deal has been done—I pay tribute to the predecessor of the Secretary of State for Defence and to his Department—to strengthen German-British conventional co-operation, but a great deal more can still be done to strengthen it. A trilateral relationship—Germany, France and the United Kingdom—could hold the key to our nuclear defence.

It is wholly wrong for people to believe that Trident is the natural follow-on to Polaris. It represents a very substantial increase in nuclear capability over and above Polaris. It is a very good system, and I am very pleased that the United States has it, because the Soviet Union has the same capabilities as those that are contained in the Trident system. However, the question for Britain is whether we can afford it and whether, in arms control terms, it makes any sense for a country that has always believed in a minimum deterrent to be adopting such a sophisticated deterrent.

Trident represents a dramatic 800 per cent. increase in the number of warheads—from 64 to 512—and a 1,200 per cent. increase in the operational availability of warheads—from 32 to 384. It also represents a substantial increase in range—from 2,500 nautical miles to 4,000 nautical miles. Therefore, we must not continue to believe that Trident and Polaris are equivalent weapons systems. Trident is a quantum leap forward.

Mr. Mates: The answer to the questions posed by the right hon. Gentleman are perfectly logical and stand together. He asked whether we can afford Trident and whether it will therefore be the cheapest replacement for Polaris. The Select Committee spent 14 months discussing the question of the next generation of nuclear deterrents and discovered that this was the cheapest system, maintaining the minimum deterrent, which is one boat at sea. Of course it is a leap forward in capability, and that may have to be taken care of afterwards. However, the right hon. Gentleman is quite wrong when he says that, although we are looking for a cheap and effective system, we must not adopt a system that happens to be more effective because it would upset the balance. The two are perfectly compatible.

Dr. Owen: On the question of cost, I concede that the hon. Gentleman conscientiously believes that Trident is the most cost-effective weapons system. However, I do not believe that it was the most cost-effective system when the decision was taken to purchase first the C4 missile and then the D5 missile. I am the first to admit that as the months roll by and as the costs of Trident build up it becomes ever harder to make that choice. At the time of

[Dr. Owen]

the next general election we shall have to face the fact that substantial amounts of money have already been committed to Trident. That will have to be taken into account in reaching decisions, but I still believe that it is possible to cancel Trident, and I shall explain why.

Mr. Julian Amery (Brighton, Pavilion): A few minutes ago the right hon. Gentleman was postulating that we would need a European deterrent because the United States defences might not be available to us. If that is the case, surely the minimum deterrent would need to be a bit stronger than that which we have today.

Dr. Owen: If Europe is more self-sufficient in its defence the United States will not pull out of the NATO Alliance. It will strengthen those in the United States who wish to remain in NATO if they feel that Europe is making a strong conventional and nuclear commitment. That view is held by many Americans, and many Americans stationed in Europe who are responsible for defence decisions in NATO also hold that view. The Supreme Allied Commander Europe is only one example arguing that a stronger European defence commitment makes it easier for Senators and Congressmen to retain the American commitment to Europe.

I am not postulating a European deterrent on the basis of replacing or excluding the United States, and the United States should certainly not be encouraged to withdraw. I would do everything in my power to hold the United States to the concept of the Atlantic Alliance for as long as humanly possible. If, as I hope, its forces remain for 20, 30 or 40 years, history will show that one of the reasons why they did stay was that there was a more equitable balance in the defence commitment to NATO by the European partners and the United States.

How we make such a contribution brings me to the matter of Trident. The problem about Trident is that the costs will build up steadily over the next 10 years. A number of times in his speeches the Secretary of State has spoken about Tornado and said that the overall programme for Tornado costs was more than that for Trident. The Tornado programme, however, between 1974 and 1984 coincided with one of the most rapidly growing periods in our defence expenditure. There was an overall real terms increase of 24 per cent. and in the equipment budget the real terms increase was 86 per cent. I know that the Secretary of State tends to claim that this increase took place under a Conservative Government, but that is not the case. When the right hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Callaghan) was Prime Minister in 1977, we managed to persuade a Labour Cabinet facing difficult post—IMF problems about public expenditure that we should meet the 3 per cent. increase in defence spending for NATO.

I would never say that the Labour party when in government ducks out of making responsible defence decisions. It is a tragedy that the defence of Britain has now become such a polarised issue. Between 1940 and 1979 there was a broad measure of agreement on defence measures, and it is only recently that we have got into the habit of voting against the Defence Estimates. I look forward to the day when we no longer have to vote against them.

The problems arise because of Trident. Over the next 10 years, if Britain goes ahead with the Trident programme, it will cut savagely into our defence capacity. For that reason, I am prepared to look at less effective alternatives. The question that we must ask is whether we can get a reasonable nuclear minimum deterrent that will make a contribution to Europe's minimum deterrent for less money than we would have to spend on Trident. There are a number of options and we should look seriously at them. The first option must be a system that already exists. To hear the talk in the House and outside from time to time, no one would believe that the United States is planning to deploy on its submarines and on its surface ships 758 nuclear-armed land attack missiles with warheads of 200 kilotonnes. Some 250 of those Tomahawk missiles will be deployed on submarines and the remainder on surface ships. The Tomahawk is an existing successful missile and can be fired from the torpedo tubes of conventional submarines. It is being fired from submarines of the United States navy. This missile is similar to submarine and surface-launched missiles in the possession of the Soviet navy, so it is not a new development.

The matter of Trident replacement needs to be kept in proportion. How do the Americans describe this missile system? They talk about it as a strategic reserve and ascribe to it great accuracy of only 100 ft off target. It can deliver a weapon to a hardened strategic target, and the United States navy is extremely pleased with its capabilities. The missile has a range of 1,350 nautical miles, flies only 50 ft over water and with Stealth technology it is almost impossible to detect by radar. It travels from 100 to 300 ft over land with TERCOM guidance.

That is a proven system, but it may well be that we do not wish to buy American technology. In 1981 the French considered, and are considering again, building a similar type of cruise missile to replace their land-based system, which is out of date. However, there is no doubt that they will carry on with their submarine-based system. British Aerospace is quite adamant that it has the capability to build a cruise missile of this quality. The TERCOM guidance system is in use on Tornado and the capability exists for using it on a missile. The Germans have shown some interest in cruise and expressed a readiness to consider a conventional armed cruise missile that would be European-built. Perhaps the Italians would be interested in it as well. Are we to say that such an option should not be seriously considered?

It is to the credit of my hon. Friends and myself that we have suggested that the practicability of a European minimum deterrent should be discussed. My hon. Friend the Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) has rather different views from mine about a submarine-launched missile. He has often rightly stressed the difficulty that exists in arms control agreements about making the distinction between a nuclear-armed cruise missile and one that is conventionally armed. That is a problem we face now because of developments in the United States navy and the Soviet navy, but my hon. Friend raises an important point.

There are other options. The right hon. Member for Llanelli tended to scoff at the French ballistic missile system, but we should not ignore it as a possible option, although we would probably end up paying as much as we pay for Trident. It would not be a bad idea anyhow to discuss that option and to go to the French to find out what they feel about it.

Mr. Younger: I appreciate that it is desirable and right to discuss this, but the time for that has long since passed. If we had time to discuss that, there are two points I would make to the right hon. Gentleman. First, if these missiles have a range of 1,300 miles, they would be uniquely vulnerable in the positions that they would have to take up to have any chance of hitting a likely target. Secondly, if they are to be used in lieu of Poseidon, which is to go out of service in the mid-1990s, by that time the sort of system the right hon. Gentleman has devised would be uniquely vulnerable to the advanced technology of the Soviet Union to work against it. In that case such a large number would be needed for any to have a chance of getting through that the cost would be vastly greater than the cost of the Trident programme.

Dr. Owen: I shall deal with these matters one by one. The Government have spent a lot of time persuading Britain and our European allies that they ought to have ground-based cruise missile systems, so presumably the vulnerability argument falls. The Secretary of State spoke about vulnerability in the 1990s. The system that will become more vulnerable if SDI research leads to deployment is the ballistic missile system, and the unique qualities of ballistic missiles that have made them an effective system make them extremely vulnerable to defence in space. That is not the case with a cruise missile.

If the Secretary of State has opened his mind and talked to his counterparts in the Pentagon he will realise that the addition of Stealth technology has made a massive breakthrough to the capacity of cruise missiles. At the moment they are subsonic. There is no reason, apart from payload, why they should not become supersonic. I have mentioned only submarine launching but there is also the possibility of putting cruise missiles on aeroplanes, as the United States air force and the Soviet air force have already done. That is another option to be considered.

I now come to the Trident submarine, not the missile system. The Secretary of State will not change his mind before the next election, whenever that is, so by then the Trident submarines will be on the slipway in Barrow. If the election takes place in the spring of 1987, which is probably the first opportunity for it, well over 50 per cent. will be committed to Trident 05 — the first Trident submarine—and well over 20 per cent. to Trident 06. It would be helpful if, when the Minister replies to the debate, he could tell us exactly how much is committed to the Trident submarines.

On top of that there is the extraordinary 120 per cent. penalty clause on the Trident submarines. The House is entitled to know a little more about that. Presumably that has been designed to make the contract hard to cancel. I hope that the legal justification and morality of such a commitment can be explained to us. All that adds up to the fact that the Trident submarine could be difficult to cancel. The right hon. Member for Llanelli shakes his head. I thought that the Labour party's policy, if placed in that difficulty, was to keep it without the missile section as a hunter-killer submarine. That is an option, although it is an extremely expensive hunter-killer submarine, and a very big one. But given the amount of money that has already been spent and the need to win votes among the Barrow and Rosyth ship workers, I can understand why the right hon. Gentleman has come up with that solution.

We, too, must look at this matter and in the next few months we must consider the various options for those Trident submarines. Shall we scrap them or do what the Labour party wants to do and keep them as hunter-killer submarines? I know that the Secretary of State has no doubt at all. He would have Trident missiles and spend billions of pounds. It is a perfectly reasonable option to keep the missile section of the submarine and put cruise missiles in for vertical launch. That is the system that is now being used in the United States navy which already has 12 in a vertical launch mode and may well decide to go for 20 or even 25.

The Secretary of State may shake his head, but let me deal with the vulnerability of cruise missiles. It is true they do not have the same amount of sea room as the Trident missile has with a 4,000-mile range. I agree that the large Trident submarine, if converted, would have a problem in that sense, but not so much as has been stated in the past because the nature of the continental shelf makes it extremely difficult to detect and pick up slow-moving nuclear-powered submarines. The right hon. Gentleman knows that better than most.

The Secretary of State also knows that that option is considered not just by a few maverick figures, or the Social Democratic party because it has somehow to hold a halfway house between Trident, large bombs and the Labour party's no bombs. That option is now favoured by many serious people. The editor of the latest edition of "*Jane's Fighting Ships*" supports the cruise missile option. I do not know whether anyone inside the Ministry of Defence will ever dare tell the right hon. Gentleman, but I can assure him that many senior officers in dark blue, light blue and khaki uniforms believe that it is high time that we were prepared to consider this as an alternative to Trident.

A substantial body of journalists who comment on defence matters believe that we should reconsider the Trident decision because it will cost so much money. If they dare to put their heads above the parapet, we would see that a good many Members of Parliament on the Government's Back Benches are not convinced about the Trident programme.

Against that background and this reduced budget that is a reasonable question. Many would not have questioned Trident while we were expanding the defence budget by 2 or 3 per cent. per year. Many might not have considered it back in November when the defence budget was to be held to level funding. But now, when they see reductions of 2·5 per cent. per year in the defence budget, there are many more who are prepared to consider whether we can afford Trident.

My right hon. and hon. Friends and I are right to take a long careful look at the options over the next few months for retaining a European nuclear deterrent—a minimum nuclear deterrent. Why do I use the term "European"? Of course, it is right that the French President will still retain overall responsibility for a French weapons system, and as one cannot delegate to a military commander and as there is no federal President of Europe, it will have to be retained by a British Prime Minister. The command and control will always have to be in political hands.

But if we could agree the refitting cycle for the submarines,; if we could agree the targeting strategy with the French, if the Germans and Italians were to come into a co-operative framework on how we saw nuclear strategy, would not that be a far more effective way of standing up against the United States when we dislike their strategy on nuclear arms control? Would not Europe be in a much

[Dr. Owen]

firmer and clearer position when arguing for maintaining SALT 2 limits if it also had its own worked-out view on NATO's nuclear strategy? Would not the partnership be more equal if, instead of the United States speaking separately to the French, Germans, Italians and British, it could feel that there was an underlying cohesion on nuclear strategic matters among the main European partners? That is the logical development.

The right hon. Member for Llanelli referred to the first decision by Clem Attlee and Ernest Bevin and the second decision by Harold Macmillan and Harold Wilson to carry on. Do not forget that it was the Labour party which carried on with the Polaris decision in 1964. That process has been carried through. The same applies to Chevaline. The decision was first made by the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) and carried on by Harold Wilson. It went to the Labour Cabinet in November in 1974 and was followed all the way through.

Mr. Kevin McNamara (Kingston upon Hull, North): It was not taken to the party.

Dr. Owen: The hon. Gentleman makes a fair point about whether it should or should not have gone to the party. The fact is that the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup thought that the decision should be made in secrecy, Harold Wilson thought that it ought to be made in secrecy, I think rightly, and the right hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth thought that the decision still needed to be made in secrecy. It was only announced in a flamboyant gesture with its code name by the right hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East (Mr. Pym) because he wanted to make a party political point in a rather cheap way somehow to justify his decision on Trident.

This is a deep question which goes to the root of a British foreign policy, but, more importantly, to the root of a European foreign policy.

Mr. McNamara: I am not necessarily disagreeing with the right hon. Gentleman's argument, but what worries me about it is that he is justifying the taking of these fundamental decisions in secret without the knowledge of Parliament, which had no knowledge of the price, and making the point that the right hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East (Mr. Pym) revealed the programme only to make a cheap party political point. Does he not believe that the British people should have known about it?

Dr. Owen: There is a fair argument that the Chevaline project should have been announced to the House, but, in fairness, those who were involved in the early decision—I was involved in the latter part—genuinely thought that there were good security grounds for not revealing the information. It was not a new generation weapons system. It was a decision to retain the effectiveness of the Polaris warhead. After the anti-ballistic missile treaty was signed there was no need for it. I inherited the decision in 1977 and I take my share of responsibility for the decision not to cancel, it having gone on for four years and already cost £700 million. In 1977-78 we got its cost under control, but it ended up costing more than was estimated and at £1 billion it was a pretty expensive investment.

Chevaline was not of the same political gravity as the decision to go for nuclear weapons in the first place which was made in total secrecy by Clement Attlee and his Cabinet. That secrecy was maintained by the Churchill Government. Nor was it of the same quality as the decision made openly by Harold Macmillan and Harold Wilson to go for Polaris. I say only that the Chevaline decision went to the Labour Cabinet in November 1974 and it would have been possible for those who objected strongly not to have acquiesced or resigned from the Government.

Sir John Biggs-Davison (Epping Forest): When the Labour Government, headed by Clement Attlee, decided to go ahead with the British atom bomb, the Cabinet was not informed. That curious concept of democracy seems to be quite common in the Labour party.

Dr. Owen: If the hon. Gentleman looks at the Conservative party's record, he will find that it has always been felt that some decisions involving nuclear weapons should be maintained on a need-to-know basis, and should not always involve the full Cabinet. I tend to think that that is wrong, but, whether it is right or wrong, it is done for the best of motives. In this country, the way to keep things secret is to be very rigid about how many people are involved. For many years, it has been understood that the Prime Minister, the Foreign Secretary, the Home Secretary and the Chancellor of the Exchequer sometimes with the addition of one or two other senior Ministers provides a sufficient forum for a debate on nuclear questions.

Mr. Younger: And the Secretary of State for Defence.

Dr. Owen: Of course, I accept that.

I do not want to delve into the history of the matter, as I have already delayed the House too long. But these are serious questions and they need to be resolved. Behind it all is the concern felt throughout the defence firms and industries about the pressure on the conventional defence budget. There is also concern in my constituency. Only last Friday, the *Western Morning News* ran a headline about the further 40 per cent. reduction in the work load of naval ships for Devonport dockyard over the next eight years. The Secretary of State has yet to decide whether to go ahead with agency management of the dockyard. I hope that, now that he has got his wretched Bill, he will not go ahead with that. I hope that at the very least he will settle for a Government-owned plc, which will achieve some of the things that he wants in terms of civil servant numbers but will not fragment the dockyard. I also hope that he will now take a more strategic view of what is needed on the defence budget in relation to the financial constraints.

In his speech, the Secretary of State gave the impression that he would dribble out the decisions as they came along. That is probably the best political course, given that there will be a general election within the next two years. But it is the worst course for the morale of the armed services and for the morale of those who serve them. It would be much better if he made some of the difficult decisions that are needed, and if he took an open, honest and sensible strategic forward look in these Defence Estimates. If he did that, he would earn much more respect.

The Secretary of State must consider the whole question of purchasing Trident. I know that it is a verboten subject in this Government, just as the devaluation of the pound was once a verboten subject in other Governments, but the Prime Minister must be made to understand that it will be an open question until the next

election. It would be of great value if the Government, as we ask in our amendment, considered how else we can make a practical contribution to the development of a European minimum nuclear deterrent without going on with the Trident system.

The Secretary of State will also have to look at some of the other areas of the defence budget, not least the balance between the surface ship and the undersea navy. He will also have to consider the Falklands garrison, the future of manned aircraft and missiles. With our European partners, the right hon. Gentleman will have to consider whether it is now time for Europe to have a medium-range missile launcher that could be used with either conventional or nuclear warheads.

This is a time for rethinking the budget. For the first time, the House accepts that there will be successive reductions in the defence budget. All of us should be prepared to reconsider past positions and to think long and hard about the future of our armed services and, in particular, about how we strengthen the European pillar of NATO.

6.23 pm

Sir Patrick Wall (Beverley): I agreed with much of what the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) said, particularly at the beginning of his speech. I am concerned about the reduction in defence expenditure that has been announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. Like the right hon. Member for Devonport, I believe that Europe is getting together—as all those in the North Atlantic Assembly know. Much work has already been done on common weapons systems, not only on a European scale, but between Europe and America.

I also agree about the grave danger posed by the Labour party's defence policy. Indeed, I disagreed with the right hon. Member for Devonport only about Trident. However, I shall not argue about that, as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State gave two valid reasons for continuing with Trident, and explained why there are no other options. Moreover, my hon. Friend the Member for Hampshire, East (Mr. Mates) said that the Defence Committee, of which I was a member, and which sat during the last Parliament, spent about 17 months trying to find a cheaper alternative to Trident. However, we failed to find one, and strongly recommended Trident.

The North Atlantic Assembly has several committees, and one of the most important deals with arms control. My hon. Friend the Member for Aldershot (Mr. Critchley) and the hon. Member for Woolwich (Mr. Cartwright) wrote a report which has become a text book on nuclear weapons in Europe, and which is extremely valuable. The sub-committee that produced that report has now been renamed the special committee on nuclear strategy and arms control. That sub-committee, of which I am a member, went, not many months ago, to Geneva to examine the discussions going on about the different types of arms control and to consider how much hope of progress there was.

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith (Wealden): The co-author of that report was the hon. Member for Woolwich (Mr. Cartwright). Does my hon. Friend recall that, when the hon. Member for Woolwich was a member of the Select Committee in 1981, he, along with other hon. Members, came down very firmly in favour of Trident rather than cruise?

Sir Patrick Wall: I do not really want to start an argument between my hon. Friend the Member for Wealden (Sir G. Johnson Smith) and the hon. Member for Woolwich. I said only that that report was extremely good. Indeed, my hon. Friend the Member for Wealden will agree with that.

Mr. John Cartwright (Woolwich): I cannot let the comment made by the hon. Member for Wealden (Sir G. Johnson Smith) stand. If the hon. Gentleman looks at the various amendments to that report, he will find that I moved an amendment that made clear my concern about the major recommendation on Trident.

Sir Patrick Wall: Before that intervention, I was saying that the Sub-Committee visited Geneva and found that progress on various aspects of arms control was not very encouraging. There seemed to be some chance of eventual agreement only in relation to chemical and bacteriological warfare. The first article of the proposed treaty banned the stockpiling, manufacture, possession or use of chemical or bacteriological weapons. There seemed to be a consensus on that issue. But the other articles involving the disposal of existing stocks, verification and the organisation and inspection of that verification showed a considerable difference between the East and West.

The Soviets would accept on-site inspection, but they would not accept inspection of the destruction of production facilities or the American challenge system, according to which the Americans can say that they want to send in an inspector, because they believe that a Soviet factory, for example, is reproducing chemical weapons. It seemed that we might obtain a reasonable result in that area in about three years hence.

But it was also felt that unless the Americans produced binary weapons, the problems would not be resolved. After all, the Russians always respond to strength. The Russians know that they have far greater stocks of chemical and bacteriological weapons, and that the Americans only have old stocks in Germany, which they propose to move from Germany when they have produced new binary weapons. This American production may give the Soviets the nudge required to an agreement on the prohibition of chemical and bacteriological warfare.

The Chernobyl disaster is important. I believe that many more people will die of radiation sickness than have been annouced so far. About 40,000 people in a town called Pripyat, only a few miles from the reactor, were there for three days. I cannot imagine that any of them could survive. Kiev was only 80 miles away. We hear about radioactivity in Welsh lambs. What about the Ukraine, the bread basket of the USSR? There must be much more contamination there than the contamination about which we hear today.

I believe that the Russians are dispersing the population throughout the Soviet Union to prevent the knowledge of casualties leaking to the West. If that knowledge leaks out and shows that large numbers of people are suffering from radiation sickness, it might be possible to persuade the Soviet Union to agree to the international inspection of reactors. If we achieve that throughout the world the problem of the verification of arms control would be much easier, particularly in relation to bacteriological and chemical weapons. That might be the breakthrough for which we have been looking in arms control.

A committee of the North Atlantic Assembly visited the United States and found a complete difference of opinion

[Sir Patrick Wall]

between the academics over the strategic defence initiative. One side believed that the SDI would work and was in favour of it and the other that it could not work and was against it. That happened in each place that we went to. The Right wing was for it and the Left wing was against it. I am impressed by and in favour of SDI.

I am glad that this country has signed the MOU. I am very glad that the Secretary of State has set up an office in the MOD. I am glad that the Federal Republic of Germany has followed our example and that Japan and Italy are likely to do so. The subsequent research and development is vital to our future. It must be extremely important to the West, otherwise the Soviet Union would not continue to make every effort to stop this research and development.

I should now like to discuss American policy. I was with my right hon. Friend the Member for Spelthorne (Sir H. Atkins), the Chairman of the Select Committee on Defence, and the hon. Member for Sheffield, Attercliffe (Mr. Duffy) in the United States. We were told that the United States conducted 25 per cent. more trade in the Pacific basin than in Europe. The Pacific basin is regarded as the most dynamic area in the world today. That is probably right. The United States is fed up that Europe does not spend more on its own defence. The average expenditure on defence is 3·5 per cent. of GDP in Europe, with Britain contributing 5·2 per cent. That is above the average, but the United States always talks about Europe as a whole. The United States contributes 6·9 per cent. and the Soviet Union over 14 per cent. of GDP. The United States obviously thinks that we in Europe should do more and I think that it is right.

The concept of isolationism and fortress America is growing. The Prime Minister's action in the Libyan raid was 100 per cent. successful and changed American opinion towards the United Kingdom and, to a lesser extent, towards Europe. Events have proved that my right hon. Friend was wholly right in what she did.

I warn the House of two dangers. The first is in decreasing British defence expenditure by 1·5 per cent. a year for the next three years. Under the Gramal-Rudman-Hollings Act in the United States there is a 4·9 per cent. cut this year and next year it will be as much as 20 per cent., of which 50 per cent. must come from defence. Thus the door is opened to all sorts of problems with the Soviet Union, which will see that the two major NATO nations are reducing defence expenditure drastically and that Mr. Gorbachev may be able to take over Europe without a war.

The Supreme Court is considering the Act to see whether it is constitutional. A decision is expected next month. I hope that it is declared unconstitutional because to eliminate the American deficit by 1991 requires a 10 per cent. reduction in defence expenditure in each year between now and then. This has to be done by law unless taxation in America is increased.

The two decisions taken together could have a drastic effect upon our European allies, who already do not contribute enough. If the Europeans consider our reductions and the American reductions they will contribute even less.

I turn to specific issues. It became clear at the recent symposium in Annapolis that if there were a third battle of the Atlantic it would be fought in the north Norwegian sea and the Baltic approaches to the Giuk gap. The need is therefore, for additional anti-submarine vessels and helicopters, maritime patrol aircraft and amphibious warfare vessels. The Secretary of State today accepted the need for 50 destroyers and frigates. I am also glad that the Government intend to put the Goalkeeper on the type 42 because air defence is badly needed.

If we went American, what would happen to the existing Nimrods selected for AEW? Will they be returned to the RAF, because it is important to have maritime patrol aircraft. We built 14 SSNs and are building four more and one SSK with another three being built. That is not bad for a country of this size. It certainly outbuilds the French.

In connection with amphibious warfare, if we are to hold northern Norway, which might be the target for Soviet attack should they believe that NATO is weakening, we must have amphibious vessels. There are only three places in northern Norway in which the roll-on roll-off car ferries could land.

I am glad that we shall have a statement on the future of Fearless and Intrepid. I hope that they are to be refitted because we need their facilities of command as well as a helicopter landing deck and a deck for landing craft. I hope that they will be reinforced by adapted merchant ships which can provide the helicopter decks if they cannot provide the command facilities.

Sir Antony Buck I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Beverley (Sir P. Wall) about the need for the replacement of amphibious capability. Does he agree that there has been one breakthrough in relation to northern Norway in the prepositioning of heavy supplies, which will result in an important strengthening of the position on the northern flank and which will make a considerable difference?

Sir Patrick Wall: That is right. My hon. and learned Friend is right. The Anglo-Dutch commando force has been there for about three or four years. Now the United States Marine Corps will have similar stocks positioned halfway down Norway which will be very effective. However, amphibious forces must be backed up by shipping. Since 1975 NATO shipping has declined by 36 per cent. I am told — and I believe it — that there is enough shipping to meet all NATO's commitments today. There are two problems. First, one third of that shipping is under flags of convenience. We might be able to get the ships back, but can we rely on the crews if they are Greek or Filipino? I have my doubts. Secondly, the reduction of shipping is continuing and within the next four years we may lose much more shipping. We need 2,800 shiploads a month for reinforcement and re-supply of economic shipping in war. They will not be available if the present reductions continue. The Government talk about this a great deal, but I should like to hear a definitive statement, not that things are all right now, but about what they intend to do if the number of merchant ships continue, to decline.

Perhaps the most important defence consideration of all is the Labour party's defence policy. In the past, the Labour party has taken one line when in opposition and another when in government. The line that it has taken in opposition has been changed rapidly when the Labour party has formed an Administration, to the relief of most people in Britain. But the next Parliament will be very

different from the Parliaments of Gaitskell, Wilson or Callaghan. Opposition Members know that. The United States has made it clear — the hon. Member for Attercliffe knows this as well as I do because he has heard it said — that if the Labour party came into power and carried out its threats to remove all American nuclear weapons from this country fortress America and isolationism would increase. I do not believe that we could remain in NATO if the Labour party carried out that policy. Not only that, the Left-wing of the Labour party is bound to want to close American bases in this country, nuclear or not. I do not believe that we can remain in the club if the main membership is chucked out of it.

Mr. Robert N. Wareing (Liverpool, West Derby): The hon. Gentleman is clearly worried about what will happen if Britain has a Left-wing Labour Government and we get rid of the American nuclear bases. After the visit of the Conservative Canadian Prime Minister, Mr. Mulroney, to this country recently, there was no change in Canada's non-nuclear policy. Canada is a member of NATO and it has no nuclear weapons on its soil.

Sir Patrick Wall: The same can be said of Norway and Denmark, but they are non-nuclear powers. We are a nuclear power. There are only two nuclear powers in Europe, France and Britain. Does the hon. Gentleman want France to take the lead in Europe? If Britain, as a nuclear power, throws out not only its own weapons but those of its main ally as well, how can it possibly remain a member of NATO? The answer is that it cannot. This is why the Labour party will not take power after the next general election. The British people have more sense than to turn againt their main ally and towards Moscow, and that is what the Labour party's policy would mean.

6.42 pm

Mr. Gavin Strang (Edinburgh, East): I am glad to have the opportunity to take up the remarks of the hon. Member for Beverley (Sir P. Wall). If the Labour party is elected at the next general election — that will become increasingly likely during the next 18 months or so — we shall almost certainly see a change in the bipartisan policy which has applied to defence matters since the second world war. The Labour party is committed firmly to cancelling Trident and decommissioning Polaris. Much more significant, it is committed to the removal of all American nuclear bases from Britain.

Mr. Ashdown: I am interested in the fact that the hon. Gentleman has answered the question that the right hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) did not answer which is directed to the Labour party's policy on the decommissioning of Polaris. It appears that the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) takes a different view. In a recent article he stated:

"this is the big question, do we unilaterally get rid of Polaris whatever happens, or do we accept the Soviet proposals to negotiate about its future in the second stage of the arms negotiations? And this will have to be resolved before the next election".

When reminded that this was Labour party policy, he said:

"Yes, but . . .a lot has happened since then. . . And this produces a situation which we can't ignore and which I'm sure we will address in a satisfactory way before the next election comes".

That is clearly opposed to what the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East (Mr. Strang) has said. What is the Labour party policy on this matter, or is it split upon it?

Mr. Strang: The Labour party's policy is quite clear.

Mr. Ashdown: What is it?

Mr. Strang: The hon. Gentleman is right to suggest that the Labour party will have to be clear on this issue in its next manifesto. I accept that it was not clear in 1983. I did not rise, however, to participate in the debate with the intention of confining myself to responding to interventions made by alliance Members. The hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) knows that the alliance is split on replacing Polaris and on cruise missiles. When there was a vote on cruise, it was revealed that the alliance was split on the entire issue of defence policy.

Mr. Hind: The article to which the hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) referred appeared in *The Observer*. When the issue of Labour party policy was put to the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook), he said:

"Denis will have to shut up about this."

That was his comment.

Mr. Strang: I shall not give way again if that is the level to which the debate is to be reduced.

Fundamental to the debate is the "Soviet threat". I do not believe that western Europe should assume that the Soviet Union will not attack it militarily. I do not believe, however, that it has any intention of attacking us. I accept that, regardless of the motives of the Soviet Union, we in western Europe must recognise the power of the Soviet war machine. That is common ground.

The evidence of the past few years shows that the leadership of the Soviet Union genuinely wants progress on peace in world terms. It genuinely wants real reductions in its nuclear arsenal, the removal of nuclear weapons from central Europe and progress made in reducing the level of conventional forces in Europe, primarily because it wishes to devote more of the Soviet Union's resources to increasing the living standards of the people of the Soviet Union. I say "primarily", but I may be wrong about that. Given the developments that have taken place over the years, the Soviet Union no longer intends to try to spread its form of government — what it calls Communism — by military means, if it ever did.

It is interesting to read the first page of the "Statement on the Defence Estimates". There is a quote from Lenin, who said:

"As long as capitalism and socialism exist we cannot live in peace. One or the other will triumph in the end".

That was said in 1920, and that probably was the position in the times of Lenin and Stalin. There was the belief that they might extend Soviet domination, and thus Communism, through the use of military means. There is a quote from Brezhnev and lastly one from Gorbachev, which reads:

"We state again and again that the outcome of the historical competition between the two systems must not be solved by military means. Our commitment to the policy of peaceful coexistence is evidence of the strength of the new social system and faith in its historical possibilities."

All the evidence points in that direction. I accept that, like any other leader, Mr. Gorbachev has his hawks and his doves, but all the evidence is that the Soviet Union genuinely wants progress.

What is the position of the United States Administration? At best it can be described as confused. I would not say that there is confusion. The hawks are clearly in the ascendency. These are people who are opposed to arms control. They are open about that. There

[Mr. Strang]

were those who used to speak in terms of winning a nuclear war. We had the Haig statement on a limited nuclear war in Europe.

I think that certain members of the United States Administration have educated themselves since then and that there are few in the Reagan Administration who would talk in terms of winning a nuclear war. There is, however, a strong body of opinion—I believe that it is still in the ascendency—which believes that competition between the United States and the Soviet Union will move more and more in the United States' favour as it forces the Soviet Union to compete with its expenditure on arms. It thinks that it will be able to force the Soviet Union to divert more and more of its resources to military spending, but I think that that is profoundly wrong. I happen to think that the Soviet system—I do not support it—is probably better designed to carry a high-spending military programme than the American system. We know that the people of the Soviet Union are unable to elect an alternative Government.

There is a gulf between European and United States thinking on the issues. It is an insult to our intelligence to suggest—it is repeated many times—that the new, slick Gorbachev approach has driven a wedge between western Europe and the United States. What about the strategic defence initiative? The British Government have been subservient to the American Government on almost every issue. Europe, and even the substantial Right-wing elements in western Europe, were unhappy about the SDI.

Reference has been made to the NATO force goal in terms of chemical weapons. We know that, in military terms, it would make sense to have new binary chemical weapons in Europe. But why are they confined only to the United States? Of course, it is in deference to the different European attitudes. We have read that European Governments—I think that, for once, we can count the British Government in on it—were prepared to amount a campaign against the United States' intention to breach SALT 2 later this year. Libya has had a profound effect on European attitudes. It has certainly had a big impact on me. The Libyan bombing has made a big impact on many people in this country and Europe.

It is alleged that there is a plan to give NATO an out-of-area role. It is not just a question of American F111s and planes in Europe being used to bomb Libya. NATO may actually embark on a policy of policing the world. That policy has been proposed by Mr. Weinberger. The role of the American Administration in South America and their recent decision to commit themselves to massive additional funding of the Contras against the Government of Nicaragua are crucial to European attitudes to NATO. These represent real developments and a divergence between the attitudes of American people and the policies pursued by the American Administration, and the attitudes of European people, and even European Right-wing Governments.

Hopefully, we will soon see a change of Government in West Germany and Britain. We will see a change in our position and Governments in western Europe which are more representative of the aspirations of the vast majority of the people of Europe. All hon. Members must recognise that the divergence between Europe and the United States is a reflection of our different history, perspective and attitude to the Soviet Union.

I turn to some of the initiatives taken in respect of nuclear disarmament. I make no apology for concentrating my remarks on that. I recognise the importance of our defences, but I also recognise that things have changed completely since debates of 50 years ago or more. The overriding responsibility facing all Governments is to avoid a nuclear holocaust. My right hon. Friend the Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies), who opened the debate for the Labour party, pointed out that the Chernobyl incident was tiny compared with even a nuclear weapon battlefield in central Europe.

During the Secretary of State's speech I intervened regarding the comprehensive test ban treaty. The evidence is that the British Government are moving position. The British Government have argued, as did the then Foreign Office Minister in reply to an Adjournment debate over a year ago, that the only objection they have to progress towards a comprehensive test ban treaty is the need for adequate verification. They wanted a comprehensive test ban treaty. That was their position at the non-proliferation review conference last year. That is different from the American position. The Americans stopped the talks on a comprehensive test ban treaty in 1980 because they wanted to continue testing. They made no bones about that.

Tremendous scientific progress has been made on verification. Leading United States scientists—I say this without fear of challenge—believe that we can have adequate verification. The Soviet Union has agreed to the installation of seismological centres in the Soviet Union to make verification effective. Only a few months ago American scientists agreed with Soviet scientists on the seismological centres which could be established in the Soviet Union. That is why the Secretary of State, in reply to my intervention this afternoon, left himself a cop out. He said that verification is the most important objection. The verification argument is becoming less tenable.

I believe that the Government were hypocritical when they replied to my Adjournment debate last year. Now that verification is becoming less tenable, they will adopt the American argument that they want to keep testing the weapons for storage reasons, and so on. The Americans want to test for SDI. They plan a nuclear pump for the X-ray lasers. We want to test the Trident warheads. It is fitting that the Government initiated a test last week, just before this debate.

A comprehensive test ban treaty is important because it will help to put the brake on the development of nuclear weapons in other parts of the world. It is tragic that the Government, who were one of the three signatories—the others were the Soviet Union and the United States—to the agreement on the initial partial test ban treaty have adopted such a negative stance at the conference on disarmament in Geneva.

I remind the House that the Soviet Union announced a moratorium on nuclear weapons testing—just as Kennedy did—which led to the partial test ban treaty. Instead of Britain responding to the moratorium and saying, "Let us see if we can make some progress on the basis of the Soviet moratorium", we are adopting a completely negative attitude. Mr. Gorbachev's proposals of 15 January are crucially important. They are probably the most important proposals to come out of the Soviet Union in 10 years. They attempt to make progress towards nuclear disarmament. They are so good that the Prime

Minister did not understand them. She said in reply to a question by my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition that they did not involve the zero option.

There are three stages in the Gorbachev proposals. I shall concentrate on the first stage because it is designed to take us into the 1990s. The proposal involves the 50 per cent. cut in strategic nuclear weapons on which it is hoped the United States will negotiate seriously, and the removal of all intermediate range weapons from Europe — but not their transfer to Asia. The West used to put forward the zero option, that is, before it went ahead with the deployment of cruise and Pershing. The Prime Minister did not understand that. I do not think that she deliberately misled the House. I think that she genuinely did not realise how good the Soviet proposal was.

I do not suggest that President Reagan should immediately say, "We shall accept the proposals". The Soviet proposals have been improved since 15 January. They provide an excellent basis for progress. They have further developed the SDI proposals. They confirm that the United States can continue with research into SDI provided it negotiates a reasonable deal regarding the maintenance of the 1972 anti-ballistic missile treaty, and provided it avoids taking SDI further than the laboratory stage. Soviet scientists agree with leading American scientists that there is no way that SDI will work. It is backed by a huge military industrial complex, and I believe that it will be difficult to stop it.

I turn to the Vienna talks on mutually balanced force reductions. To hear some hon. Members speak, it would seem that they want to have American troops in Europe for ever. Labour party policy is for the mutual dissolution of NATO and the Warsaw pact. We hope that progress will be made, and that there will be real reductions in Soviet forces. We hope to reduce our forces also. Perhaps one day the American forces will return to America. Some hon. Members think that that is a terrible option in the future. It may be that progress can be made in Vienna. It may be that the proposals which the Soviet Union has put forward will be taken in a wider arena.

All the evidence points in the direction of the Soviet leadership wanting real progress. I urge the British Government to change their attitude. When the Prime Minister visited America to set the seal on her support for the strategic defence initiative I think that she described herself as Mr. Reagan's biggest fan in Europe. I thought that that summed up the relationship of the British Government with the American Administration. The relationship has been one—I say this on the basis of the Government's policy in the past six years — of supine subservience in every area of defence.

The Government may be in office for another 18 months. For goodness sake, let them stand up for the future of our people. Let them take an independent view. Let them be prepared to consider Europe's position. We do not want an anti-American policy. However, we want a British Government who are prepared to stand up for Britain. We want a Government who are prepared to argue for progress. If it is the case—I believe that it is—that the Soviet Union wants progress, let the British Government speak out.

6.59 pm

Sir Antony Buck (Colchester, North): I hope that the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East (Mr. Strang) will forgive me if I do not follow his argument. He spoke with such rapidity that I could not follow much of what he said. I think that at the end of his speech he was suggesting that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister was subservient to the American President. How little he knows our Prime Minister if he thinks that she is subservient to anyone. Like all of us, my right hon. Friend is a loyal ally. She has proved that in relation to Libya, to which the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East referred en passant. What would have happened if we had not agreed to the Americans using the F111s from our bases?

Mr. Wareing: What might have happened?

Sir Antony Buck: Undoubtedly, the Americans would have used less accurate and less appropriate aircraft from the American sixth fleet in the Mediterranean; there would have been more civilian casualties; and we would rightly have been blamed. They were performing a surgical exercise on an evil regime. It is odd that sometimes the Opposition almost speak in favour of someone like President Gaddafi.

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith: Does my hon. and learned Friend agree that we have not heard much of Gaddafi since that rightly punitive exercise?

Sir Antony Buck: I respectfully agree with my hon. Friend. I hope that he is not tempting fate. It was right for Britain to allow the F111s to be used. Of course, it is easy to be a good, staunch ally when things are going well, but it is in times of difficulty one needs one's friends. I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and other senior Ministers were right to allow the F111s to be used as they were.

I shall try to keep my contribution relatively short because many hon. Members wish to contribute. I very much appreciate the speech of my right hon. Friend the Member for Spelthorne (Sir H. Atkins). I should like to say how nice it is to see my hon. Friend the Member for Kettering (Mr. Freeman) on the Front Bench as Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces. I am sure that he wil be happy during his time in the Ministry of Defence. My hon. Friend the Member for Wealden (Sir G. Johnson Smith) and I spent some of our happiest times as junior Ministers in the Ministry of Defence. I hope that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State will, unlike us, go on to be a senior Minister.

This is a difficult time for all parties in defence matters. We are at the end of a fairly easy period during which defence expenditure increased by 3 per cent. a year in real terms. We should be grateful to my right hon. Friend the Member for Spelthorne, the Chairman of the Select Committee on Defence, for the extraordinarily able report which we shall absorb later in greater detail. It will be of inestimable value in the single service debates which I hope will follow in due course. The report contains a great deal of material and is the result of the evidence of a large number of witnesses.

The more cosy period during which there was a 3 per cent. increase in real terms in defence expenditure has substantially enhanced our military capability. We have honoured to the full that 3 per cent. increase, and our present level of defence is much more satisfactory than it was.

I am not sure that we must leave our expenditure at that. Unless we are careful, there will be a decline from now on in real terms in our defence expenditure, as was

[Sir Antony Buck]

pointed out by the Select Committee. I am not sure that my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Government Front Bench will

"take arms against a sea of troubles. And by opposing end them"

and go to war with the Treasury pending a possible breakthrough in MBFR talks or a further START round to ensure that the real value of defence expenditure is kept up. I do not believe that we can continue with a 3 per cent. increase in real terms. That would be unrealistic. However, the Conservative party fought an election rightly emphasising that a Government's first duty is to see that the country is properly protected. I do not view with equanimity the thought of our defence expenditure decreasing in real terms over coming years. There may well be a need for a major exercise by those of us who are keen to maintain our defences to ensure that the Treasury is brought to heel, although that is not the easiest thing to do. If my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Government Front Bench take a robust line, they will find more support than they expect from Conservative Members and from a minority of Opposition Members.

I pay tribute to the work of our armed forces generally. I have the privilege of representing the northern part of a garrison town and I see a great deal of the armed forces. Last week, the Select Committee on the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration, of which I am Chairman, went to Northern Ireland in relation to the duties of the ombudsman for Northern Ireland. I stayed on to see something of the work of our armed forces there. It would be inappropriate if, as chairman of the Conservative party parliamentary defence committee, I were to let any defence debate pass without paying fulsome tribute to the work that our armed forces have been doing for a long time in Northern Ireland. No other force inside or outside NATO could perform that task with such restraint and success over such a long period. We have just had to increase the number of troops because of the uncertainties in the region. Those who call themselves "loyalists" are the ones who are now causing especial difficulties for our armed forces. It is odd to define someone as a "loyalist" when he is causing such great difficulties with respect to law and order. I think that I carry the House with me in paying tribute to our armed forces for the work that they have done and are doing in Northern Ireland.

Over the past 12 months I have also seen something of the work done by our armed forces in BAOR. They are of the highest quality and match the very best of the armed forces in NATO. I used to think that it was appropriate to cut the number of our armed forces in Germany below our commitment of 55,000. I still have a sneaking suspicion that it might be more appropriate for our German allies to bear a greater share of the defence burden. According to the defence White Paper, the Germans spend only 3·3 per cent. of gross national product on defence, compared with our 5·2 per cent. of GDP. It is hard on us to pay more than the Germans to defend the Western world. It is not practical to reduce the numbers in BAOR, but the Government should consider ways of ensuring that the German Government pay a greater share, as they used to, of the cost of the armed forces which are there to defend the whole of NATO, including Germany. I am proud of the high standards maintained by our armed forces in BAOR.

I had the privilege of leading the first parliamentary delegation to the Falklands. The group included some of my "friends", in the non-Parliamentary sense, in the Opposition. In the Falklands we have a tenable situation. In the long-term we do not need large numbers of forces there. We have now built the second runway and we have a relatively small number of troops over there. Of course that costs a lot of money, but there are some military advantages to troops being there because they can train with a greater freedom than almost anywhere else. Perhaps some parts of Scotland could provide similar facilities, but they receive superb training in the Falklands. I suspect that a very good battalion going out comes back a crack battalion, and, as my hon. Friend the Member for Wealden said, they may learn some fishing as well.

Therefore, there are spin-offs and it is not an impossible burden for us to maintain. In my view, what we need is one nuclear hunter-killer submarine on patrol off the coast there most of the time. We have 17 or so of those submarines and we might as well have one on patrol there to see whether any foolhardy successor in title to Mr. Galtieri were foolish enough to chance his arm. It would be a severe deterrent to know that there was a nuclear hunter-killer submarine there.

Mr. Robert Key (Salisbury): Does my hon. Friend agree that perhaps one of the most overriding advantages of experience in the Falkland Islands, where I, too, visited British troops, is the remarkable nature of tri-service co-operation we have seen? Would he couple with his praise for all our services, whether in Northern Ireland, BAOR or the Falklands, thanks to the wives and families of those service men who have had a difficult time in the past few years?

Sir Antony Buck: As usual, I agree with every word of my hon. Friend. The families sustain considerable burdens because of the nature of the jobs the troops undertake. I represent Colchester, one of the oldest garrison towns, and I see something of that. Over the quarter of a century that I have had the privilege of being Member of Parliament for that area I have seen a much greater and more sensitive attitude adopted to the problems of what the forces always sweetly call married families. Our boys, to coin a phrase, are sustained by their families who give them tremendous support.

The Secretary of State mentioned our task force. Going back to my days as a Minister with responsibility for the Royal Navy, one the things that was particularly successful was started then. As we inevitably cannot have a Mediterranean fleet and a fleet in every part of the world, the Navy operates a powerful naval task force which is deployed at any one time and makes sure that our sea presence is known throughout the world. That helps the Navy to maintain a blue seas capability, which has stood us in good stead in the past.

It is a privilege to take part in this debate, and I congratulate the Government on having maintained our defence posture. They now have difficult decisions to make. My advice is to take on the Treasury and see that there is not a diminution, in real terms, in our defence effort over the coming years. I would not like to enter the next election as a supporter of a Government who had

seen anything of a decline in our military capability preceding any breakthrough in disarmament across the iron curtain.

7.13 pm

Mr. John Silkin (Lewisham, Deptford): I hope that the hon. and learned Member for Colchester, North (Sir A. Buck) will forgive me if I do not follow the line of his speech. I want to ask more fundamental questions than make a tour of the armed forces.

I have every sympathy with those who produce the "Statement on the Defence Estimates". Each year it becomes much more difficult to make it readable and the 1986 effort looks like one of Mr. Shah's publications—fuzzy, technicoloured and extremely boring. The White Paper is so turgid and stale quite simply because it has nothing new to say.

The Secretary of State, who is a kind and tolerant man and obviously took no great part in drafting the White Paper, talked about continuity. That is another word for saying that it is quite fossilised. It is a defence statement that looks to the past. Defence statements should look to the future. The generation that grouped together with the United States shortly after the end of the war in order to resist the real threat posed by Stalin's armies has gone—and so has Stalin, over 30 years ago. The world has changed.

The immediacy of world television has also had its effect. To the young, the neighbours they are enjoined by the Bible to love as themselves can live out their lives 4,000 miles away and still be their neighbours; hence the immediate and heartening response to the appeals for the starving in Africa. The Sport Aid participants, it is well to remember, could be seen on the screens of most countries, including the Soviet Union. To the young, the nuclear world of their parents, which was new and exciting even as late as the 1960s, has become the nightmare of Chernobyl, which perhaps more than any other single event—many hon. Members have referred to it—has shown the need for international co-operation in the area of nuclear power as well as in every other area.

If ever there was a time to rethink the whole question of defence, including the role of NATO—I do not disagree with that—it is now. If we are going to rethink that role, we must rethink the most important aspect of the situation today, the role of the superpowers. Every hon. Member felt enormous relief when President Reagan consented to meet Mr. Gorbachev in Geneva last year. It was as though a great cloud had been lifted from us. The terrifying fear of the world was the hostility of those two superpowers.

I am told that a few years ago at the meeting of the Commonwealth Heads of Government a senior venerable statesman spoke about the fight of the superpowers in relation to the fight between elephants that took place in his own continent of Africa. He said that when two elephants fight one another they damage not only one another but all the villages within miles. No doubt that is true, and that is what the world was fearing. I am told that another Commonwealth leader, on hearing that story, said that it is even worse when elephants make love.

A world dominated by two superpowers agreeing among themselves to divide up the world in a new Yalta is something which the rest of us can be frightened of, too. It is not a long way off. They divide the world into zones of influence. Why does not the Soviet Union actively intervene in South America? Why does not the United States actively intervene in Afghanistan? The answer is that there are zones of influence and they automatically leave it to one another. A world dominated by those two superpowers is a world in fear.

If those are the two elephants we are frightened of now, there is another one coming up. I am looking ahead to the next 20 years when China will be a superpower. The House will recall that Napoleon said:

"Let China sleep for when she wakes the rest of the world will tremble."

A world dominated by three superpowers will not be a safer world; it will be a much more dangerous world.

I am glad that the Secretary of State did not boast as much as his predecessor did about the 40 years of peace in Europe. I think that he understands that in the rest of the world there have been about 150 wars since the end of world war 2. That is because the two superpowers fight their wars through their surrogates. They supply arms to countries in the Third world, Africa and Latin America. That is where the danger is coming, above all.

I do not think that we can do this straight away as I do not believe that one can automatically change the whole attitude to defence, but it must develop over many years. Over the next many years I would rather like to see a looking ahead by this country above all other countries at what will happen. I admit that we live in Britain, not Utopia, but that is no reason why we should not look ahead to the next generation. To the young, we are becoming more irrelevant in our old defence postures. I know because I adopted many of those postures myself. I, too, felt in 1949 that the menace of Stalin and of the Soviets had to be met; hence NATO and the desire for a strong NATO, in which the United States, as the only nuclear power, was essential. But there are new ideas now, and it is our duty to take account of those new ideas.

We should work together with all other countries that are willing to join us to create a more effective way of obtaining and controlling the peace of the world. It is not that we are short of ideas; there are plenty of them. The most imaginative at the moment is one in the book entitled "Prescription for Peace" by a former hon. Member, Henry Usborne. It looks to a federation of neutral nations with internal weapon limitation and a minimal constitution, independent and free from interference in domestic affairs. The idea is that such a grouping would take its place with the three superpowers as the fourth superpower, in the Security Council, but without the excess of armaments that the other three have or wish to have. That is one possibility.

The second possibility is dialogue with the non-aligned countries. Only two years ago we had the five-continent initiative, when six countries approached the Soviet Union and the United States and said, "Why can't you get together and talk to one another?" It was the intervention of those six countries that started the dialogue between the United States and the Soviet Union, so there is no reason why we should not do that. We have a perfect weapon for peace — it is strange how one always uses military metaphors in defence debates. We have a weapon for peace because we have a Commonwealth, which has a tremendous advantage, in that it has, all over the world, a grouping of nations that understand one another and have a common tradition and history. They can talk to various people in their continents. That is another possibility.

[Mr. John Silkin]

A third possibility is an increasing dialogue with the individual countries in the Warsaw pact by the NATO countries, because we have a great deal in common with one another. We have a common frontier. We have a common desire for peace. I speak for the countries that are not the superpowers, both here and on the other side of the iron curtain, in the Warsaw pact countries. I believe that there is a common desire to get the superpowers off our backs.

During the debate we have heard a number of phrases such as, "Let's be careful, chaps, because if we are not, the Americans may get cross with us. They may actually leave NATO. We never know what the Americans will do." Some of us are getting a bit sick of all that. It is about time that the Americans had a little humility, too. There is the emotional blackmail of saying to us, "Unless you agree to United States nuclear bases in Britain, we shall pull out of NATO."; or, "Unless you agree to help us bomb Libya, we shall pull out of NATO." That is beginning to be a little counter-productive.

Dr. M. S. Miller (East Kilbride): Does my right hon. Friend accept that in the United States there is a large body of public opinion that feels exactly as he does?

Mr. Silkin: Indeed, I do. I have been careful in talking about the American President and the American Administration. It is not for my hon. Friend or for me to interfere in the domestic policy of the United States, but we are entitled to say that the American Administration have been taking a rather too arrogant view of matters at the moment, just as those in the Warsaw pact are entitled to say the same about the Soviet Union. That is why it would be a bad thing to disband NATO. It would be calamitous. There is a way of talking across that frontier to people who feel very much as we do. That should be encouraged.

The House knows that I have always taken the view that, whether in the service of the United Nations, the Commonwealth, NATO or any other grouping, Britain should be capable not only of defending herself but of providing the means to assist the world's defences. That means that her pre-eminence in maritime matters must be preserved.

The right hon. Member for Western Isles (Mr. Stewart) asked the Secretary of State a pertinent question just before he finished his speech. He asked him what the Government intended to do about the decline in the Merchant Navy. The Secretary of State was a sailor, too, and he knows the point. It was implicit in what the right hon. Member for Western Isles said that, without the Merchant Navy, Britain cannot have a Navy. We all know that the Navy in time of war and in time of difficulty relies on its Merchant Navy and on the Royal Naval Reserve. These days, the RNR includes everybody who comes in. Only the other day an RN officer said to me—it was something that we used to say the other way round during the war—"Of course, you chaps who were in the reserve were the people who manned our ships in wartime. We kept them going in peacetime." There would be no manning of ships in wartime if it were not for the Merchant Navy.

This is where table 1.4 in the second volume of the defence Estimates comes in. I hope that my hon. Friend and shipmate, the Member for Sheffield, Attercliffe (Mr. Duffy), when he winds up, will draw further attention to it. The table is of officers, ratings and cadets in the Merchant Navy. It is interesting to note that it omits the years 1979 and 1986. I do not blame whoever wrote the technicolor version for omitting those years. I would, too, if I wanted to be selective, but I do not. I want to be truthful.

These are the figures. In 1979, 31,439 officers were registered. In 1986 the figure is 13,371. In 1979 there were 28,942 ratings and in 1986 the figure is 17,680. There were 6,318 cadets in 1979 and today there are 1,016. That is the future of Britain. Earlier we heard a great deal about ships and shipbuilding, and about warships. We did not hear anything, except from the right hon. Member for Western Isles, whose question was not answered, about those who were to man the ships if ever there was a state of emergency. On that basis, and if that trend continued for another five years, there would not be a Merchant Navy left.

So what does it all amount to? It amounts to this. Two volumes of monotonous writing and selective and partisan statistics do not make up for the mortal blow that is being dealt to the future of our country. They do not make up for the lack of a coherent defence policy, they do not give hope to the young, and, above all, they do not make up for a lost opportunity at a crucial moment in the history of the world.

7.29 pm

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith (Wealden): I enjoyed listening to many of the comments made by the right hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Mr. Silkin) who chose this occasion to make a thoughtful and, on the whole, constructive speech. However, as he would expect, I did not agree with his conclusions.

I believe that we have a very coherent defence policy. In view of the changing conditions in the world, I believe that, as staunch allies of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, we should be ever quick to take new initiatives and to seize the opportunities that are presented from time to time to explore the Soviet mind to see how far we can have a mutual reduction in conventional and nuclear arms.

As a chairman of the military committee of the North Atlantic Assembly, I do not see a need for a fundamental review either of this country's defence policies or of the NATO posture generally. One of the worst things that we can possibly do is from time to time to dig up the roots of the military commanders of NATO. I have no doubt that modifications could be made. I am sure that if progress is made in Geneva and if we can make some progress in the multi-balanced force reduction talks in Vienna — and there are signs of hope in that direction—we will find more fruitful opportunities for exchanging views with the Soviet Union and a more intimate dialogue with other members of the Warsaw pact. As the right hon. Member for Deptford said—and I agree with him on this point—dialogue between the Warsaw pact and NATO countries is not just a matter for the Soviet Union and the United States. The President of the North Atlantic Assembly, a distinguished American senator, persuaded a number of us at a recent meeting in Luxembourg that the time had come for an exchange of views between members of the assembly and, it was hoped, one of the Warsaw pact countries.

Many of us are alive to the fact that, with the talks going on at Geneva, with the signs that we have had from

Moscow that Mr. Gorbachev believes that there should be a renewal of disarmament negotiations — although we have yet to get down to some of the more practical details — it would be foolish to assume that our strategy, tactics and attitudes should be locked in the cement of the memory of the creation of NATO some years ago.

I hope that the right hon. Member for Deptford will forgive me if I do not go further down that road. After hearing comments about nuclear philosophy and the apocalyptical statements that have been made today and other wide ranging surveys, I shall confine the main burden of my remarks to a narrower topic. In illustrating this narrow point I may be — though I hope not — a little tedious. This point has a strong bearing on cost, and that, after all, has been one of the features of the debate.

I am sure that the right hon. Member for Deptford did not mean this, but it does not lie well in the mouth of any Opposition Member to criticise the Government for being cost effective in defence after years of considerable increases in real terms in defence expenditure on which we had given the lead in western Europe. The time has come for the Government to consider — and rightly so, in view of the other pressing demands on public expenditure — inviting the armed services to exercise restraint during the next few years.

I accept the Government's policy, but I join my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Colchester, North (Sir A. Buck) in making it clear to the Government that, as much as I understand the need for restraint in public expenditure in defence — and we cannot continue increasing defence expenditure in real terms year after year — I hope that, if the Government thought that there was any question of a real diminution in the effectiveness of our armed forces, they would not hesitate to take the appropriate action in Cabinet and argue that course most forcibly. I have no doubt, as my hon. and learned Friend said, that the Government would have plenty of friends on the Conservative Benches in support of such a course.

I want to consider the effects of competition on the costs of procurement. The Government have recently introduced a policy of competitive buying. The White Paper states that in terms of the volume and value of contracts, which amount to £7·5 billion, no less than 64 per cent. by value has been placed

"as a result of competition or from the competitive environment."

That is an encouraging figure.

I have several reservations about applying a competition policy inflexibly, and I would appreciate a comment on these points from my hon. Friend the Minister — and I welcome him to his new post — when he replies to the debate.

My first point is that in applying a competition policy, I hope that due attention will be paid not simply to short-term cost benefits but to the effects on the companies themselves. I am not making a bid for a soft, cosy life for defence manufacturers at the taxpayers' expense. A competition policy should be flexible for several reasons. It should be flexible on strategic grounds. We know that to maintain a vital, technical, scientific and manufacturing resource in this country, it is sometimes essential to our national interest to maintain a British source. That is essential in defence terms and also in relation to the impact that such orders can have on the capability of some of our manufacturers to manufacture in the civilian sector.

There are also cases when, in order to encourage the growth of a specific technology — and the Department of Trade and Industry is aware of this — it will be in our longer term interests to abate short-term cost saving benefits, especially when new emerging companies are struggling to establish a bridgehead in a new technology. The initial procurement costs of buying from such a company, which may gain a contract, may be higher than buying from abroad. However, the long-term financial and strategic benefits may be the better bet.

It is understandable, in the light of some of the Public Accounts Committee reports, that our sympathy should be a little short when we hear tales of how badly done by the larger companies have been at the hands of the Ministry of Defence, especially when such companies have a monopoly. Those companies which have a monopoly pose a problem. If a large company has a monopoly, we should be prepared to accept that there are ways of building in incentives to keep costs down. To assume that monopoly pricing will take us to the cleaners because there is no other British competitor and the only other source is a foreign competitor may not be the right reason for buying abroad even if the price is less.

Clearly these are difficult problems. I am not arguing for protectionism. Successive Governments since the war thought it right to buy the best equipment for our armed forces — which are entitled to the best equipment — irrespective of the short-term unpopularity of buying abroad. Clearly the Government have a responsibility to the taxpayer as well as to the defence manufacturers. That is why I and my colleagues welcome the Government's steps to infuse a competitive spirit.

National competitive buying poses a threat to national frameworks in Europe. The right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) touched on this in the nuclear context, but, given time, I do not doubt that he would have gone wider. I do not think that any of us believe that we can achieve economies of scale in defence purchasing if we insist on restricting our purchases on grounds of national need to our national armouries, offsetting any criticism of protectionism by making an occasional foreign purchase. The cost of modern defence technology, and of research and development into it, is escalating so quickly that we must consider the size of the end product's market. None of the European nations' national markets is big enough to support companies such as the ones that I have in mind. The pace of industrial technology is quickening too fast for us.

The philosophy of aggressive entrepreneurialism is nowhere better epitomised than in the United States, but the United States has considerable advantages. We have bought excellent equipment from the United States and will no doubt continue to do so. It is tempting to assume that, with more aggressive entrepreneurial techniques, British defence manufacturers would be able to emulate the United States. I have reservations about that. It is too often assumed that, with a bit more get up and go, we could find a lucrative, permanent and strong base in the American market, so we do not need a European policy. It is especially tempting for us in Britain to assume that we can have the best of both worlds. As was said during the Westland debate, we tend to think that we can dine with the Americans when it suits us and with the French or Germans when that suits us. I do not believe that we have such a luxury. The protectionism and legal devices that impede entry into the American market are stringent and

[Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith]

formidable. They are also the subject of intense lobbying in Congress. I do not complain about that, but it is a tough, rough market.

A fundamental difference between us is that the United States has many more substantial companies than we have. Their order books are fatter, their defence budget is more substantial and their internal market, which produces longer production runs, is therefore more profitable. It is quite ludicrous to assume that, if we adopted more aggressive attitudes, we could get more than a toehold in the United States market. We may have some successes from time to time, as with the Rapier or the Harrier

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): And the Hawk.

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith: Indeed. Going way back into history, we had some success with the Canberra, which my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) flew; but the experience of most British and European companies is that, although they may get an initial order, the repeat order — the big one — goes to an American company. I quite understand that. America is 3,000 miles away from the source of production, and that must add to its qualms about pledging itself to buying too much from abroad.

The European market is more compact, so if British and other European defence manufacturers are to develop expensive and sophisticated technologies of a quality that we want and at a price that we can afford, we must increasingly rely on our ability to collaborate. That is essential, as we cannot assume that we will have a quantitative superiority over the Soviet Union. We have so far had a qualitative superiority, but unless we collaborate more we will not be able to maintain it. That means creating a wider European market.

I am aware that collaboration does not always cut costs. There have been examples of projects that have been to our benefit and others that have proved tremendously expensive. People think that Tornado is a fine example of collaboration. It is. Technically it is very good, but it is tremendously expensive. At £30 million a copy, it is some aeroplane and the costs of development exceed that of the Trident system. The European defence base has been too fragmented. There are too many different pieces of equipment which are designed to achieve the same purpose. There is still too much national division of the European defence cake at the expense of European NATO agreement about what should be made and by whom. We would say that the biggest offenders are the French. They are extremely difficult to co-operate with. To them, European co-operation means accepting French design, French production, except, perhaps, a bit of the spare wheel. Those who speak to the French will learn that they think that we can be pretty bloody, too. I suspect that all nations have good grounds for criticising each other, but unless we step up the collaboration we shall all go down the sink together.

The consequences for Europe would be serious. We would lack an industrial defence base from which we could expect a spin-off for civilian demands when the de-industrialisation of western Europe as a whole—we hear much about de-industrialisation in Britain—in the face of competition from the far east becomes an even more serious threat to our livelihood.

Our growing dependence on the United States is greeted by some with envy and by others with crossness. The right hon. Member for Deptford said that he wanted them off our back, just as he thought that the Warsaw pact countries sometimes want to get the Soviet Union off their backs. I do not share his feeling about the United States. We are all in it together as democracies, and I thank God that America's strength, wisdom and strong political sense and understanding of democracy is with us. I do not believe that it is healthy for our relationship, however, for us to become overdependent on the United States for our military and technical needs.

America expects Europe to do more for itself and it is puzzled that we do not get our act together. The act will be got together not by knocking the heads of defence manufacturers, but by political will and leadership. With that, the rest will fall into place. I say political leadership because all the companies that I have in mind are extraordinarily dependent — some too dependent — on Government contracts. That is why they look to politicians for a lead.

I invite my hon. Friend the Minister to give us the assurances that I have asked for: that we shall sustain and strengthen the drive towards shared procurement objectives and reinforce the excellent work of the independent European procurement group. There has been much rubbishing of Trident today, and far more goes on outside the House. It is bound up with the cost of defence equipment. I doubt whether we would hear quite so much about it if we were on a rising tide of expenditure. Criticism that Trident takes up too large a proportion of defence equipment expenditure does not stand up. We must ask whether Trident gives good value for money and whether it will do what it is designed to do.

As my right hon. Friend the Member for Spelthorne (Sir H. Atkins) said — he is Chairman of the Defence Select Committee which has gone into this matter in more detail than anyone else — if we scrapped Trident tomorrow and instead spent the money on conventional weapons, it would not buy us the equivalent of anything more than three armoured divisions. It would be equivalent to a mere one sixth of the annual expenditure on service pay and allowances. I do not think that three armoured divisions have much of a deterrent value, which is what we are talking about. The purpose of nuclear weapons is to deter.

As we all know, modern conventional weapons are not cheap. In relative terms they are more expensive and add only marginally to our defence capabilities. The arguments against Trident which the Labour party peddles so enthusiastically are that conventional weapons are better and cheaper.

We did not hear that many years ago. Today the Labour Front Bench pledged that the money saved on Trident would be spent on conventional weapons, although that has been denied by other Labour Members. I shall believe that when I see it. Even if that were done, the money would not be well spent. There is no reason why we should deny ourselves our nuclear deterrent. In reality, the real reason for the Labour party's hostility to a British nuclear deterrent, whatever the cost, is its desire to discredit the Government's commitment to our nuclear defence posture.

I am sorry that the right hon. Member for Devonport has left his place. He occupied the House for some considerable time—I make no complaint about that—

with his thoughtful and provoking speech. We all know why the alliance cannot agree. It has nothing to do with the merits of Trident and everything to do with the fact that the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Mr. Steel) cannot persuade his party to follow him because it cannot agree on a successor to Polaris. Indeed, from time to time we are not even sure what the right hon. Gentleman thinks.

We all know that it was right to make the decision to replace Polaris when we did because of the long lead time to install a new system. I should like the right hon. Member for Devonport to publish some figures showing the savings we would make if we adopted his solution. He suggested that a cruise alternative would be effective. Many people who have considered alternatives do not believe that a cruise system would be effective as an investment to last well into the next century.

Obviously, the United States has cruise missile systems launched from submarines and surface vessels and landlock sytems, but it has a much broader canvas for nuclear weapons. We must put our money where it will have the most effect. We have made the right decision, and I congratulate the Government on their courage and, above all, their decisiveness.

7.52 pm

Mr. Bruce George (Walsall, South): The hon. Member for Wealden (Sir G. Johnson Smith) should not be so complacent about the alleged homogeneity of the Conservative party. Certainly the hon. and learned Member for Colchester, North (Sir A. Buck) gave a warning to his party towards the end of his speech. It may have been rather disguised and some of it may have been in code, but people who think seriously about defence—I am told that there are some in that category in the Conservative party—will be exceedingly worried about what the Conservative party is doing.

There seems to be euphoria about the fact that Polaris will be replaced by Trident. However, the White Paper has not addressed the question of how to reconcile the Government's aspirations, their commitments, and resources, although the Defence Select Committee has. If the resources available to the Government decline, there is no way that their defence policy will encompass the finest nuclear weapon system available in the West and adequate conventional defence.

A year ago the Committee made a report on defence commitments and resources, and the Government treated us to a rather soporific reply. Indeed, it was so bland and awful that the Committee, despite its large Government majority, stated:

> "The Government's Observations on our 1985 Report demonstrated either an unacceptable lack of frankness or an unwillingness to come to terms with the problem."

I do not wish to appear Wilsonian in my "I told you so", but about six years ago myself and some others said that Trident would squeeze a great deal from our conventional defence budget, and many of the chickens are now coming home to roost. If supporters of Trident compare carefully the costings for what the Government hope to do with what they will have the resources to do, they will have far greater anxieties than they have been minded to admit.

Defence expenditure is falling. As an hon. Gentleman has said, the White Paper bears the hallmarks of Eddie Shah. I think it bears the hallmarks of Jeffrey Archer because there are elements of sheer fiction, and perhaps Alan Ayckbourn contributed an element of farce to it. As the Committee's report stated, defence expenditure of £19 billion will decline in real terms over the next three years, possibly by 7 per cent., yet our commitments are increasing. Over the next few years we must pay for many major items, so the funding gap is growing ever wider.

When we told the former Secretary of State for Defence, the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine)—it is hard to keep up with them and it is almost like being a machine gunner in the first world war—that there could well be a 7 per cent. reduction over the next two or three years, he said that it was "unthinkable". The unthinkable has almost happened. The Committee's figures show that defence expenditure could well fall by 7 per cent. Government supporters will say, "But look how wonderfully we have done since 1979. There has been a major increase in defence expenditure". That is true. But when that expenditure is diminished over a period, how long will it be before those gains are dissipated? Not all Conservative Members are as enamoured of Trident as the hon. Member for Wealden. There are major problems and even the Government are now beginning to admit that publicly. They say that difficult decisions must be made, and if ever there was a verbal understatement that phrase shows it.

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith: I know that the hon. Gentleman follows these matters closely. May I remind him that there have always been difficult decisions in defence? The Government are not talking about difficult decisions which are catastrophic.

Mr. George: Perhaps in two years' time we shall be able to evaluate whether the massaging of the Government—the improvement in contracting out the reorganisation—will suffice. I do not remotely think that it will narrow the funding gap. If Conservative Members would like greater information, they will not get it from the Ministry of Defence. Certainly it is worrying for those who believe in defence. I would not like the public to think that believers and supporters of defence reside only on the Conservative Benches. I have always taken the view, and I have never expressed the slightest divergence from it, that the essential prerequisite of the state is to defend itself. It may be regrettable that large sums must be spent on defence, but it is a fact of life. Any party which ignores that central principle will, rightly, face the wrath of the electorate. The Labour party should listen to what many of its supporters are saying and to what the electorate said in 1983.

The Labour party has to present to the electorate a viable defence policy, whatever form it takes. We shall pay a heavy price if we fail to convince the electorate that the Labour party is seriously interested in defence.

I have no shame in saying that I support NATO, or that the United States is not an army of occupation. The United States presence in Europe is central to its own security and that of Europe. I regard with considerable disquiet movements in Europe and the United States that think that there is an alternative to that arrangement. We are told that, since NATO was founded in 1949, circumstances have changed. The Soviet Union is infinitely more powerful now than it was in 1949 when NATO had a nuclear monopoly.

I have some anxieties. Although I regard many elements within the current United States Administration as being worrying, as they have an exaggerated perception

[Mr. George]

of the threat, my worry is balanced by my anxiety about those in my party, in the country, or in Europe who underestimate that threat. One of the essential prerequisites to this Alliance, which I want to see survive until such time—it will not be in the immediate future—that alliances wither away, is that it should be strong. The future of security and détente will not be achieved by posturing and thinking about phoney ideas of neutralism which were dismissed by Attlee and his colleagues in the 1940s, and would be dismissed today by the electorate.

We must consider how we shall proceed as an Alliance. It is important that there should be a proper definition of the threat, although this is easier said than done. We hear in America of the so-called "realistic" school of international relations, which often exaggerates the threat, as opposed to the Utopian school in some parts of Europe, which thinks that there is no threat. Both views are mistaken.

The CND sends us briefings. In a recent one, it cited the International Institute for Strategic Studies, which said:

"Our conclusion remains that the overall balance continues to be such as to make military aggression a highly risky undertaking . . . there would still appear to be insufficient overall strength on either side to guarantee victory."

Perhaps it would be appropriate to cite other sections of the report for the sake of completeness. It says:

"The West has largely lost the technological edge in conventional equipment . . . there is still sufficient danger in the trend to require remedies in the Western Alliance."

The threat to NATO is still serious. While some Labour Members and some people outside are quick to point out that there are weapons in NATO pointing towards the Soviet Union, my worry is that there are weapons pointing towards us to which we should also pay attention. For instance, the 22 Yankee class submarines, the 37 Delta class submarines, the three Typhoon class ballistic missile submarines, the 1,398 land-based intercontinental missiles are all worrying, as are the long-range and medium-range bombers, the Bears, the Bisons, the Backfires, and the Badgers, the Blinders and the Fencers carrying nuclear weapons, all of which could threaten the United Kindom.

It is important to get the threat into perspective. It would be nonsense beyond words to imagine that the Soviet Union is simply waiting at the starting line for the signal to pour into Western Europe. However, it is behaving like that, not because of a change of heart at the Kremlin, but because NATO presents a proper and just about adequate nuclear and conventional weapons deterrent. Should that change, we should be in some difficulties.

Let us get the threat into a proper perspective, but there must also be a redefinition of Alliance relations. The conditions have changed since 1949. Europe is much stronger economically, so it wants to be taken seriously and has to get its act together institutionally. There are the beginnings of it in the independent European programme group, the Western European Union, and the Eurogroup. Although the EEC does not have a security brief, it has a role in improving defence equipment collaboration.

Let us redefine the US-European relationship so that we do rather more than we have done in the past. Perhaps then Europe will be taken more seriously. Let us get the East-West relationship better organised. Although I have spent most of my time talking about defence and security, we cannot—and I do not include arms control simply for ritualistic purposes—we should not ignore the recent Soviet moves. We must see whether they are real, or simply posturing, with a desire to divide NATO—something for which they are showing an increased sophistication. Let us explore the Soviet offer to see whether it is consistent with our security and, if it is, let us proceed to a decent arms control arrangement. However, we must not seek that simply for the sake of getting an arrangement. That happened before, when détente was not as successful as we should have liked. Let us not forget that we should be getting right not just West-West relationships and the East-West relationship, but the North-South relationship. Tensions emerge from outside the NATO area and we have to do more thinking about relations with the Third world.

The difficulties that we are experiencing in NATO are not merely the extensions of old differences. There is always a crisis—the neutron bomb, the intermediate nuclear force, the follow on force attack, emerging technologies, the strategic defence initiative, chemical weapons, out-of-area, and this year it is Libya. Is it simply another twist, another crisis, that the organisation can absorb, or are we, as some people fear, in the midst of qualitatively different trends? Are the Europeans and Americans drifting apart? Some would gleefully observe that development, smile, and see it as the fulfilment of all their wildest desires. I can say without fear of contradiction that the future of security is through NATO and the Harmel principles of détente and deterrence. It is only through a strong Alliance working for better co-operation within it and better relations with our potential adversaries that security will be, if not guaranteed, enhanced. I reject out of hand those who argue that pursuing a low defence commitment, a form of unarmed, or even armed, neutralism, will solve all our problems. It will not.

8.8 pm

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): It is a pleasure to follow the positive speech of the hon. Member for Walsall, South (Mr. George). It was reassuring for some of us on these Benches who greatly fear for the mainstream policy of the Opposition party on defence matters. He referred to the importance of being a member of NATO and to the fact that a proper and adequate nuclear and conventional deterrence is essential to our defence capability. The Estimates address that problem.

I shall look at some of the basic underlying problems facing us today. The only direction from which we can see a major threat to the Western and British interests is from the Warsaw pact, dominated by the Soviet Union. Any nation that spends 15 per cent. of its gross domestic product on weapons, compared with 5·2 per cent. in Britain and 6·9 per cent. in the United States, clearly shows what it is about. It outnumbers us in nuclear warheads, in conventional troops in Europe and in armed forces. On total troops we are outnumbered four to three, on tanks two to one, on anti-tank weapons four to three, on artillery three to one, and on fixed-wing tactical aircraft two to one. It must not be forgotten that, in addition, 300,000 tonnes of chemical weapons are stockpiled in the Soviet Union and that every unit of battalion strength in the Red Army has an offensive chemical warfare unit. It is unfortunate that, because of that and the continuing Soviet advance in the production of chemical weapons, the Americans,

having not produced any chemical weapons since 1969, are now thinking positively of trying to redress that imbalance.

The development of that enormous amount of military hardware stems only from a fear on the part of the Soviet Union of attack from the Western nations. We must get inside the thinking and the psyche of the Soviet Union politicians and begin to understand what motivates them. For that, we must consider history. We must consider 1812 and 1941. Few of us who have studied history will forget the famous cartoon of Stalin and Hitler shaking hands over the dead body of Poland. The betrayal of that treaty must be burnt into the pysche of the Soviet Union and its politicians, who reckon that between 1941 and 1945 more than 20 million of its citizens were killed in defence of their country. That event dictates the policy of the Soviet Union, its attitude towards the creation of buffer states that make up the Warsaw pact and its intervention in Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Poland and Afghanistan. One way in which a country can defend itself is to dominate the countries around it, accordingly manipulate the world and world opinion to achieve protection for itself and, at the same time, dominate the sphere of activity where it is the major power.

Fortunately for the Government, the Defence Estimates do not give any comfort to the Soviet Union, either in its obsession with being attacked or its desire to dominate the world in its sphere of activity. Unfortunately, the Liberal party's defence policy and that of the Labour party offer much comfort to the Kremlin in that regard, because unilateral disarmament will do nothing but weaken the position of NATO — that essential part of our defence policy which was rightly mentioned by the hon. Member for Walsall, South. He said that he thought that

"NATO presents a proper, and just about adequate nuclear and conventional weapons deterrent."

That is what the Defence Estimates are about. As long as that remains the position, we shall have a free Western world, unbullied and not blackmailed by any desire in the Warsaw pact to expand its world domination.

What about the defence policy and the position of Britain and NATO? We talk about the Soviet Union being a superpower, but it is only a superpower militarily. When it is compared with the EEC and the United States in economic terms, it is not a superpower. It is a superpower only in the number of its troops, its weapons and the amount of money that it continues to pump into its armed forces at the expense of its people's quality of living, housing and basic domestic consumer goods.

What has brought the recent advances in negotiations on disarmament of conventional and nuclear weapons at all levels? The reason simply is that, through the defence policy pursued by Britain, the United States and NATO, we have shown our determination to defend ourselves from aggression and potential domination by the deployment of cruise missiles, by the introduction of Trident and by the maintenance of our defence commitment by increasing it by 3 per cent. every year during the past five years.

In addition, the SDI programme — the Secretary of State recently announced the £6 million investment in Britain and the agreement signed between the United States and the British Governments — will defend our way of life and our standard of living. I and many Conservative Members believe that only that determination, that belief in the need to protect our way of life and expand our defence capability, if necessary, brought the Soviet Union to the negotiating table. That has resulted in the offers that have been made for nuclear disarmament of different sorts. The Soviet Union recognises that we shall continue as we have done.

We tell the Soviet Union that we shall negotiate disarmament, because that is what we want, but we shall negotiate only from strength. That is where the Labour and Liberal policies on defence break down. They can never negotiate from strength. If one does not negotiate from strength — if one has nothing to negotiate — one will achieve nothing. One will merely weaken the NATO Alliance.

Trident plays an important part in Britain's contribution. The cost of the programme is £7·5 billion but it is spread over 15 years. It amounts to only 6 per cent. of the equipment grant. It is good value for money in defence terms.

Mr. George: From where does the hon. Gentleman get the figure of £7·5 billion? The Select Committee on Defence seems to differ with him, and I suspect from the grimace on the face of the Minister that he believes that it is not £7·5 billion but more than that.

Mr. Hind: The £7·5 billion came from the Defence Estimates. If I am wrong, I am ready to be corrected.

Mr. Lee: To put the record straight, we are talking about a figure of just under £9·9 billion over a 20-year period.

Mr. Hind: I apologise to the House. My figure is based on what must be spent. I shall return to that point. The Minister corrects me and says that the figure is £9·9 billion, but even on those terms it is still good value for money.

If we consider the imbalance in conventional forces, what would happen if we were to attempt to bridge the gap? We would obtain for the additional money three divisions of tanks — that is all. Would that be a sufficient replacement for the nuclear deterrent of the United Kingdom? In addition, there has been criticism that the number of warheads will be increased. But that in itself increases the possibility of what we can do with the weapon. It will hit 14 times more targets than our present nuclear deterrent — Polaris.

Mr. Couchman: Is it not a fact that, although Trident will represent a considerable escalation on our present capability with the Chevaline-based Polaris, we will only be restoring the capability to hit targets that we first had with the V-bomber force and the original bombs? Is it not a fact that there was a reduction when we adopted Polaris and a dramatic reduction in our capability to hit targets when we went to Chevaline?

Mr. Hind: I am obliged to my hon. Friend. It is clear that we are restoring the capacity that we had in the 1960s.

The abandonment of Trident would cause a large deficit. The Labour party wishes to negotiate the American nuclear bases out of Britain. Does it not know that that would result in the loss of more than just those nuclear bases? I believe, from comments heard in Washington, that it would result in the withdrawal of 300,000 American troops from Europe, and would put a great deal of pressure upon NATO.

[Mr. Hind]

The Labour party's arguments are intellectually dishonest. It condemns nuclear arms and wishes to withdraw them unilaterally from the United Kingdom, but also wishes to remain in NATO under the umbrella of the American nuclear capacity. Labour Members wish to remain in the club, but do not want to pay the membership fee. The Americans will not stand for that. They will say, "This is an alliance and everyone standing within it pays their way. You cannot be a member unless you are prepared to take the good with the bad."

We hear talk about the SDP-Liberal alliance forming a Government. Alliance Members constantly push it down our throats. Today, we have seen a classic example from the leader of the SDP of the differences between his party and the Liberal party. The hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Meadowcroft) is a member of the council of CND and advocates disarmament. A recent Gallup poll showed that 84 per cent. of Liberal candidates would abandon the Polaris nuclear deterrent. This contrasts with the 51 per cent. of SDP candidates who wish to keep it. The leader of the SDP says that he would replace Polaris with an additional nuclear deterrent, while the leader of the Liberal party says, "No, we shall not replace anything." How could they form a credible Government if the public were not sure of their policies?

The Labour party suffers from the same problem. It is clear from the outpourings of the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) — the Labour party's foreign affairs spokesman — that his views differ in many respects from those of the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East (Mr. Strang) and no doubt those of the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn), who is waiting to put his case.

Trident is so far advanced that it would be foolish to call it off. It has consequences for defence spending far beyond that which we can conceive at present. We should press ahead with a weapon that will be a deterrent and prevent attack from the Soviet Union.

We should negotiate nuclear disarmament from a position of strength, and Trident would provide us with that strength. The most recent offer from Mr. Gorbachev has come about because we have been negotiating from strength. We should consider his offer carefully because it provides a good basis from which to negotiate sensibly a verifiable mutual nuclear disarmament — not the unilateralism that has been urged upon us, with the hope that neutralism will follow. Britain's history defies neutrality in any respect. It is foolish. We cannot become Switzerland overnight, as many Labour Members seem to believe.

The Tornado programme is very important to those hon. Members who represent constituencies in the north-west. British Aerospace builds the airframe. We are pleased to see that the Tornado has been recognised in military circles as one of the finest weapons, and as our main line air defence weapon. The announcement of the European fighter aircraft — a five-nation partnership — will be welcomed in the north-west as a sensible development to replace aging aircraft. In the 1990s, we hope to see the result of the Government's foresight in participating in that programme.

My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State talks about making savings in defence purchasing in relation to the royal ordnance factories. We should not make savings by buying inferior equipment. Many of my constituents who work in the royal ordnance factory at Chorley believe that some foreign ammunition is inferior. It might be cheaper, but if it is inferior it is a bad purchase. Saving money on defence spending is fine, provided that it does not increase the DHSS bill through the payment of extra welfare benefits. The Government should examine royal ordnance purchasing policy. The provision of ammunition causes grave concern in Lancashire because many jobs are invested in it.

Before the Government start to order type 23 frigates, they should consider whether the most effective naval surface weapon will be a long, thin frigate or a short, fat one. That has not yet been resolved. It would be foolish to go ahead and subsequently, after research and investigation, discover that the alternative would have been better.

We are on the right lines in relation to our policy on Trident. Even if it is never used, it plays an important part in negotiations on nuclear disarmament, and will have been worth every penny spent on it to make the world a safer place.

8.26 pm

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): I wish to voice in the House the point of view of many millions of people, of whom I am one, who believe that Britain's burden of defence expenditure is, in real terms, much too great and contributes to our failure to solve other difficulties, including our economic weakness; and also believe that the nature of our relationship with the United States, through NATO and directly, unfortunately limits Britain's capacity to ease the world tensions most likely to lead to war, and makes it hard for us to provide the urgently needed support for the Third world.

I wish to put the argument for a major diversion of resources from the means of death to the means of life, and for an independent or non-aligned foreign policy which would allow Britain to play a more constructive role in bridging the East-West gap, and in closing the gulf that separates North and South.

That view is widely shared. I have taken part in many defence debates for 30 years. I made my maiden speech from the Front Bench in 1957 as Opposition spokesman on defence. The arguments advanced by the Government today and some hon. Members do not reflect in any real way the changes that have taken place in the world and in public opinion in Britain. That is why there is a wider gulf now between the view of the current Government and that of the Opposition — the next Government — than I can recall since I have been a Member of Parliament.

The Government and the SDP are having marginal, managerial arguments about what is the best weapon to fire from the Trident submarine. The Opposition view on defence, as put forward by my right hon. Friend the Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies), of closing all United States nuclear bases, cancelling Trident, decommissioning Polaris — we all know that there have been discussions with the Soviet Union on that — and of a wholly non-nuclear defence policy, represents a clear alternative to the views put forward by the Minister. I shall be very proud to advocate it during the next general election campaign. It is the product of many years of discussion. I was on the national executive committee of the Labour party when

Hugh Gaitskell said that he would fight and fight and fight again against such a policy. There is great support for it within the country, as I hope to show.

I should now like to put into *Hansard*, if I may put it like that, some of the factors that are changing public perception about what is happening. The first is in respect of the Soviet threat. I do not believe – and I think that millions of other people do not believe – that the reason we have had peace in Europe since the war is because the West first had a monopoly of the bomb and since then has had superiority in nuclear weapons.

Many people of my generation, remembering the war years, believe that one of the major reasons why the Soviet Union never intends to invade western Europe is because it lost 20 million people in the last war. They also remember that, far from Russia ever invading Britain, Britain sent an army into Russia to crush the revolution. There is no evidence – and there never has been, other than its armed strength – to suggest that Russia ever intended to move into western Europe, nor is there any evidence that it would succeed.

Does any hon. Member believe that the Russian army could go through eastern Europe, where it might meet some resistance, and then occupy West Germany, France, Italy, Norway, Sweden and Denmark and then come to Britain, after which it would go on to Northern Ireland, there to deal with the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley)? Does anybody honestly believe that that has ever been Russia's intention? Does anybody believe that the only reason for Gorbachev not addressing the Supreme Soviet in Westminster tonight is because the Government have an order form for Trident? Nobody believes that any more. The reason for people believing Gorbachev now – and they do – is because his argument is consistent with the true interests of the Soviet Union: to develop its economy after years of bureaucracy under a centralised system. Any hon. Member who speaks in the House tonight – we have already had a bit of it from both sides – as though we were still living during the time when Stalin was still in command is misreading the situation.

Secondly, there has been a reassessment of the position of the United States. I greatly admire the American people, who have strongly resisted Reagan's policy in central America. I do not wish to identify American opinion with Reagan, any more than I wish to be identified with the present Government in Britain. Many people realise that we are now living in the age of the America empire. We had an empire for a long time and then we lost it. When I was born I think that we governed a sixth of the world. The Americans have 3,000 bases around the world. They have imperial interests around the world. Anybody who seriously believes that the United States stands for democracy and peace is living in a fool's paradise.

The Americans toppled Allende in Chile and they backed Franco. They also backed the Turkish dictator and the Greek generals. They supported Marcos until he became impossible and they went along with Papa Doc. They also invaded Grenada and they may invade Nicaragua. The House should not think that the British people any longer believe, if they ever did, that the United States is more than an empire in decline, and an empire in decline is more dangerous than an empire that is nascent and growing in strength.

We have American bases in Britain. Nobody honestly believes that we have a veto, because the American President takes an oath of allegiance as President and as commander-in-chief of the American armed forces which prohibits him from sharing his discretion with any Government, however friendly. The bombing of Libya undoubtedly had an effect, because non-nuclear weapons and non-nuclear bases were used. The Americans may be impatient with us. It may be true that one only has to say that we want the Americans to go and they will pull out of the whole of Europe, but I doubt whether that is the case. We are entitled to self-government. The old saying was "no taxation without representation." There should also be "No annihilation without representation." We as a nation are not defending ourselves properly if we put our future under the control of a foreign president whom we did not elect and whom we cannot remove.

The third matter that has changed public opinion is the growing doubt about nuclear weapons. Chernobyl played a significant part in that. If the Russians never dropped a single bomb on western Europe but we dropped a single bomb on Russia, it would destroy us. People have failed to take on board the real message of Chernobyl, that through an accident in a nuclear power station the use of nuclear weapons becomes impossible. But that opinion is changing. Also we know, although I learned it only after having been the Minister with responsibility for nuclear power for eight years, because the Civil Service did not convey it either to the Cabinet or to me, that plutonium from our civil power stations goes into American weapons. Many people are now connecting nuclear power with nuclear weapons.

The fourth point, which is very obvious, is that people are beginning to realise that there is a crushing burden of defence expenditure. I do not intend to go into the billions because billions do not register with the public, in their household budgets. Last year, every man, woman and child in Britain had £6·16 a week taken off them for defence. That is three times as much as is spent on the fire, ambulance and police services. We spend three times as much on keeping the Russians out as we do on protecting ourselves.

Mr. Lee: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Benn: May I finish this point first? The amount of defence expenditure, compared with Japan, is one of the explanations why the Japanese are doing so well. We spend 5 or 6 per cent. of our national income on defence, whereas the Japanese spend only 1 per cent. on defence. Is it any wonder that Japanese cars, videos and cameras are to be found all over the world? Last week we held a big arms sales exhibition at which we boasted about the number of weapons that we sell. We are crushing ourselves with the arms burden. The skill that ought to be available to help the disabled and the Third world to deal with the problems that lead to discontent at home and abroad is being wasted upon weapons of war. The burden is enormous.

I asked for the national figures to be divided by the number of constituencies. Chesterfield is having to pay £16 million for Trident. That is Chesterfield's share of Trident. Derbyshire county council's rates each year amount to only £36 million. I know that one figure is spread over a period while the other is for only a year. The Falklands war cost Chesterfield £6 million. Perhaps that is appropriate, since Coalite is in Chesterfield. However, the

[Mr. Benn]

borough council spends only £7 million. If one relates the defence burden to the budget of the ordinary family, it is a crushing burden.

Mr. Lee *rose*

Mr. Benn: People feel that as well. If the Minister wants to intervene, although I would rather he did not do so, because I do not want to take too long, I shall give way.

Mr. Lee: Does the right hon. Gentleman not acknowledge that defence expenditure in this country sustains around 1·2 million jobs?

Mr. Benn: It sustains far fewer jobs than if the same amount of money went into civil production. We may be able to produce a nuclear missile with a microchip but we cannot give 24-hour-a-day care to old people with a microchip. We have learned that we may get more bangs per buck with Trident but we get more jobs per pound if we spend the money on civil needs.

My fifth point — this is perhaps where Bob Geldof has done us a good turn — is the link that people make between the arms race and world poverty. It is obscene that people should be dying by their millions for lack of a dirt road, a tractor, a pipe and a pump when the United States — and we are a part of it now — is to spend a billion dollars on another sophisticated weapons system. It is obscene and it is wrong, if I may use a word that has fallen out of favour. The world debt crisis, much of which has been accumulated because dictators have bought weapons with which to crush their own people, not to fight the Russians, could be a factor in that.

My sixth point is the effect of militarisation on our domestic democracy — the effect on civil liberties of having 30,000 American troops here and police trying to arrest and chase the Greenham common women. We were told that the hippy convoy consisted of people who were like "armed brigands". I am more frightened of the cruise missile convoys going around the country and their capacity to destroy than I am of a few people who are in favour of trying to work for peace, whatever strange festivals they may attend. I am also more frightened of the destruction of Cabinet responsibility and parliamentary accountability because of failure to tell the truth, and of the fact that we have a standing army in Britain, which, since 1688, this Parliament has always rejected.

These factors are well reflected in public opinion. For some reason the Gallup poll figures are sent to me free every month and I have just received the latest ones. The figures I shall quote are figures that we will never see in the newspapers and when hon. Members hear them they will know immediately why that is. On page 36 there appear the questions:

"Some people say the United States is antagonising allies by her foreign policy. Do you agree?

Yes: 70 per cent.

How much confidence do you have in the ability of the United States to deal wisely with world problems?

A little: 26 per cent.; very little: 31 per cent.; none at all: 18 per cent."

Three quarters of the people asked that second question have little, very little or no confidence at all. One can contrast those figures with the speeches that are made. There are also some significant questions about comparing the British attitude to America with the British attitude to Russia. The figures are quite staggering. The question is asked:

"Do you approve or disapprove of the role of the United States in the world?

Approve: 28 per cent.; disapprove: 57 per cent."

The same question asked about Russia revealed that 22 per cent. approved and 52 per cent. disapproved. There is not much difference in those perceptions and that comes out in the final question I shall quote. It reads:

"Do you think the United States has done everything reasonable to reach agreement with the Soviet Union?

Has done everything: 14 per cent.; should do more: 79 per cent."

When the same question was asked about the Soviet Union the figures were almost identical. Some 14 per cent. thought the Soviet Union has done everything possible while 78 per cent. thought it should do more, a marginally lower percentage.

When we consider the weight of political and media opinion which never says a good word about the Soviet Union, it is interesting to see that such figures should come out of the deep memory of the war or some deep understanding of what is happening.

In considering the next step I should like to look first at the Labour policy. Labour policy will mark an important change and the Conservative party should not think that it is going to run away with the election on polling day because, as I have shown, there is a lot of support for the ideas that underpin our policy.

Next we must look for some alternative security systems in Europe because I am sure that the Poles, the Hungarians and the Czechs would like to have a little bit more elbow room just as we would vis a vis their alliance.

There must be a major diversion of resources from weapons to meet need. We must remove all American bases and not just the nuclear ones. We must disengage from NATO. It may be that if we were to try to remove the nuclear weapons to which we are committed we might get into the same problems as New Zealand where the Americans have applied heavy pressure through ANZUS.

We must realign our policy in order to direct it in the way in which people want it directed, to try to break down the barriers between east, west, north and south. I recognise that that is a long-term strategy, which will take time and need discussion, but it offers the best hope for mankind. It is in contrast to a Government who are going for reckless expenditure and subservience to an American Administration that has nothing to do with our interests. It threatens our security, increases the risk of war and costs millions of lives in the developing world for lack of the aid that we do not give because we criminally divert resources to weapons that we do not need.

We live in a time of great danger, when war could occur by accident. I do not believe that either of the major powers wants war, but war by accident is possible. A nuclear accident could happen in any country, and a Trident missile could explode in Britain just as Chernobyl exploded in Russia. We live in a time of the bankruptcy of countries brought about by the weapons they have to buy—especially countries in the Third world—and we live in a time when there could be some tragedy on a massive scale.

But we also live at a time when the technology is available to mankind to end every problem of poverty and disease if only we are prepared to devote our skill and our resources in that direction. I have enough confidence in

Britain and British common sense to believe that public opinion is well ahead of the Government of the day in wishing that that initiative could somehow be taken.

8.45 pm

Mr. James Couchman (Gillingham). It is a pleasure to follow the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) because he concentrates the mind wonderfully upon the proposition that a Labour Government should come to power and what it would do for our defence policy. I have no doubt that what the right hon. Gentleman has said would form a main theme of what such a Labour Government would give to the British people by way of a defence policy.

I used time in previous defence debates to talk about constituency matters, constituency defence or defence procurement matters. The level of debate has risen today and I suspect that that is because we are moving inexorably towards a general election and people have raised their eyes above their own mean constituency interests. I shall have to mention one such matter, but I shall leave it until much later.

The next 12 months will see a major change nationally and internationally about the defence of the West and of the East. Within the last few weeks we have taken a step forward with the ordering of the first Trident submarine. That is a major step to having a successor to Polaris. Internationally, President Reagan has said that he no longer feels bound by the SALT 2 agreement. That is an unratified and much compromised agreement but he has shown his goodwill by scrapping two Poseidon submarines in order to commission a Trident vessel. President Reagan's coming away from SALT 2 will concentrate the minds of arms limitation negotiators at the various arms control conferences that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State mentioned in his speech.

In his foreword to the excellent booklet "British Defence Policy" my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said:

"it is the first duty of any British Government to safeguard its people in peace and freedom."

He went on to restate the Government's high commitment and priority to defence. That was reinforced in his speech, and that is as it should be. However, I am not entirely convinced that Opposition Members are as convinced that the first duty of any Government is the defence of the realm. That is a duty which must not be compromised by reductions to fund some other programmes.

The hon. Member for Walsall, South (Mr. George) delivered an excellent and robust speech. Obviously we disagree with him on the question of a nuclear deterrent but his was one of the most refreshing speeches I have heard from the Opposition in defence debates since I came to the House. If they were convinced, Opposition Members would cease to talk in terms such as those used by the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) who, when we shared a platform recently, as I said in my intervention during the speech by the right hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies), said that the funding of his aspirations for the Health Service would in no small way be due to the cancellation of Trident. On that platform he conceded that there would be a need to strengthen somewhat our conventional forces in the event of that cancellation, but there was a clear implication that there would be a gap and money from the Trident saving would go to other non-defence programmes. That needs to be hammered home and to be said time and again.

That lack of commitment to defence, which played such a demonstrable part in the electoral eclipse of the Labour party in 1983, betrays the memory of some former Labour leaders. That lack of commitment will split the so-called alliance and reveal just how big a split exists between the parties of the alliance and what a sham is the present collusion between those two parties.

It is, of course, the Government's commitment to Trident, and specifically Trident D5, which distinguishes the Conservative Government from the three other parties which aspire to government. In considering the present posture of the Labour party to Trident and, indeed, nuclear weapons in general—and we have heard much about that in the debate—it is worth remembering the part Labour Governments have played in shaping Britain's nuclear deterrent since world war 2. Partly because of the unhappy early rivalry and also because of the McMahon Act, the post-war Government of Mr. Attlee and Mr. Bevin committed Britain to building its own atomic bomb. Mr. Attlee allowed the B24s of the United States to have bases in Britain. It is that first commitment to Europe and to NATO that survives today.

Mr. Bill Walker: Would my hon. Friend care to comment on the fact that the B29 was capable of striking Libya from United Kingdom bases?

Mr. Couchman: I bow to my hon. Friend's superior knowledge of the capabilities of the B29, which he probably remembers better than I do. There is certainly a distinct irony in the fact that a putative Labour Government would now deprive the United States of the bases which it has in the United Kingdom.

Of course, Attlee's steadfastness did not extend to telling the British public of the decision to build the British bomb. The funds voted were hidden in the euphemism "repairs to public buildings." That secrecy, by ambivalent Labour Administrations, has surfaced from time to time.

We were reminded that in 1964 the first Wilson Government made much of wanting to renegotiate the Nassau agreement of my noble Friend the Earl of Stockton and the splendid deal that he obtained for Polaris, but they wanted to do so only to strengthen the impression of an effective collaboration. What Lord Wilson did not appear to want was to cancel Polaris. He justified the decision to continue on the improbable premise that too much money had been committed already. Actually, only about £40 million had been spent on the beginnings of the hulls of two Polaris submarines.

However, what the Wilson Government did at that time was to compromise the programme by the decision of the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) to cancel the fifth SSBN and so jeopardise the credibility of our Polaris fleet.

In 1974, as we were reminded by the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen), the Wilson Government took on the decision of the Government of my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) to allow the Chevaline upgrade to Polaris to proceed. But, again, everything had to be secret. We were told this evening that that had been taken to Cabinet. I understand that there is some discussion whether all Cabinet members were aware of the Chevaline

[Mr. Couchman]

upgrade in 1974. By 1977 the cost of Chevaline had reached £800 million, as we were reminded by the right hon. Gentleman, and cancellation was considered. However, by that time Britain's deterrent was much too important to our relationship within NATO and our relationship with the United States.

Before the end of his premiership, the right hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Callaghan) had the courage and foresight to recognise, on advice, that the Polaris fleet was aging, that even the Chevaline upgrade would not last for ever, and that it would be necessary to consider a possible successor. Studies were commissioned to examine the need and feasibility to replace Polaris with a new independent deterrent. Again, the studies were carried out in a deeply secretive way with Ministers able to disavow their part.

By November 1978 those studies were ready for the right hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth, the then Prime Minister, together with the right hon. Members for Devonport and for Leeds, East and Lord Mulley to consider.

The outcome of the studies was that the replacement of Polaris by Trident C4 should be explored. The right hon. Gentlemen explored that possibility with President Carter, and the signs were favourable. But by then the Labour Government were at war with their trade union paymasters and were in their death throes. Two months later its Liberal collaborators pulled the plug and Labour's influence on Britain's nuclear policy was reduced to that of a dispirited Opposition. Up to that time, in their own secretive and somewhat ambivalent way, Labour Prime Ministers had acted in favour of the continuance of an independent British deterrent. They had maintained a bipartisan policy.

The year 1980 saw that bipartisanship shattered when the fact and cost of Chevaline was revealed to the House by my right hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East (Mr. Pym). Labour outrage and the accession of the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) as Leader of the Opposition led inexorably to Labour's unilateralism and its political catastrophe in 1983.

The right hon. Member for Llanelli never comes to the Dispatch Box but that he blames all the nation's ills on the Government's decision to buy Trident C4 and subsequently to replace that with a decision to buy D5. Labour, in thrall to its Left wing, aspires to cancel Trident, to recall the SSBNs and to decommission the Polaris missiles as soon as it takes power — perhaps I should say, if it takes power. Labour aspires to throw out American nuclear forces from their bases. We have heard that repeated time and again this evening. Labour also aspires to throw out the cruise missiles which are dedicated to NATO and are under the joint control of ourselves and the Americans.

Those Labour aspirations will lead to the "Finlandisation" of the United Kingdom and the break up of NATO, because it would be the biggest wedge to have been driven into the belly of NATO. That will drive the Americans back across the Atlantic, which, to judge from their present naked and constant anti-Americanism, will delight most members of the Labour party. The abrogation of our nuclear policy and the consequences that I foresee will leave Britain peculiarly vulnerable to any threat from a potential adversary who has nuclear weapons.

The right hon. Member for Llanelli has said that Labour will strengthen our conventional forces. I must advise him to talk to his right hon. Friends about their various spending ambitions. There will be no money left from the cancellation of Trident to do anything about strengthening our conventional forces. In any case, it really would not matter what increase in conventional defence Labour commissioned because, in the face of an aggressor with a nuclear capability, we would be helpless to resist. That, of course, is why Soviet offers to reduce by a small proportion its missile stock in return for the elimination of the British and French deterrents are completely cynical and are to be resisted. Labour's appeasement will be its Achilles heel, and when we reach the next general election it will have just as much success as it had in 1983.

Let me deal briefly with the defence policies of the so-called alliance. In this most vital of all Government responsibilities, the conspiracy of power hungry but disparate parties resembles a pantomime horse — not the friendly creature with one participant leading and the other with his head stuck into his leader's nether regions, but a two-headed pantomime horse with the two heads facing in opposite directions. We have heard much about their various and disparate policies this evening.

When one compares the Liberal party's defence policy with that of the Labour party, there really is not a fag paper to put between them. However, the Liberal party's SDP partner, if one accepts that the right hon. Member for Devonport speaks with the authority that that office should have, appears to believe that Britain should retain an independent deterrent beyond Polaris, but that that should not be Trident. The SDP would support the retention of cruise, but the unilateralist Liberals are opposed to the retention of those weapons.

We have all been somewhat amused over recent weeks by what I was going to refer to as the vituperative pillow talk of the leaders of those two parties. As lovers, the Social Democrat and Liberal parties make a most unprepossessing match.

I have spoken at some length about the policies and postures of the Opposition parties, particularly with regard to our independent deterrent. Only the Conservative Government offer the nation properly-resourced balanced nuclear and conventional forces to defend Britain's integrity. The key to that balance, certainly on the nuclear side, is, without any doubt, the powerful and convincing Trident D5 weapon. It will be a long time before any system that might be deployed could possibly render Trident an ineffective deterrent. Only this Government, with their policy, will retain a commitment to that deterrent and all that that symbolises.

8.58 pm

Mr. Paddy Ashdown (Yeovil): I shall not take up the remarks made by the hon. Member for Gillingham (Mr. Couchman). He gave us a uniquely unoriginal and unenlightening tour through history, which ended up with some remarks whose inacccuracy was only exceeded by the boring nature of what went before.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Ashdown: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will forgive me if I do not give way, but there is a limited time.

Mr. Brown: The hon. Gentleman has not even been in the Chamber for most of the debate and then comments on

Mr. Ashdown: The hon. Gentleman is wholly wrong. I have been in the Chamber for all but about 40 minutes of the debate. I apologise for having been absent then, but the hon. Gentleman will recognise that we all have other calls on the time.

I wish briefly to mention three items. The first is a constituency item, and let me say that I am glad that it is so, since not long ago it was a national item. It was then a matter of frustration to me that I could never get "Westland" into the problem of the so-called Westland crisis. The Minister will know that more than a year ago, and about eight months before the crisis broke, I warned the Government of the impending Westland crisis, as did many hon. Members on both sides of the House. Unhappily, those warnings were ignored. As a result, terrible damage was done to a major defence contractor and to a major part of our defence industry. Moreover, terrible damage was done to the Government. The Westland crisis nearly swamped them. Westland came through that period, and it was great testimony to its quality and strength and to the quality and strength of its work force and management that it did so. We owe a great debt to the company and, in particular, to Sir John Cuckney for having taken us through that turbulent period. Such pressures would have broken lesser companies but uniquely in the case of Westland it bonded together the management and the work force.

I know that there is much discussion and recognition of these issues behind the scenes. So I say quietly, but nevertheless insistently, that there is another crisis in the making unless the Government can soon clear up some of the uncertainties about the future of helicopter procurement. Westland is going through a crucial restructuring period, and the uncertainties that lie ahead make it almost impossible for it to plan effectively.

I issue that warning, and I hope that on this occasion, the Government will listen. Apparently 15 Sea King orders are in the pipeline somewhere, but they have not yet been delivered and we do not know when they will come. Let us hope that it will be soon. It is vital also to clarify the policy on light and medium support helicopters for the Army. That has not been done and the inference to be drawn from the most recent questions on defence is that that may not happen until the end of the year. That is too late by several months if one is to allow proper planning ahead within Westland. We also need to know when the commitment to EH 101 production will be made. It must be made soon. If it is not made in the next month or two, it must be made as soon as possible.

Westland is trying to restructure and is going through a difficult period. Frankly, its task will become impossible if the company has to deal with all the variables attendant on the Government's uncertainty. I implore the Government to pay heed to this warning. There is, I say again, a crisis in the making unless some of those uncertainties are cleared up.

Let me outline the problem in starker terms. Apart from aircraft in the pipeline, those 15 Sea Kings referred to earlier will provide 750,000 man hours of work when the order is confirmed. Add this to the man hours provided by Sikorski, over a period of five years some 2 million man hours in all, and a total of 2.75 million man hours is needed. Westland produces 2.8 million man hours in a single year. That is the measure of the problem ahead.

We do not ask, as we did not ask before, for charity. We merely ask for some clarity and certainty against which we can plan the future of that great company. In the light of what has happened in the past, it is incumbent on the Government to do everything possible to make sure that that is provided for the company.

It is a matter of some encouragement to us that during the RAF debate the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement said:

"we shall be doing all that we can to ensure that Westland's position and capabilities continue to be recognised fully in the international market place." [*Official Report*, 26 February 1986; Vol. 92, c. 1035.]

Those are encouraging words from which many of us take comfort. We know the Minister to be a man of his word, and to be working behind the scenes to ensure that that happens. But the time has now arrived for that statement to be turned into action. I implore the Government to ensure that that happens soon.

My second point springs out of the first. Helicopter policy in general is a mess, and the Secretary of State should recognise that. The tactical concept of splitting helicopter control on the battlefield between the Army and the RAF makes no sense in battlefield, tactical, defence or procurement terms. I hope that the Secretary of State will note that I am receiving nods of assent from Conservative Members.

That policy is wasteful, inefficient, costly and potentially militarily dangerous. I hope that the Secretary of State will bend his mind and that of the Ministry of Defence towards a full review of tactical helicopters policy in terms of control on the battlefield and of procurement. I hope that he will take into account the fact that we are behind most other armies in this respect. According to calculations made by the United States, we are 100 helicopters short of what we need in the central plain of Europe. I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will take account of the advances in the United States and the USSR in helicopter policy. I hope that he will recognise the importance of helicopters as a force multiplier, especially in an army which is smaller than we would like it to be.

I turn to the central issue — the Defence Estimates. I believe that at its best the White Paper is, and I use the words of the Select Committee, a defence review by stealth without Parliament having the proper capacity to be able to examine it. At worst it is nothing less than a fudge. The word "fudge" has been used a great deal. It has been used in connection with the Liberal/SDP alliance defence commission on which I sat. The real fudge, however, lies in this White Paper. The Government know that what they claimed that they would deliver with Trident makes it impossible to deliver what they say that they want to deliver in terms of conventional weapons. Contrary to the Secretary of State's claim, the evidence is that no long-term planning has been done. His predecessor told us last year that there were no plans or discussions on the defence cuts which he has now announced.

One must believe either that that statement by his predecessor was a deceit — which I reject — or that

[Mr. Ashdown]

Ministers had no idea of what was happening. I am unclear about which is worse for the nation and its future defence planning.

The figures are clear and their conclusions are irresistible. When we talk about a cut of 4 or 5 per cent. in the overall defence budget over the next four or five years, we mean a cut in the equipment budget of from £800 million to £700 million, or 11 per cent., over the same period. Trident expenditure in this period will rise from £150 million in 1984-85 to £850 million in 1988-89. That means an increase in expenditure of 470 per cent. for Trident. Allowing for other fixed costs, that means that the repair and maintenance budget will have to drop by 11 per cent. and the non-Trident equipment budget by 24 per cent. to accommodate it. The effect on new conventional equipment will be devastating.

If my figures are incorrect, I hope that the Secretary of State will at least give us the benefit of the true figures because he has provided none of his own. I have quoted the best figures available on which to make these judgments. It is essential that the Secretary of State and the MoD come clean. It is impossible for our defence industries to plan unless they know what is ahead. It is impossible for the House to plan and debate such vital issues unless we are clear about the choices open to us. The Defence Estimates paper over increasingly widening gaps and caverns.

I have only a few minutes in which to deal with the criticisms levelled at my party by the Secretary of State and others. It is strange that the Government should accuse us of splits. The Government have been split down the middle of their economic policy. Their Cabinet was nearly blown apart by splits on the Westland crisis. It was split over Libya, over Leyland, over South Africa, and even on defence matters. There was a split over the key SDI issue. The Foreign Secretary said something entirely different from that which the Prime Minister now insists is the Government's policy. In the last six or seven months the Government have been split on national issue after national issue.

Nor can we absolve the Labour party. The right hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) said that the Labour Government would wish to cancel or decommission Polaris, as has been said before. The right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey), on the other hand, has said that that is a matter yet to be resolved and which must be considered before the next election. I refer to his interview in *Marxism Today* of April 1986. The right hon. Member for Llanelli said that the Labour party would throw out United States nuclear bases as soon as it is elected. The right hon. Member for Leeds, East said:

"we haven't yet addressed ourselves too adequately"

to these problems.

"We are beginning to do that".

He said that there was a problem over United States bases but that, no doubt, the Labour party would have a policy before the next election.

I say to Labour Members that their policy of throwing out the American bases is the great weakness in their argument. It points to a series of major inconsistencies in their position. It makes it impossible for them to claim to support NATO when they say that they will not play their part in ensuring that the deterrent under which they rest and are protected is properly serviced, if necessary, from the shores of this island. It is a position that is morally inconsistent and, frankly, downright cowardly. If we are to benefit from the deterrent, we must be prepared to face the necessity to provide the procedures, bases and facilities that are required.

The alliance defence commission, on which I had the pleasure to sit, produced a policy that was significant in the sense that it was coherent from one end to the other. What was said at one point did not cause what was said at another to be nonsensical. It faced some of the major issues that are approaching us. Its unique achievement was to take debate out of the ideological bunkers into which it has been put by the Conservative and Labour parties. It brought the issues into the open and we were able to discuss them realistically. It does no good to democracy or politics to treat defence with the closed mind of the religious fanatic. Defence is something that must be brought out into the open so that we can take full account of the real options that are ahead of us.

I pay tribute to my right hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen). I do not agree with him on every issue and there are differences of emphasis between us, but it is better for the public and for defence generally that the differences of emphasis are publicly and openly debated, minor though they are. It would be an achievement if the Government were now to produce a defence expenditure White Paper which showed the options rather than hiding them and did not opt for the fudge that has been inflicted upon us in the Defence Estimates. The Government know that what they propose in their obsession with Trident makes no sense of what they claim to be their policies for conventional weapons. The result will be a reduction in the efficiency of NATO and a weakening of the defence of this nation.

9.12 pm

Mr. A. E. P. Duffy (Sheffield, Attercliffe): First, I take the opportunity of congratulating the hon. Member for Kettering (Mr. Freeman) on his ministerial appointment to the Ministry of Defence. I wish him well in his first defence debate as a Minister and in his reply this evening.

The Defence White Paper is becoming glossier, as some hon. Members have observed, longer and no doubt more expensive. There are some interesting changes in its format, if not in its basic priorities. More attention is being paid to Labour party priorities, such as arms control, disarmament, conventional defence improvements, defence co-operation and equipment collaboration. When this year's White Paper is compared with those for 1982 and 1981, for example, we realise how much headway has been made with some of the priorities that the Labour party has established and promoted in recent years. For example, in 1984 arms control was given two pages in the White Paper. It was given just under three pages in last year's White Paper. It has been given six pages this year and an entire chapter to itself, with related passages elsewhere.

As I listened to the Secretary of State this afternoon—he spent the last 15 minutes of his speech talking about arms control—I found myself wondering whether a Conservative Secretary of State for Defence could have spoken at such length and with such apparent sincerity, and perhaps growing conviction, on arms control three or four years ago.

East-West relations are of supreme concern to us all. NATO is concerned with defence and political issues.

Eighteen months ago, the superpowers were not talking to each other, and there was no thought of an East-West summit or even the renewal of contacts. There have been considerable contacts over the past year. Both sides put forward constructive proposals in Geneva. That was an important start to better relations.

Mr. Gorbachev's proposals reflect a different syle of Soviet leadership than heretofore, and present the West with questions and difficulties. They also present the West with opportunities for agreement, which we cannot neglect. As my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, East (Mr. Strang) reminded the House, the recent renewal of contacts has had an enormous impact on the public perception of the Western position. All the more welcome in chapter 1 is the acknowledgement that Soviet leaders have ceased fo regard war with the West as inevitable.

It is on that recognition that we must seek constantly to build. An essential step is to ascertain an accurate picture of military balance between NATO and the Warsaw pact. It will not be easy, however confidently it is approached in annexe A of the defence statement. Comparing quantitative factors, such as manpower and equipment, is relatively straightforward, but even that exercise can be unexpectedly difficult – a fact which may explain why no new NATO-Warsaw pact force comparisons have been published by NATO since 1984.

In addition to static indicators, a number of dynamic measures bear significantly on the relative effectiveness of the forces. A much neglected but increasingly important variable is electronic warfare capabilities. Some say that the whole character of modern warfare is being changed by electronic warfare capabilities, with astonishing speed. Yet there is no mention of that in the defence statement.

Labour Members welcome the assurance in paragraph 315 that the past 12 months have seen further significant steps towards conventional defence improvements within the Alliance. One of the effects of the public debate over the role of nuclear weapons in Alliance strategy has been the emergence of broad-based support for the conventionalisation of NATO strategy. As doubts about the moral legitimacy and military utility of the threat of first use of nuclear weapons have grown – from which side of the House has that argument come consistently in recent years? – so has the interest in reducing NATO's reliance on nuclear weapons through improving non-nuclear forces. Yet how much and in what way NATO's conventional forces could and should be strengthened remains an open question.

We welcome the attention that conventional weapons improvement received in this year's defence statement, but by next year we shall be looking for some guidance as to how much and in what form. The search for financially feasible and politically sustainable options for enhancing conventional deterrence constitutes perhaps the most critical Alliance challenge of 1986. Not so welcome is the section on chemical weapons at paragraph 323, which is truly frightening—and not just because of the nastiness of the beast. Does the House really accept the presumption that one must be able to retaliate in kind?

In view of European sensitivity on arms issues, and because of the distaste in which nerve gases are held, I regret the proposed United States modernisation of its chemical weapons stockpile. In the light of our experience of, first, the modernisation of intermediate nuclear forces and, secondly, SDI, and the divisiveness they both threatened, surely it was vital that both the political and presentational aspects of chemical weapons modernisation should have received more careful attention and should have been set in the context of arms control. Instead, they have scarcely received any emphasis.

The most significant passage in the White Paper is in paragraph 503:

> "Although the budget for 1986-87 and the two subsequent years . . . is planned to rise in cash terms, its value in real terms will decrease by about 6 per cent. over the three-year period . . . Some difficult decisions will have to be taken but there will be no need for any change in our main defence posture."

Clearly, the defence statement's message is that the seven fat years are over. Although the Secretary of State for Defence insists that he sees no need for a full-scale defence review, he must be well aware that he is taking a calculated political risk. He clearly believes that a programme involving selective cuts and delays in programmes, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) argued, can square the circle without serious effects on the forces' fighting capability and morale or on Britain's contribution to NATO. But on the central issue of how the Government intend to match the increasing demands on the defence budget with diminishing resources he is silent. His suggested cuts were small beside those difficult decisions which every hon. Member must know are now exercising his mind.

The reaction of the Government's supporters to the Defence Estimates, for example, is one of alarm. On 13 May, the *Daily Mail*, looking at the figures, concluded that they would not work and wanted the cancellation of Trident. *The Times* on the same day was similarly alarmed and wanted the Rhine Army to be brought home. The *Daily Telegraph* [*Interruption.*] These are the newspapers that normally, conventionally and historically have supported the Conservative party. The *Daily Telegraph* wants the Ministry of Defence budget slashed. Apparently, none believes that British defence spending, even in its newly trimmed state, can carry on indefinitely as the highest percentage in Western Europe.

The situation, argued Lord Carver in the other place last week, is aggravated by the Government's

> "stubborn refusal to deviate from their belief in the need for an independent British strategic strike force, an expensive luxury that merely adds to the superfluity of nuclear weapons . . . and is irrelevant to the real needs of NATO which is our first line of defence.
>
> For several years now there has been near unanimity among those qualified to judge these matters that NATO's primary need is not to increase its arsenal of nuclear weapons, but to improve its conventional capability." — [*Official Report, House of Lords*, 25 June 1986; Vol. 477, c. 324.]

The right hon. Member for Spelthorne (Sir H. Atkins) referred to the same debate and mentioned Lord Glenarthur, who wound up the debate for the Government. Would the right hon. Gentleman, in his distinguished role as Chairman of the Select Committee on Defence whose work is valued by every hon. Member, seriously set the judgment of Lord Glenarthur—I say this with the greatest respect to the noble Lord—against the professional judgment of Lord Carver? Yet the right hon. Member for Spelthorne said that he could not follow the logic of the argument of my right hon. Friend the Member for Llanelli against the need for an independent strategic deterrent.

Sir Humphrey Atkins: I quoted the words of Lord Glenarthur who was speaking on behalf of the

[Sir Humphrey Atkins]

Government. I am bound to tell the hon. Gentleman that a Minister speaking on behalf of the Government carries more weight with me than even Lord Carver.

Mr. Duffy: I understand why the right hon. Gentleman said that in the presence of his hon. Friends. If he really believed that, his Committee would not undertake the rigorous work of cross-examination of professional witnesses which is a feature of its sittings.

After examining the latest budget forecasts, the Select Committee on Defence believes that official talk of defence spending having reached a more or less stable plateau is no longer valid. The right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) made the same point. While the Ministry of Defence has attempted to cloud the full scale of cash cuts, the Select Committee says that they could reach 7 per cent. in real terms by 1988-89 and threaten the operational capability of Britain's armed forces. The defence statement hints at where the axe might fall most heavily in its reference to the warship building programme and it is on that that I especially want to address the Secretary of State. Last year's document confidently claimed not only the first order of the new class of type 23 frigate, but spoke of future orders, naming at least one company expected to benefit. There are no such references this year and there is no new order announced today.

There is a similar absence of information on many Army and Air Force programmes. However, the right hon. Gentleman will soon have to bite the bullet and make choices. Big new programmes, in addition to Trident, a new fighter for the RAF, new tanks and artillery for the Army, new helicopters for the Navy and the ground forces are all clamouring for slices of a cake that will soon start to shrink.

The blows must fall somewhere on the conventional forces. Again, the speculation is that the main squeeze will fall on the Navy. In 1985-86 the Navy brought into service one nuclear-driven submarine, a carrier, two destroyers, a frigate and eight minesweepers. This year it can expect one submarine, one frigate and three minesweepers. The Navy is already on the slippery slope. Order books have never been so thin — four submarines last year and no new surface vessels except three minesweepers.

Thanks to the Falklands war, the Navy escaped the swingeing cuts intended under the 1981 review. The Secretary of State is now contemplating the position adopted by Sir John Nott, his predecessor but one, whose determination to cut the Royal Navy was quelled only by that war.

Slippage can be seen in the rate of ordering not only of frigates but of diesel-operated submarines, mine-counter measures and the replacement of the assault ships Fearless and Intrepid, about which the hon. Member for Beverley (Sir P. Wall) was so rightly concerned.

In the light of their Falklands experience, the hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) must know that the Royal Marines, the old corps of the hon. Member for Beverley, are also concerned about the lack of an area defence weapon, the need for an additional artillery battery, more engineering support and possibly some armoured reconnaisance vehicles. However, while the Navy confronts an uncertain future on the size and effectiveness of its surface fleet, it is already having to struggle to meet its present commitments. For example, the number of frigates in the United Kingdom area held in readiness to meet unexpected contingencies has been reduced from two to one. Time devoted to evaluating equipment, local exercises and routine maintenance have all been trimmed. The British contribution of destroyers and frigates to NATO exercises over the past 10 years has declined by nearly one third. The amount of time that a frigate spends at sea has risen. The Navy's ships are now spending 50 per cent. of their time at sea, 10 per cent. more than in the war years and three times the 1930s level.

There is concern that in the long run present levels of activity may lead to a decline in the fighting efficiency of ships and their crews. In recognition of that and recruiting levels for officers in recent years that are too low, the manpower cuts ordered in the 1981 defence review are now being revised. Increased time at sea with frequent separation from wives and families must be affecting older married officers particularly and goes some way to explaining why far fewer now join the service with the idea of making it a career.

The growing problem of recruitment and retention of officers in the three services is, despite the manner in which the Secretary of State glossed over it this afternoon, the subject of a current detailed study by the service chiefs. Most of Britain's armed forces and 95 per cent. of their budgets are now committed to the Alliance. The survival of western Europe in wartime would depend upon American reinforcements getting through. In wartime the United Kingdom would provide vital port reception facilities. That role inevitably impinges upon the shape of the fleet. For example, it means the Navy simply has to have a balanced fleet. It needs carriers to provide anti-submarine warfare protection for the Atlantic strike fleet. Sea Harriers to protect against enemy attack and support amphibious landings.

The Atlantic link is of crucial strategic importance to the defence of western Europe. Since so few people travel by sea any longer, the public often fail to realise the extent to which Europe is dependent on routes across that vast ocean.

The sea bed provides oil and gas resources which account for more than 25 per cent. of western Europe's energy consumption. The north and central Atlantic also provide one quarter of the world's fishing catch. Despite the decline of the merchant and fishing fleets of the NATO nations, the quantity of seaborne trade has tripled in the past 20 years, although an increasing proportion of the trade involving NATO nations is carried in hulls under the flags of other countries. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Mr. Silkin) pointed out, that deplorable and alarming trend is reflected in the decline in the numbers of personnel and ships of the United Kingdom merchant fleet, as may be seen in tables 1.3 and 1.4 in volume 2 of the Estimates.

The four pillars of defence policy are the strategic nuclear force, the defence of Britain's land airspace, BAOR and the Navy. The defence statement takes the first two roles almost for granted—that is, the strategic force and the defence of Britain's land airspace. However, should they necessarily be taken for granted?

We have criticised the pre-eminence accorded by the Government to the strategic nuclear deterrent. I should like answers to questions about the prior commitments that we have entered into in recent years about the manner of the defence of Britain's land airspace. In the previous two debates on the Royal Air Force, I have expressed

acute anxiety about NATO's need to counter Warsaw pact air superiority in the central region. In view of the increasingly hostile air environment, Tornado will clearly experience a growing difficulty getting over the target and must therefore have the capability to engage it from some distance. Paragraph 4 of the 1983 defence statement claimed that studies were in hand to assess the conventional armed long-range stand-off missile or complementary systems to manned aircraft. There has been no mention of the studies since then, although I understand that a memorandum of understanding exists between the United States and ourselves on long-range stand-off missiles.

In the light of that development, how far has the Ministry of Defence gone in a comparative assessment of the performance and cost-effectiveness of manned combat fixed-wing aircraft operating from fixed airfields, and missiles or pilotless flying vehicles, whether the task is strike, reconnaissance or air defence?

In the defence statement BAOR is described as a powerful symbol of our commitment to the security of Europe. However, *The Times*, again of 13 May, finds it incredible that the Government should really consider the calculated decline of what, in defence terms, remains a unique asset for the Alliance as well as for Britain the Royal Navy in order to perform a job which is of symbolic value rather than of military urgency, and which other members of the Alliance are better equipped to carry out.

I should like to refer once again to the speech by Lord Carver in the other place last week. He expressed the belief that a critical look would have to be taken at the number of regular infantry battalions. With the almost total disappearance of overseas commitments outside Europe, a figure of 56 battalions, of which 31 are stationed in the United Kingdom, is a large number in proportion to units of other arms, bearing in mind that infantry battalions are one of the easiest units to raise from reserves.

In the defence statement there is an essay entitled "The Seamless Robe". Let me interpose the thought that the original seamless robe was worn by our Lord on Calvary. It is entirely inappropriate to use that expression in this context. The essay entitled "The Seamless Robe" says that "the forward defence of the Federal Republic is the forward defence of Britain itself".

But so is the defence of our sea lines of communication. The essay says that were we to weaken our commitment we would send the wrong signals to friend and foe alike. That is not necessarily so—not if we were to up our contribution to our situation—our island situation.

Furthermore, our defence expenditure is 5·2 per cent. of gross domestic product, and Germany's is 3·3 per cent. Nor can I resist the temptation to draw the attention of the House to page 52 of part 2 of the defence statement, where I note that there are 20,100 multiple hirings in BAOR while there are 14,000 vacant married quarters in the United Kingdom.

The defence statement significantly reflects the multitude of challenges which face the Alliance. It scans the entire range of Alliance economic, political and military difficulties. If the Chernobyl nuclear reactor accident raises serious questions about Soviet international behaviour, NATO, for its part, has yet decisively to raise the nuclear threshold by increasing its conventional defence posture.

The time for talking is over. We are now looking for results from the Alliance in relation to conventional defence improvement. Nevertheless, there is room for optimism. The United States and the Soviet Union have demonstrated a renewed willingness to improve relations. There are signs that Atlantic defence co-operation is improving, and there is increased emphasis, as I have argued again and again, on conventional arms improvement. My right hon. and hon. Friends are in no doubt that it is Labour's distinct approach in recent years to defence thinking that has provided the climate within which such hopeful developments have been possible.

9.35 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. Roger Freeman): I thank the hon. Member for Sheffield, Attercliffe (Mr. Duffy) for his kind comments and welcome, and I also thank my hon. Friends who have made kind remarks. It is a daunting experience to speak in my first defence debate, not least because of the relatively high proportion of hon. Members on both sides of the House who have held office in the Ministry of Defence. It is an unusual experience to have a little more time than the usual 10 minutes which a Back Bencher would be allowed to make a speech. I know that on this occasion I will not incur your wrath, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if I exceed 10 minutes, but I will be cut off sharply at 10 o'clock.

Many interesting points have been raised by right hon. and hon. Members and I will try to answer as many as possible tonight. Before doing so, I would like to make one or two brief remarks about those aspects of the Government's defence policy which fall within my direct responsibility.

The most important asset of our defence effort is the people who provide its backbone. It is fundamental that we should have the people of the right quality in the right numbers who are properly motivated and trained. It is for that reason that the Government have given a high priority to the terms and conditions of service under which the armed forces operate. We have accepted and implemented the findings in each and every report of the Armed Forces Pay Review Body, although it was necessary to stage the 1984 and 1986 awards. I must stress that the increases, averaging 7·5 per cent., will be effective tomorrow and will be of permanent benefit to our armed forces.

We have made a number of improvements to specific allowances designed to compensate for the special demands of service life — for example, improved arrangements for those serving on full tours in Northern Ireland and abolition of the parental contribution to the third visit home each year by the eldest child at boarding school. We will continue to keep conditions of service under review and make any further changes that are justified. As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State told the Select Committee, we are studying the adequacy and cost effectiveness of the range of allowances payable to service men to see whether any changes ought to be made.

The positive results of this policy are evident both in the high quality of our service men—we would all recognise the professionalism and skill which they bring to their task — and in our record of recruiting and retention. Although there are one or two specialist areas where we would like to do better — such as skilled trades and technicians where competition is traditionally strong—

[Mr. Roger Freeman]

our recruiting targets are largely being met and the rate of voluntary outflow is well below that experienced by the armed forces in the late 1970s under the Labour Government. As my right hon. Friend told the Committee, there is some evidence that the rate of outflow is steadying and the Government will, of course, continue to give the position close attention. We are treating service men fairly, and they know and appreciate that.

I ought to say a few words about the support given by the armed forces to young people as this interests me especially. More than 80 per cent. of recruits to the armed forces are aged under 20, and within the forces we teach a wide range of skills from heavy goods vehicle driving to electronics and advanced mechanics. These skills are, of course, needed by our defence requirements, but they equally provide people with skills which stand them in good stead when they leave the armed forces.

I should also say something about the support given by the Ministry of Defence to young people through the cadet movement. The sheer scale of the movement is not always appreciated. It involves about 45,000 Army cadets, 35,000 air training corps cadets, 22,000 sea cadets, and 42,000 members of school combined cadet forces. I was pleased today to have had the pleasure of entertaining a party of sea cadets from my constituency who were visiting Parliament.

Each cadet service aims to develop in young people a sense of responsibility and awareness of the needs of others, self-discipline and initiative—in short, to develop the qualities of good citizenship. To realise those aims, the cadets take part in training and activities which draw on the spirit of adventure and develop qualities of organisation, discipline and dedication. The Ministry of Defence is able to support that programme with assistance on training equipment and facilities.

Mr. Bill Walker: Would my hon. Friend care to comment on the fact that the air cadets now have the finest fleet of modern sailplanes anywhere in the world, thanks to the Government's procurement policy?

Mr. Freeman: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I should like to add that, in Northern Ireland, air cadets will shortly be able to use some new gliders. I am proud to be able to report that to the House.

All of these activities are well appreciated by the cadets concerned as exciting, challenging and worth while. None would be possible, however, without the enormous dedication and hard work of the unit officers and adult instructors who turn out in fair weather and foul to help them. I pay a special tribute to them.

Efficiency is about doing things better. In that respect, I commend to the House the financial and management information system which is being developed in the Quartermaster General's area with the assistance of outside consultants, but no doubt the House will wish to come back to that at the appropriate time, perhaps during the Army debate next year.

We are adopting an imaginative approach to the disposal of some of our high value sites in the defence estate. We are developing a rolling programme of land disposals using the proceeds to reprovide facilities elsewhere. The scheme is self-financing, and we expect to generate funds to support the defence budget and achieve major savings in maintenance expenditure. The first batch of proposals to be developed will be the rationalisation of defence holdings in north and west London. Our purpose is to reduce the estate to the minimum, consistent with defence needs, and to release land for other productive uses.

This year has witnessed the creation of a heritage area in the historic south-west corner of the Portsmouth naval base, which is no longer required for defence purposes. With several important listed buildings and docks, HMS Victory, the Mary Rose, the Royal Naval museum, Portsmouth, and the magnificently restored HMS Warrior, which is due to arrive in 1987, it has the potential, with suitable development, to become a unique monument to Britain's maritime heritage and a major tourist attraction on the south coast.

The project is very much a joint effort. I have just visited Portsmouth, and I should like to pay tribute to all of those who have played a role in the heritage area's creation. The Ministry of Defence has provided the site and HMS Victory, the Heritage Trust Partners its ships and museums, the Property Trust its expertise and Portsmouth city council has built a jetty for HMS Warrior and provided money and support in other areas. The Property Services Agency, the English Tourist Board and English Heritage have all played a part. Although it is at its early stages and will no doubt have teething troubles, which is usual with a project of such complexity, this is an exciting project. I am sure that the House will join me in wishing everybody who is associated with the venture a successful future.

Sir Antony Buck: Will my hon. Friend assure us that the McCarthy museum will feature, in view of the very generous gesture of Mrs. McCarthy, who gave our nation her magnificent collection of Nelsonia, built around the early portrait of Nelson, which, at the moment, is near the bottom of the gangway? I hope that that collection will be absorbed into the complex.

Mr. Freeman: I am grateful to my hon. and learned Friend. I shall look into the matter and write to him.

I now turn to the specific matters raised in the debate, and I hope that the House will forgive me if I do not cover all of them. Some issues will be more properly dealt with tomorrow by my right hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces and my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement.

The right hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) addressed his remarks mainly to the nuclear deterrent. He said that the Labour party would cancel Trident, but he failed to answer two specific questions. The first was about the timing of any decision to cancel Polaris, and the second was how he could reconcile kicking the Americans off their bases in the United Kingdom and at the same time relying on United States nuclear support for NATO. That inherent contradiction was not dealt with properly.

The right hon. Gentleman spoke about Trident squeezing our conventional capabilities. Mathematically it must be true that non-Trident costs will fall as expenditure on Trident rises, but that is a negative approach. Rather like much of the philosophy of the Labour party, he is looking purely at the sums contributed, not at the value that one can get from a specific block of money. As an accountant I would say that it was the difference between looking purely at an input analysis as opposed also to

considering the output analysis. The right hon. Gentleman may shake his head, but part of my job is to ensure that we get better value for money.

Mr. Ashdown: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Freeman: I am dealing with a point raised by the right hon. Member for Llanelli. It is appropriate to consider the value from a certain amount of defence expenditure, as well as the sum committed in pounds and pence.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Spelthorne (Sir H. Atkins) asked about allowances in particular. That is dealt with by the Defence Select Committee, and obviously the Government will review the whole Select Committee report carefully. I am paying particular attention to paragraphs 79 to 93 which deal with training, allowances and manpower. I remind him that a review of allowances is under way, and I emphasise that there is some statistical evidence that the recent increase in the premature voluntary retirement rate is slowing down. It has certainly not reached the high level from which the armed forces suffered under the Labour Government. We shall certainly keep the position under close review.

The right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) asked two specific questions about Trident. It was interesting that he said that his alternative, the minimum deterrent, was not as effective as Trident. That is a fair record of his speech and a fair summary of the alternative. I am sorry that I was not present for the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind) who strongly supported our policy on Trident rather than the alternative deterrent advocated by the right hon. Gentleman.

The right hon. Member for Devonport asked about Trident's spending commitments. To date £2,400 million has been committed and £620 million has been spent. He also asked about the penalty clause—the provision in the contract with Vickers Shipbuilding and Engineering Ltd. which provides compensation for VSEL in the event of the cancellation of the contract for HMS Vanguard. There is no mystery about the clause, and the right hon. Gentleman will find a copy of it in the Library. I assure him that this is a straightforward commercial arrangement which is intended to provide VSEL with compensation for costs, not profits, properly and legitimately incurred in fulfilment of the contract. It is as simple and straightforward as that.

My hon. Friend the Member for Beverley (Sir P. Wall), the right hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Mr. Silkin) and my right hon. Friend the Member for Spelthorne referred to the Merchant Navy. I am sure that they have had the opportunity of studying the "Statement on the Defence Estimates" with great care, but it might be for the convenience of the House if I quote two sentences that accurately summarise the Government's view on merchant shipping. They are on page 38 of volume 1. I note that the right hon. Member for Deptford did not think much of the presentation of the statement—a judgment with which I disagree. I draw his attention to this paragraph:

> "There are, however, still sufficient ships of most of the particular types that we need to enable us to meet our foreseen defence requirements for cross-Channel reinforcement and direct support of Royal Navy operations . . . for the foreseeable future, most of our requirements are likely to be met."

Mr. Silkin: The hon. Gentleman is looking at the wrong table. That is table 1.3. I was drawing his attention to table 1.4, which shows the calamitous loss in officers, ratings and cadets in the Merchant Navy. We can have as many ships as we like, but if we have no one to man them, what good are they?

Mr. Freeman: I listened carefully to what the right hon. Gentleman said, and during his speech I looked at the table. I am sure that he will accept that the number of officers and men required to man a ship is a statistic that does not remain fixed throughout its life, but can change. There is also productivity in merchant shipping. I repeat the commitment that the Government have made on a number of occasions about merchant shipping.

The hon. Member for Edinburgh, East (Mr. Strang) raised a question about the balance of power between the Soviet Union and the West's NATO forces. He said that all the evidence is that the Soviet Union genuinely wants to cut defence expenditure. That is a fair summary of the main thrust of his contribution. I hope that he is right, but I draw his attention to annex A, which discusses at some length the question of the military threat with which the Alliance is faced. I am sure that he has read this.

We do not claim that annex A is definitive. It is a complex and difficult task to assess the size and scope of the Soviet forces, but the general situation and trend are clear. The Soviet Union has large, formidable and well-equipped forces and—this is the key point—its rate of expenditure on them has quickened since 1973. The Soviet Union spends 14 to 16 per cent. of its gross domestic product on its defence forces—more than any other NATO country. Those forces will not simply be wished away, nor can they be ignored. The simple fact is that the expenditure, which is one measure of commitment by a country to its defence obligations, has been rising and is still at a high relative level. I hope that the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East is right. The Ministry of Defence has to respond to a clearly perceived threat which is borne out by the financial figures and the proportion of GDP that I have just given.

My hon. and learned Friend the Member for Colchester, North (Sir A. Buck)——

Sir Antony Buck: Well done for remembering my constituency.

Mr. Freeman: I can remember the constituency because I wrote it down. I pay tribute to his experience and help. He referred to the Falklands, as did my hon. Friend the Member for Salisbury (Mr. Key), and paid tribute to the dedication and professionalism of our armed forces overseas, and in particular in the Falkland Islands. The topography and climate of the Falklands provide excellent opportunities for training, but I stress that the level of our forces is kept under review to ensure that it is at the minimum level necessary to defend the Falklands against aggression. Numbers have been reduced steadily and are set out in the White Paper. The new airport should make it possible to achieve a further reduction in force levels without diminishing our ability to defend the islands.

My hon. Friend the Member for Wealden (Sir G. Johnson Smith) asked questions about procurement policy and philosophy. He asked about our policy in relation to individual companies, particularly those with new and emerging technologies. He asked also whether we are still committed to the independent European procurement

[Mr. Freeman]

group. My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement has taken on board his points and will respond to them in tomorrow's debate.

The hon. Member for Walsall, South (Mr. George) referred, rightly, to the importance of our commitment to NATO and emphasised his belief that the United States has a key role to play in it. The Government are grateful for his support for those principal defence policies.

My hon. Friend the Member for Gillingham (Mr. Couchman) visited the Falklands last year. He represents what was formerly an important naval port. I am grateful to him for stating clearly his interpretation of the Labour party's policy. It accords with mine. The policy of the Labour party is that Trident savings will be spent on conventional forces, albeit there would be the equivalent of only three divisions on the central front. None of the money saved would be available for increased spending on the social services. That statement is now clearly on the record.

The hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) referred to helicopter procurement policy. The Government are fully aware of the situation at Westland. My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State may refer to that matter tomorrow. If the hon. Gentleman is able to be present at tomorrow's debate, I hope he will be content when he hears what my hon. Friend has to say.

I commend to the House the "Statement on the Defence Estimates". As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence said when he opened the debate, the theme of this and previous defence statements by this Government is one of steadily improving defences. The improvements in our defence capability have been outlined by my right hon. Friend and they are contained in detail in the "Statement on the Defence Estimates". We have improved the organisation of our armed forces and of its civilian support, which is my particular responsibility. We have consistently improved pay and conditions for members of the armed forces. We are increasing the Reserves. As the House knows, the strength of the Territorial Army is to be increased over the next few years to a maximum number that will be in the mid-80,000s. That includes the Home Service Force.

The services have far better equipment now than they had under previous Governments. The task now is to offset the very modest reduction in the real resources that will be available over the next few years by continuing the improvements in efficiency and the rewards of competition in procurement. As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said, there will be no need for any change in our main defence commitments.

My right hon. Friend said that the message of this White Paper is continuity, consolidation and realism within a sustained effort in support of NATO. As for continuity, my hon. Friend the Member for Wealden said that in defence policy one cannot chop and change. Since this Government came to office our defence policy has provided continuity. One does not pull up defence policy by the roots. As for consolidation, several right hon. and hon. Members have referred to the fact that we are at the end of a period of expenditure that has increased in real terms each year by 3 per cent. and also that we are into a new period of consolidation——

Mr. Kevin McNamara (Kingston upon Hull, North): Reduction.

Mr. Freeman: The hon. Gentleman says "Reduction." I refer to the point that I made earlier. He is looking only at the amount of money that is voted by the House for defence. There is another dimension to the analysis of our defence capability: our ability on the ground, through better equipment that has been purchased over the last few years, to increase defence expenditure so as to defend this country and make our contribution to NATO.

In terms of realism, as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said, there will be no major change in our defence commitments. Trident remains the key to our defence policy and we regard it as a cost-effective deterrent. The alternatives suggested by the right hon. Member for Devonport do not commend themselves to the electorate of Britain. Our main policy is to strengthen and sustain NATO. It is vital that the United States——

It being Ten o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

Debate to be resumed tomorrow.

Mental Health Care Centre, Little Hulton

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Durant.]*

10 pm

Mr. Terry Lewis (Worsley): I am grateful for the opportunity to bring to the attention of the House the grave threat to the current and future prospects for providing community care for mentally ill and handicapped people in the city of Salford and elsewhere. This is entirely due to an incredible blunder by the North-Western regional health authority. Before I go into the detail of that, I should like to remind the House of the Government's commitment to providing care in the community through joint funding between local authorities, social services departments and the National Health Service through regional and district health authorities.

When the Government came to power in 1979 they almost immediately nailed their colours to the mast of community care. The then Secretary of State for Social Services commissioned a study to clarify policies for the development of community care in the health and personal social services. The study reported, among other considerations, upon the need for interaction between the National Health Service and the personal social services. As a result of this exercise, Government policy developed along three lines. They were, first, the creation of a local service in those districts that still had little provision; second, provision in every district of enough suitable accommodation for the care of people with mental illness; and, third, the making of satisfactory arrangements for patients and staff locally concerning the closure over the next 10 years or so of mental illness hospitals that were not well placed to provide a service reaching out into the community and that were already near the end of their useful lives.

The Government announced their decisions on care in the community in a written answer on 28 July, 1982 when the present Secretary of State said that he was:

"convinced that it would be right to press ahead with a programme aimed to get out of hospital and into community care as many people as possible who do not require hospital care. My decisions fall into two parts: those which can be acted upon without legislation; and those which require changes in the law when the opportunity can be taken."—[*Official Report*, 28 July 1982; Vol. 28, c. *522-3.*]

In the first category, he said that he had three main proposals: first, that health authorities would in future be able to guarantee continuing annual payments to local authorities and voluntary organisations for people moving from hospital to community care; second, that schemes jointly financed from the NHS would be available for extended periods for projects for moving people out of hospital; and, third, that a programme of pilot projects would be promoted and that up to £50 million of joint finance funds would be centrally reserved over the following five years in order to develop and assess the programme.

The initiatives which did not require legislation were launched in a circular on 14 March, 1983. Those which did require legislation were enacted by the Health and Social Services and Social Security Adjudications Act 1983. I remind the House that on Second Reading of that Bill the then Minister for Health again stressed the importance to the Government of community care. He went on to outline four main objectives of the Bill,

"The first is to provide more care for the elderly, the mentally ill and the handicapped at the place where the patients and their families would prefer to be, that is, at home or in small units near to home. Too many patients still have to live in large, impersonal institutions, occupying hospital beds for long periods simply because the community services are not there to support them at or near home."

He went on to say:

"Last July"—

Two or three years ago—

"we announced the details of a very important inititative, which we called the 'Care in the Community' programme. The most important change is that for the first time ever district health authorities will be able to offer to local authorities and voluntary organisati as guaranteed annual payments without limit of time to pro ide for people moving out of hospitals into community car:. We want to see resources moving with the patient so that the funds go with him to provide him with the right sort of care in or near his home."—[*Official Report*, 17 February 1983; Vol. 37, c. 492.]

I think that I have shown conclusively that care in the community and its reliance on the partnership between the National Health Service and the personal social services is the cornerstone of the Government's mental health care strategy.

However, I understand that up to the present time, according to evidence given to the Select Committee on Social Services, only about 20 per cent. of local authorities are committing themselves to the joint financing arrangements that I have mentioned. I am not surprised at that low response, if the recent experience of Salford city council is typical.

Salford city council social services committee has embraced, and is embracing, the policy with energy, inventiveness and, in view of the current financial circumstances, with great courage. Therefore, it is with regret that I am forced to bring the matter of the mental health day care centre at Little Hulton in my constituency to the attention of the House.

In March 1984, the joint care planning team for mental health in my area established a working group on day care to examine the opportunities for a joint day care service in the Little Hulton, Worsley, area and proposed an entirely new facility.

The project was intended to provide the facilities that are needed in the local community. It sought to take advantage of th legislation, to which I have already referred, to provide for the transfer to the local authority of a substantial sum of health revenue to meet recurring costs in a manner designed to achieve the maximum value for money. It offered a model for the redistribution of resources from health to local authority to ensure that appropriate care would be delivered locally and efficiently. The proposal offered the opportunity to establish a new model for the delivery of sub-acute mental illness care, together with more conventional day care in a jointly managed setting.

Salford city council was to make available a suitable building for the purpose. The NHS was expected to provide the staff since it would function primarily to meet the deficiencies in NHS day care. It was predicted that there would be a reduced demand on in-patient NHS facilities and at the same time improved opportunities for early discharge.

Salford city council responded to the recommendation by enthusiastically endorsing the need for the facility at Little Hulton and there was a clear commitment by the Salford health authority to accept responsibility for staffing.

[Mr. Terry Lewis]

Imagine, then, the horror with which the Salford social services committee learned at its meeting on 23 April 1986 that the North-Western regional health authority would not, after all, be funding the centre through the Salford health authority as previously agreed. That came after the centre had been built at a cost to the city council of £310,000.

In the interests of making myself absolutely clear, let me quote one or two relevant facts. The social services committee, at its meeting on 22 February 1984, authorised tenders to be invited for the construction of a new mental health day care centre at Little Hulton at an estimated cost of £350,000. Then the finance sub-committee, at its meeting on 1 March 1984, approved the proposals for the construction of the centre, subject to the revenue costs being met by the district health authority. The social services committee, at its meeting on 27 March 1985, accepted a tender for the construction of the centre. The total cost, including provision for furniture and so on, amounted to about £309,000. It was then informed by the director of social services that he had received a letter from Salford health authority indicating that it would meet the revenue costs for starting the centre, amounting to approximately £120,000 per annum.

If the House will bear with me, I shall read some of that letter. It was sent by the general manager of Salford health authority to the director of social services at Salford, and says

"The Policy and Resources Panel of the Authority have agreed to my recommendation that this Authority commit itself to the funding of the staffing revenue implications for the proposed Mental Health Centre in Walkden"—

It is, in fact, in Little Hulton—

"It is my understanding that Salford City Council will make available the building and will meet the costs of running the Centre other than staffing. Salford Health Authority will provide the staffing on the basis that it will function primarily to meet the deficiencies in NHS day care.

The Health Authority will seek money from the following sources:

1. A bid for revenue support to the Regional Health Authority and to the Non-Capital Led Programme for 1986/87.

2. That in the event of the RHA funding not being received, the Authority will, over the period of two years up to completion and commissioning of the Centre, identify staffing resources within Prestwich and Peel Hall for transfer to the Unit."

Thus, there was something of a guarantee in that letter.

I shall not quote that letter further, because the paragraphs that I have read out show the commitment that the district health authority had given to the city council. It was only upon receipt of that notification from Salford health authority that the council finally committed itself to embarking upon the construction of the centre. The building is now completed, and the committee was extremely surprised to hear at the final moment that no finance would be available for running the centre. Consequently, that building, which is desperately needed in order to realise the Government's commitment to care in the community in relation to the transfer of mentally ill persons from hospitals into the community, cannot be opened.

The present position is that despite fulsome praise from Sir John Page, the chairman of the regional health authority, for "the commendable progress" Salford health authority has made on the plans which have been developed for the build-up of community mental handicap and illness places in 1985-1986 and over the next two years, a costly facility will remain closed because the right hand does not seem to know what the left hand is doing at Gateway house in Manchester. The excuse for breaking the staffing agreement is that funds are available for only one of two projects. That should have been apparent before the go-ahead was given to build the centre, and I am amazed at the staggering incompetence shown by the health authorities.

When I met the Minister last week, he made the point — with which I agree — that the NHS rightly devolves decision-making to a local level. He gave the impression that such problems are best resolved locally. Ordinarily, I would concur with that. However, because of the implications for the Government's own committed policies, which I have already explained, I implore the Minister to intervene. He has the power. He is backed by his own Government's stated aims.

Failure to assist will mean that a brand-new facility will remain idle while the patients for whom it was intended will be released from the big institutions into a world that is not ready for them. Those already in the community who are in need of help will be denied it. As long as it remains empty, the centre will stand as a visible condemnation of the blundering bureaucrats at Gateway house, and will be a mockery of the Government's care in the community policy. I urge the Minister to act.

10.14 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mr. Ray Whitney): I am glad to have the opportunity of replying to the hon. Member for Worsley (Mr. Lewis). I recognise his serious interest in the issue. As he said, we had a discussion a few days ago about it. I acknowledge that he recognises that this is a local problem. The National Health Service structure is designed so that local problems and difficulties can be solved locally, between the region and the district.

I shall outline what has happened. Salford health authority has made an agreement with Salford city council that it is now unable to fulfil, because the district considers it must give other needs priority. The district health authority was to staff a day centre for mentally ill people at Little Hulton in Walkden and Worsley, a part of Salford that lacks these facilities. The revenue cost to the health authority would have been up to £150,000 per annum. The local authority was to provide the building. The building cost £310,000. The DHA provided £70,000 of this capital from joint finance moneys allocated by the regional health authority. That is an indication of the Government's and the National Health Service's commitment to funding care in the community projects. The £70,000 was part of the continuing huge investment in Salford's health facilities.

The DHA's agreement was given in a letter dated 26 March 1985 from the district health authority to the director of social services for Salford. In the letter, the general manager described how many would be raised to staff the day centre. An application would be made to the RHAs non-capital led development fund. This is one of four regional development funds against which districts may bid. Districts have to support their case with detailed costed proposals, showing how the bid fits into their overall strategies and how patients will benefit. A recent but very sensible requirement is that a district must show that it can maintain financial discipline and balance its

budget. Bidding is competitive and priorities have to be decided. That is in the nature of politics and economics in the National Health Service. In this way the region aims to ensure value for money for patients. If such funds were not forthcoming, the district general manager said, the district health authority would make the necessary staff available from Prestwich and Peel Hall hospitals.

Bids were made for non-capital led funds in 1984 and in 1985. Sir John Page, the regional health authority chairman, discussed the 1985 bid with the Salford chairman at the district's annual accountability review last November. However, this was not the DHA's only bid for development money. An assessment unit for the elderly mentally infirm at Hope hospital was also proposed. When asked to rank its schemes in priority, the DHA put the Hope hospital scheme first.

The RHA was left with the understanding from the district that they could release staff for the day unit by better use of their existing resources. Accordingly, the follow-up letter to the district's accountability review said that the region would not be funding the day centre.

Plans for the day centre emerged from the joint care planning team which brings together the DHA and the local authority. I understand, progress was regularly discussed in this forum. The social services committee discussed the matter in April and last month, on 22 May, the city administrator wrote to the hon. Member.

On 2 June, the district first told the region that staff could not be released after all. On 9 June, the district general manager suggested the solution that the region advance funds committed to certain future developments. Rightly, the region is cautious about mortgaging the future to pay for the present in this way. But the proposal is being examined, although it is too soon to say what solution will be found.

The hon. Gentleman has tried to draw conclusions from all this, but the position is that Salford and the north-west region are better funded now than ever before. Care in the community—the hon. Gentleman referred to my right hon. Friends and their commitment to the concept—is total and genuine, and this has been demonstrated. It is being established in the region on a sound basis.

The Government are proud of their record in the north-west region. The region is better funded and better managed and it is treating more patients than ever before. Since 1979, Health Service spending in the region has increased from £380 million to £807 million in 1984-85. That is growth in real terms of just short of 20 per cent. Taken together with the region's allocation for 1985-86 and 1986-87, real terms expenditure in the region is forecast to rise by about 23 per cent., compared with an average of 19 per cent. for health authorities in England as a whole. This includes the recent increase of £50 million to the NHS to take account of pay review body awards.

This growth comes from real growth in Health Service resources. It comes also from redistribution from historically well-off regions in the south to the north. I invite the House to take note of how under this Government the north-west region has moved towards its resource allocation working party target. In 1977-78, it was 11 per cent. below that target, but this year it is only 0·8 per cent. below it. This also comes from making better use of existing resources. The region estimates that its cost improvements for 1985-86 will be about 2·3 per cent. That includes cash releases through efficiency of £10·7 million.

Out of this impressive growth, Salford has done especially well. Last year the £27 million first phase redevelopment of Hope hospital — the region's third teaching hospital—was opened by Princess Anne. Plans are now being made for the second phase. Last year alone over £2 million in development funds were invested by the region in the district. Discussions are going on about over £400,000 of developments in Salford in this financial year. If these are successful—that is if Salford can meet the region's sensible requirements, which I have already mentioned—examples would include the following: 52 extra renal dialysis places, new consultants in child and adolescent psychiatry, and in neuropathology, and new work on AIDS. No one doubts that Salford has serious health needs. The difference between the Government and the hon. Gentleman is that the Government are getting on and doing something instead of just talking about needs.

Day centre staffing has become a problem despite increased investments. For several years the DHA has been overspending its already adequate cash limits. By last year, accumulated over-spending was £2·8 million. In the main, the cause was unplanned growth—in other words, making commitments without ensuring that the resources were available. Even Labour Governments have seen that this is the road to ruin for patients' services, and have required health authorities to live within their cash limits. Last year the region and the district agreed a three-year action plan to balance the DHA's books. Left unchecked, Salford's health authority's overspending — and the entering into of commitments without resources—would inevitably have pre-empted development moneys intended for other less advantaged parts of the region.

That would have been the real risk to care in the community. But, in fact, the region is developing ambitious plans to provide people in the North-Western region with mental illness services in their district hospitals and in the community. Careful plans are being made to move long-stay patients out of institutions to care in the community tailored to their needs. In 1985-86, North-Western region earmarked £492,500 of growth money as development funds specifically for care in the community. A total of 71·5 per cent. of that was spent on nine projects in Salford. This year, £843,000 is earmarked by the region, and already some 50 per cent. is committed to Salford.

What I have described and demonstrated is the Government's fundamental commitment to Salford, their commitment to improving the health provision in the Salford area, and to improving the level of care in the community. I hope that that will provide the basis of continuing collaboration between the district health authority and the local health authority. In that spirit, I am absolutely certain that the particular problem of the day centre to which the hon. Gentleman referred can be solved.

Following our discussions, I asked the regional health authority to investigate how the problem arose and to confirm that it is considering the district health authority's proposals. I agree with the hon. Gentleman that no one wants to see the new facility standing empty. I emphasise that local priorities must be decided locally — in the region. As I have said, Salford already receives a large proportion of the North-Western's development funds, and the region is absolutely right to ensure that the district health authority lives within its means. More for Salford must inevitably mean less for elsewhere. There is an

[Mr. Ray Whitney]

important lesson here: local collaboration in providing people's health services is too important to risk on poor planning and commitments that cannot be backed up.

I am quite certain that the correct decisions will be taken. I have asked for the regional health authority to report to me in due course following its further consultations with the district health authority. It does so against a background of a continuing and steady real increase in the taxpayers' resources which are being committed and devoted to the North-Western region. Within that commitment to the region, it is perfectly clear from the details I have offered to the House that the Salford district is rightly benefiting. It is now up to those concerned with the decisions in that area to resolve the problem. I am quite convinced and confident that they will do so. When they do so, I shall be happy to inform the hon. Gentleman of the outcome of their deliberations.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-eight minutes past Ten o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 1 July 1986

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

GREATER MANCHESTER (LIGHT RAPID TRANSIT SYSTEM) BILL *[Lords]*

GREATER MANCHESTER (LIGHT RAPID TRANSIT SYSTEM) (NO. 2) BILL *[Lords]*

Read a Second time, and committed.

BLYTH HARBOUR BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

Order for Second reading read.

To be read a Second time tomorrow.

Oral Answers to Questions

SOCIAL SERVICES

Pension Books (Issue)

1. **Mr. Gregory** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the average length of time between the receipt of applications for state pensions and the issue of pension books; and if he will make a statement.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mr. John Major): Invitations to claim retirement pension are issued four months before pension age. This period is normally sufficient to allow for any necessary inquiries to be made, for the claim to be decided and for an order book to be issued in time for payment on the due date.

Mr. Gregory: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that comment on the normal time. Is he aware of the anxiety that a number—admittedly, a minority—of pensioners experience if their books are not issued by that date? Will my hon. Friend investigate the reasons for any delays at Newcastle?

Mr. Major: I am aware of that anxiety. As far as I am aware, it is not a significant problem at Newcastle. Where it does occur, there is absolute provision for a Girocheque to be issued to the beneficiary so that he does not have a delayed payment of pension.

Mr. Rowe: Regarding the issue of Girocheques, is my hon. Friend aware that there is considerable anxiety about the possibility of a change being made in the way in which people living in residential institutions receive their pensions? Can he give an assurance that no change will be to the detriment of their independence over their own money?

Mr. Major: That matter arises on a later question today. We are still considering the results of the consultation paper that we issued. I can assure my hon. Friend that any changes will require the voluntary consent of the beneficiary.

Mobility Allowance

2. **Mr. Spencer** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what recent representations he has received about mobility allowances for sufferers of myasthenia gravis; and if he will make a statement.

The Minister for Social Security (Mr. Tony Newton): I am not aware of any recent representations specifically about suffers of myasthenia gravis.

Mr. Spencer: Is my hon. Friend aware that myasthenia gravis is a rare neurological condition which afflicts one in 30,000 of the population, and that most of them, such as my daughter, strive to lead normal lives, but the fluctuating nature of the symptoms makes it difficult sometimes for many myasthetics to claim mobility allowance to which, for most of the time, they feel they are entitled? Can my hon. Friend assure the House that those fluctuating symptoms are fully taken into consideration by the appropriate boards?

Mr. Newton: I can give my hon. and learned Friend the assurance for which he asked in the latter part of his question. The problem arises with a number of conditions, including multiple sclerosis, of which the medical adjudicating authorities have a good deal of experience. We must all accept that it can be a a difficult problem in the case of fluctuating conditions.

Mr. Alfred Morris: Is the Minister aware that there is now a widespread feeling that, following the Lees case, the criteria for awarding mobility allowance has been tightened up, especially to the detriment of multiple handicap people whose ability to walk is affected by severe mental or sensory disabilities? In their interests, will he urgently consider the response that he has given to representations on that important matter?

Mr. Newton: I am aware of the point that the right hon. Gentleman raises following the Lees case and, indeed, the Hilton case. I think he will understand that what is being sought is a clear and specific extension of the criteria for mobility allowance which raises difficult questions of resources. I have undertaken to look further at some of the points that have been made to me about particular issues.

Resource Allocation Working Party

3. **Mr. Chapman** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what recent representations he has received about the effects of the application of the resource allocation working party formula and the current review; and if he will make a statement.

The Secretary of State for Social Services (Mr. Norman Fowler): I have received a number of representations concerning various aspects of resource allocation and the review of the RAWP formula. Consultation on the review ended yesterday and I am expecting an interim report by the end of this year and then a full report.

Mr. Chapman: As RAWP was introduced nine years ago, will my right hon. Friend say whether it has succeeded

in what it set out to do, or whether it is to be a permanent way of allocating resources in the Health Service? Whatever his answer, will the review consider the effect of RAWP applied not only between regional health authorities but by regional health authorities, because some district health authorities seem to be badly done by in the double application of the formula?

Mr. Fowler: I give consideration to those points. The principle of RAWP is basically to put money where the people are. I think that that principle is accepted by both sides of the House. On sub-regional allocation, clearly the review's findings will be relevant not only when dealing with matters such as patient flow, but for regions in distributing money.

Mr. Ashley: Before there are any changes in the RAWP formula, will the Secretary of State bear in mind that the crisis in north Staffordshire hospitals is infinitely worse than the problems in south-east England? Last winter there was one red alert in a London hospital, but there were continuous red alerts throughout the whole of north Staffordshire.

Mr. Fowler: As I have just made clear, there is no question of abandoning the RAWP principle. The whole point is to try to get equal access to health care for people in equal need. We shall stand by that principle.

Mr. McCrindle: Will my right hon. Friend take note of the fact that, although few of us object to the transfer of resources to areas that have been ill-served in the past, there are some signs that in London and the south-east the position is becoming difficult? Without in any way suggesting that we should withdraw the extra allocation of resources to areas away from London, when my right hon. Friend has the review's report, will he consider increasing the resources to the Thames regional health authorities, which in some respects have larger waiting lists than some places far away from London?

Mr. Fowler: We are considering that and other issues concerned with RAWP. Clearly it is important that the RAWP formula should reflect need as far as possible. That was the purpose of setting up the review.

Mr. Kirkwood: Will the Secretary of State assure the House that, when he has had time to study the RAWP review, he will consider the important report by the Faculty of Community Medicine, which was published today, about some of the bad aspects of the way in which we measure up on the league table of health in relation to other countries? Will he also assure the House that he is now fighting his departmental corner to get more money so that, when the interim and final reports are available, he can do something about the problem?

Mr. Fowler: I shall certainly be happy to respond to the report of the Faculty of Community Medicine. We would agree with a number of its points. We agree that the prevention of disease and promotion of health are vital. However, some of the statistics used by the faculty were selective. It took life expectancy figures from the age of 45, but if life expectancy figures from birth are taken, the United Kingdom is near the top, not the bottom, of the league.

Mr. Carter-Jones: Will the Secretary of State bear in mind that the complaints from Hope hospital in Salford down to St. Thomas's hospital in London are not so much about RAWP as about the total cuts in the Health Service?

Mr. Fowler: The hon. Gentleman knows enough about this position to be aware that there have been no cuts in resources going into the Health Service. He knows perfectly well that the budget, which was £7·75 billion, has been increased to £18·75 billion. However he does the arithmetic, that cannot be regarded as a cut.

Mr. Sims: Does my right hon. Friend accept that in times of increased costs—with the reasons for which we are both familiar — even relatively well-resourced authorities need substantial increases in funds each year simply to maintain, let alone to improve, the services that they already operate?

Mr. Fowler: Clearly, demographic factors and medical advances have to be taken into account. My hon. Friend will acknowledge that health authorities must also use the resources at their disposal to the best effect.

Mr. Meacher: Is not the misapplication of RAWP one major reason why the Royal College of Physicians reported yesterday that, after seven years of Tory Government, Britain is now one of the unhealthiest countries in the developed world, with low life expectancy and high rates of disease and handicap? Is not the other major reason the fact that the Government are now spending 50 per cent. less on health as a proportion of gross national product compared to the French, the Germans and the Americans? When will the Secretary of State recognise that RAWP cannot work properly while the NHS remains so grossly under-funded by the Government?

Mr. Fowler: I wonder why the hon. Gentleman never compares it with the Labour Government. As he well knows, the Government are spending 24 per cent. more in real terms than the previous Labour Government. We are treating more patients, the capital building programme has been restored and the Health Service is developing into a better Health Service. We will stand not only on our record but on a comparison of that record with the record of the previous Labour Government.

Supplementary Benefit

5. **Mr. Andrew Bowden** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will review the limit on supplementary benefit board and lodgings payments made to those in residential homes who become disabled after retirement age so as to bring it in line with the limit applicable in respect of those who are disabled before that age.

Mr. Newton: While we have no plans to do precisely what my hon. Friend suggests, the new limits proposed from 28 July seek to assist those he has in mind by introducing a substantially increased limit for elderly people in residential care homes who are blind or who qualify for the higher rate of attendance allowance.

Mr. Bowden: I welcome the increases in the limits, but how can my hon. Friend justify a position whereby a person who has retired one day after his birthday will receive a lower allowance if he is disabled on that day than a person who is disabled one day before reaching pensionable age? Surely that is not fair.

Mr. Newton: The general position was made clear when we introduced the original limits under the regulations. There is a special position for the younger physically disabled, many of whom might be very young and perhaps

multiple handicapped. We made it clear that there is a distinction to be drawn between them and the general run of people becoming disabled by advancing years. I accept that there are some problems, but broadly it is a reasonable distinction.

Mrs. Beckett: If I understand the Minister's answer, he is saying that those who become blind after retirement will continue to receive a different rate from those who retire when they are blind. If I understand it correctly, as 83 per cent. of those who become blind do so after retirement, the Minister is really saying, "For heaven's sake, if you are going blind, do it the day before you are 65."

Mr. Newton: That is a rather facile point for the hon. Lady to make. She will realise that one of the difficulties we face — for example, in relation to representations about blindness — is that blindness is only one of a number of potentially disabling conditions that arise after retirement age. We have felt it right to deal generally with severely dependent elderly people.

Students (Benefits)

6. **Mr. Pike** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he now expects to bring forward his regulations on benefits to students.

Mr. Fowler: The regulations will be debated tomorrow.

Mr. Pike: When the Secretary of State made his statement on 18 June, he will recall that he refused repeatedly to say how many losers there would be as a result of the change that was being announced. Will he say now how many people will lose as a result of the changes? Is it not a disgrace? Is it not time that he sat down with officials at the Department of Education and Science and worked out a fair policy for all our students?

Mr. Fowler: I do not accept any of that. As I said when I made the statement, 400,000 students are affected overall: 140,000 gain the full £36 but, because of the concessions, many fewer and smaller housing benefit losses are taking place. Students are not normally affected by losses from more than one source. In other words, they are not cumulative. It is not possible to give the exact figures that the hon. Gentleman has asked for, and that is what I said in my statement.

Mr. Norris: As students in this country enjoy a level of public support way beyond those of all our Western competitors, does my right hon. Friend agree that the right way to proceed in this matter is, first, to consider again the principle of student loans; secondly; to consider that it is wholly inappropriate for students to be financed through a system of supplemetary benefit and housing benefit, which is essentially aimed at a completely different section of society; and, thirdly, that it is of paramount importance to co-ordinate such decisions as are made about students with his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science?

Mr. Fowler: Yes, certainly. I entirely accept my hon. Friend's points. The aim of the proposals is to return to a position where help for students is channelled through the education maintenance system. That aim was set out in the social security Green Paper and in the White Paper. Twenty years ago no students claimed in that way. Now most do so at an annual cost approaching £120 million in the social security budget. It is wrong to have a system which encourages young people to depend on social security. That is why we are taking this action.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: Will the Minister explain how it is possible to calculate how much the changes will cost if he does not know how may people will still lose? How many times in the past has the Treasury come up with extra money without being told the detailed numbers involved? Is he satisfied that there is now sufficient information in local benefit offices to enable students to get their rights rather than the rights that they thought would be removed?

Mr. Fowler: If the hon. Gentleman does not believe that information is available in local offices, I will investigate the specific cases. As I have said before, there are a number of matters about which we can be certain. For example, the provision for unemployment and supplementary benefit probably affects 70,000 people. However, I must return to the point that it is impossible to give an exact figure of the kind requested by the hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike), for the simple reason that the losses are not cumulative in the way that the hon. Member for Burnley believes.

Commercial Surrogacy

8. **Mr. Peter Bruinvels** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any plans to introduce further legislation extending the controls over commercial surrogacy arrangements.

The Minister for Health (Mr. Barney Hayhoe): I am keeping the need for amending legislation to the Surrogacy Arrangements Act 1985 under review.

Mr. Bruinvels: Will my right hon. Friend condemn the vile practice of surrogacy and womb leasing arrangements which are reported still to be occurring even with the Reproductive Freedom International Organisation run by Miss Lorrien Finley? Surely any kind of womb leasing for financial gain is contrary to the law and the spirit of the Surrogacy Arrangements Act 1985. Should not people involved in that practice be prosecuted? Is it not a privilege to have children? People should not play on the emotions of others and make financial gain, which is contrary to the Act.

Mr. Hayhoe: The concern expressed by my hon. Friend would be held by many hon. Members. I have seen the recent reports, and I understand that there has been a police investigation into that particular case, and the Department of Public Prosecutions is considering the report.

Mr. Allan Roberts: Will the Minister congratulate the hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels) on accepting and recognising that there is a limit to how and where the free market should operate and that morality is more important than the policies of greed and monetarism? Will he ask his hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East to accept that the same principle should apply across the board in relation to the Health Service and social services and accept that morality does comes before profit in the Health Service and the social services?

Mr. Hayhoe: Of course morality comes before profit in the Health Service.

No one who heard the exchanges earlier between my right hon. Friend and the hon. Member for Oldham, West

(Mr. Meacher) on this matter could have failed to hear my right hon. Friend make it abundantly clear that increased resources have been allocated to the National Health Service. That is a clear indication of the Government's priorities.

Mr. Stokes: Is my right hon. Friend aware that most people absolutely loathe commercial surrogacy and expect the Government to act quickly and not simply have the matter under review?

Mr. Hayhoe: Commercial surrogacy was dealt with in the Surrogacy Arrangements Act 1985. The suggestion now made is that the individual concerned may be falling foul of the Act, in which case no doubt the DPP will take the necessary action. We are considering whether there is a need to amend legislation to take account of these practices, which would not be illegal under the terms of the 1985 Act.

Mr. Dalyell: In the mouths of Ministers of all Governments the phrase "under review" has many parliamentary meanings. Can we expect any end product to this particular review?

Mr. Hayhoe: I am well aware of the hon. Gentleman's ingenuity in terms of parliamentary language. Certainly when I say that the matter is under review, I mean that it is under review.

Waiting Lists

9. **Mr. Favell** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the reasons for variations of waiting lists between regional health authorities.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mr. Ray Whitney): There is no simple answer to my hon. Friend's question. Variations in waiting lists can be caused by a multiplicity of factors relating to the efficiency with which resources are used and to the resources available in a particular place.

Mr. Favell: In regions where health authorities have failed to get their act together to reduce waiting lists, should not health authorities be forced to contract out medical services? Is my hon. Friend aware that in Wales two private kidney dialysis units have been introduced to help the Health Service and that in the past 12 months the number of kidney patients has increased from 30 per million per head of population to 55 per million, and lives are already being saved?

Mr. Whitney: My hon. Friend has made an important point. Ministers have made it clear that a reduction in waiting lists is an urgent priority for the NHS and the health authorities.

Mr. O'Brien: Will the Minister look into the problems experienced in my constituency? Due to the closure of hospitals that accommodate geriatric patients, those patients have had to be transferred to general hospitals. As a result, the number of beds available for general medical care in those hospitals has been reduced, which has created problems in the Yorkshire region. Will the Minister look into the closure of hospitals in which geriatric patients predominate?

Mr. Whitney: The diversion of resources must be a matter for the decision of local health authorities in the light of needs. The closure of beds has been the policy of Governments of both parties for some years. However, I am glad to say that under this Government the number of patients treated has increased remarkably.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Is my hon. Friend aware of the considerable improvement in the facilities and nursing beds available at Grantham hospital, and will he welcome that fact? Is he further aware that there is a feeling among medical staff that, because of the shortage of medical staff and under-provision, those facilities are not being fully used? Will he inquire into those complaints to see whether there is any justice in them?

Mr. Whitney: I am glad to hear about the situation in Grantham, and I will certainly look into that latter point.

Mr. Corbett: Is the Minister aware that in the West Midlands regional health authority area, and in Birmingham in particular, people have to wait for up to seven years to get on the waiting list for ear, nose and throat treatment? Moreover, a consultant at the Queen Elizabeth hospital has written to kidney patients virtually telling them that unless they are at death's door, they will not get an operation. What will the Minister do about that?

Mr. Whitney: As I said, we have made it clear that the improvement of waiting times has very high priority. That is why resources are being steadily increased. As the hon. Gentleman may know, a pilot project has been funded in the west midlands to examine the effect of referral practice by providing general practitioners with additional information about waiting times in other districts.

Mrs. Currie: Is my hon. Friend aware that in the Southern Derbyshire health authority waiting lists are generally low, which contrasts greatly with waiting lists of over 1,000 gynaecology patients, some of whom have been waiting more than four years? I am sure my hon. Friend will agree that that is totally unacceptable. Is it not time to take another look at the report of the Social Services Committee on medical education, which recommended the appointment of far more consultants? That might attract them back into the hospital service, where the problems now lie.

Mr. Whitney: I welcome the low waiting list in south Derbyshire. The appointment of consultants is a matter for the judgment of the health authorities, and it is not subject to any control exercised from the centre.

Mrs. Clwyd: Does the Minister believe that patients themselves should be forced to shop around to find the shortest waiting list? Is he aware that one of my constituents, who needed a hip replacement operation, was told that he would have to wait several years? However, he rang about six area health authorities in England and eventually had his operation at Guy's hospital, London. Is that the sort of Health Service that the Minister believes in? Does he not think that a health authority should help patients to transfer to areas that have shorter waiting lists, so that people are not forced to wait an inordinately long time for operations?

Mr. Whitney: As I have already made clear twice, we are determined to bring down waiting times. I am also glad to note that waiting lists have been significantly reduced during the period that this Government have been in office. I remind the House that in March 1979 waiting lists

stood at 752,000 and that at 30 September 1985 waiting lists had been reduced to 661,000. That is the latest recorded figure.

Mr. Squire: I welcome both the reduction in waiting lists and the much greater efficiency which they has often demonstrated is now abroad within the Health Service. However, does he agree that waiting times of nine months and years in some cases are simply unacceptable to people who often are in great pain?

Mr. Whitney: Yes, Sir, but I remind my hon. Friend that entry for hospital operations is virtually immediate in 50 per cent. of cases.

Sir John Farr: As waiting lists can be a matter of life or death, is there not a strong case for linking all the different waiting lists by national computer? Will my hon. Friend look into this question and see what can be done?

Mr. Whitney: We have financed a project in the west midlands to examine this possibility. We are awaiting the outcome of that examination.

Dr. Marek: Despite the completely misleading figures that the hon. Gentleman and his right hon. and hon. Friends rabbit on about at every available opportunity, the public know that the National Health Service is having cuts imposed upon it by this Government and that waiting lists are unacceptably high. Is not the truth of the matter that the regional health authorities do not know where to turn to continue to provide a proper service? Is it not also true that in the last four to five years we have been suffering from an unacceptably high plateau of waiting lists? Exactly how does the Minister propose to bring them down?

Mr. Whitney: If there are any misleading figures, they come from the Opposition Benches. I have already reminded the House that waiting lists have been reduced under this Government. If the hon. Gentleman would like further accurate figures, I remind him that in 1984 the National Health Service treated over 800,000 more in-patient cases than it treated in 1978, over one third of a million more day cases and over 3 million more out-patient cases.

Family Credit

10. **Mr. Marlow** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received on the intended incentive effect of family credit.

13. **Ms. Clare Short** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what consultation process is being undertaken on his proposals for family credit.

Mr. Fowler: We have received a number of representations on the incentive effects of family credit, as well as on other matters, as part of the consultation process which began with the issue of the Green Paper last year. More recently, as part of our reconsideration of the payment mechanism for family credit, we have had further discussions with a number of organisations that are closely affected. As already announced, following that reconsideration the Government have decided that family credit will be paid direct, rather than with wages, when the new scheme is introduced in 1988.

Mr. Marlow: I thank my right hon. Friend for his reply, but will he expand on it a little? If a man goes out to work and family credit is payable, I understand from what my right hon. Friend says that it will be payable to the mother. If the woman goes out to work and the man stays behind, will family credit be payable to the husband, or do the Government take the view that the housewife is more committed to the welfare of her children than her house husband? If the Government take that sexist view, would they like to clear themselves with the European Court of Justice to save themselves future embarrassment, or do they take the view that the European Court of Justice has no status on this issue, or that, if it has any status, it should not have any such status?

Mr. Fowler: I am glad to be able to reassure my hon. Friend that the position is the same as with family income supplement. I think my hon. Friend will welcome the fact that under the family credit proposals we are providing £200 million extra for low-income families in this country, and we estimate that that will affect about 200,000 additional families.

Ms. Short: Does the Secretary of State admit that the real policy underlying this proposal is to try to force down wage levels by paying family credit through the employer, thereby encouraging employers, in addition to the other methods that the Government are using, to force down the wages of the low paid? Is that not what this is all about?

Mr. Fowler: I think that that is entire rubbish. Had the hon. Lady had more time to reflect on what she was about to say, perhaps she would not have uttered it. We are directing £200 million extra to low-income families. I should have thought that was exactly what anyone of any sense anywhere in the House would want to do.

Mr. Ralph Howell: What is my right hon. Friend's latest estimate of the saving that will accrue due to the passing of the Social Security Bill?

Mr. Fowler: I cannot give a figure of that kind at this time.

Mr. Meacher: Now that the Government have been forced to back off from their ill-advised and unpopular proposals, not only on family credit but on SERPS, the 20 per cent. housing benefit cut, discretionary disability payments, the 2 per cent. personal pensions bribe and now social fund appeals, is it not time that the Secretary of State recognised that everywhere outside this wet House of Commons the Bill is universally detested? Now that his last three years' work has crumbled into a ragbag of disconnected cuts without logic or structure, should he not do the honourable thing and either withdraw the Bill or resign?

Mr. Fowler: I think that the hon. Gentleman should know, and perhaps does know, enough about the House of Commons procedure to realise that some of these things will come back and some of these things may be put right. My hon. Friends, in Committee and on Report, if I may say so, having won entirely the argument with the hon. Gentleman on the Social Security Bill, I am bound to say that I think the Bill will do what it set out to do, which is to direct more help to people in real need.

Mr. Yeo: Contrary to what the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) says, is my right hon. Friend aware that there has been a very warm welcome for the way in which the Government have allowed a change in

the intended method of payment of family credit? This is seen as an example of the Government's flexibility and sensitivity to the needs of this group.

Mr. Fowler: I think that that is right. Had we accepted the amendment tabled on Report by the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) we would have had the worst of every conceivable world. We have changed, and I make no apology for that, but what we have not done is to change in the remarkably foolish way that the hon. Gentleman proposed.

Mentally Ill and Mentally Handicapped People

11. **Mr. Allan Roberts** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he envisages that a central bridging fund will be established for the development of community care services for the mentally ill and mentally handicapped.

Mr. Hayhoe: The Government have consistently recognised that bridging finance can help to secure the successful transition from one pattern of service to another and regions have been encouraged to plan accordingly. But there has been little real demand from health authorities for a central bridging fund as such to supplement the centrally earmarked resources of joint funding and the care in the community initiatives.

Mr. Roberts: Why does the Minister have a central bridging fund in Wales and not in England? On both sides of the House we all support the concept of the mentally ill and mentally handicapped being cared for in the community rather than in large institutions, but the Government are throwing them out of the institutions and not giving local authorities the money that they need to provide the community facilities to support these people, to house them and to look after them. With cuts in rate support grant and rate capping, the burdens are intolerable. Even Tory-controlled Sefton in my constituency has had its staffing levels turned down by the regional health authority because they are too high. What is the right hon. Gentleman going to do about it?

Mr. Hayhoe: I reject the absurdly exaggerated comments of the hon. Gentleman. The arrangements in Wales are a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales, and the different arrangements there will be kept under close study by my right hon. Friend and myself.

Mr. Madden: Will the Minister look at reports published this week in the *Yorkshire Post*, which reveal most disturbing circumstances in private nursing homes in Hull, Leeds, and Bradford? Will he examine those reports and make sure that such circumstances are not allowed to recur in other places?

Mr. Hayhoe: I think that disturbing conditions in homes, whether private or public, deserve careful examination.

Mr. Norris: Will my right hon. Friend remember that the Select Committee, which considered the principle of community care laid great store on the provision of bridging finance, bearing in mind that the cost per patient in large institutions rises as those who are transferred leave a smaller number to bear the overhead costs? Will he consult the chairmen of the health regions to ensure that there is a known mechanism for the provision of bridging finance where necessary?

Mr. Hayhoe: These matters are considered in the normal review processes with the region. I am glad to say that more of the regions are making these arrangements. It is also essential that there should be good co-operation between the social services departments of local authorities and district and regional health authorities. Again, I am doing what I can to encourage that co-operation.

Ms. Harman: When will the Minister recognise that the DHSS figure of 2 per cent. per year growth for social services is insufficient to maintain, let alone improve, the standard of services? Is he aware that the Government must now increase that figure, not least to meet the extra cost of community care that is not met by joint finance? Is he further aware that unless the Government do so, the care in the community policy will continue to represent a reduction rather than an increase in support for vulnerable and dependent people who are living in the community?

Mr. Hayhoe: Yes, Sir. Of course I accept the pressures for additional funds. It is worth noting that the national joint financing allocation in 1986-87 was £111 million, an increase in real terms of over 60 per cent. in the figure for the last year of the last Labour Government.

Specialised Operations and Treatments

12. **Mr. Greenway** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will establish an organisation to co-ordinate demand for specialised operations and treatments, providing for the early distribution of patients to appropriate centres; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: The Department is already funding a pilot project in the west midlands to assess the effect upon the referral practice of general practitioners of providing them with additional information about waiting times for general surgery in other districts. Any proposals for a wider-ranging system would have to await an assessment of that project.

Mr. Greenway: Assuming the project to be successful, will my hon. Friend consider establishing a national databank containing treatments and operations available so that people who need treatment and operations can be directed immediately to areas where they are available, so reducing waiting lists and talk of non-existent cuts in the Health Service?

Mr. Whitney: We shall consider carefully the results of that project. Quite apart from the outcome of that, as my hon. Friend knows, the reduction of waiting times is a clear priority for the Health Service.

Mr. Pavitt: Does the Minister realise that the referral of patients by general practitioners for specialised operations, and the crisis in acute beds that exists at the moment in the whole of the home counties, means that the time he is spending on the regional survey is not enough? He should consider the way in which the distribution of patients affects the catchment areas of district health authorities and get rid of the system whereby funds are cut purely because of population statistics.

Mr. Whitney: The hon. Gentleman will know that the review of the RAWP formula is just being completed, as my right hon. Friend has advised the House. Part of that study will include the sorts of factors to which the hon. Gentleman referred.

Patient Services (Costs)

14. **Mr. Galley** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information is available to his Department about comparative unit costs for providing patient services in different health authority areas and different hospitals.

Mr. Hayhoe: Unit costs are reported to the Department annually for each hospital in England and for other services. Summaries of these costs for the regions and for England are published. In addition, the performance indicators published by the Department include detailed information about unit costs, which health authorities can use to compare their own performance with that of other districts.

Mr. Galley: Can my right hon. Friend confirm that unit costs for private patient services in some parts of London are 30 per cent. higher than in the regions, even taking account of the London weighting factor? Will he make more readily available in published form the comprehensive comparative information about efficiency so that we may know which are inefficient and uncaring authorities and which authorities care enough to make the best use of their resources?

Mr. Hayhoe: Yes, I shall certainly consider the possibility of publishing these figures. In regard to the comparison between London and the rest of the country, in the large acute hospitals of over 300 beds the highest average cost per in-patient case is in the North West Thames region, where it is £901. That compares with a figure for the Oxford region, the lowest, of £579, and for Yorkshire, the second lowest, of £602. The English average is £714. That shows the higher costs in the Thames region, which are partly explained by London weighting and the concentration of more expensive types of cases being treated in those hospitals.

Mr. Ashton: If all those statistics are available to answer what seems to be a planted question, why is it that the Minister, when I put down written questions about my area, says that I should ask Trent regional health authority? Why is it that he can supply those statistics when he feels like it, but, every time Opposition Members ask questions about statistics and comparisons, we are referred to the regional health authorities?

Mr. Hayhoe: The figures that I have given are published figures that can be found in the Library of the House.

Mr. John Mark Taylor: Does my right hon. Friend accept that costs and services in Solihull will be greatly improved by the decision to give us a district general hospital? Will he acept the appreciation of the people of Solihull for that decision?

Mr. Hayhoe: Yes, indeed. It is important that we take note of the considerable progress being made in many areas in improving health care facilities by the application of RAWP policies.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q.1 **Mr. Hirst** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 1 July.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. I was present at Victoria station to meet President von Weizsacker of the Federal Republic of Germany at the start of his state visit to this country. In addition to my duties in this House I shall be having further meetings later today. This evening I shall attend a state banquet at Buckingham palace in honour of the President of Germany.

Mr. Hirst: Has my right hon. Friend found time since her return from The Hague to read a major policy speech by the Secretary of State for Energy, in which he predicted that the world faces a severe energy crisis and shortage if nuclear power is discontinued? Does she agree that he is right to stress the importance of vigorous action by the international community to secure the highest standards of safety, design and operation of nuclear power? Will she contrast his responsible lead with the foolishness of the Opposition, who believe that nuclear power may be dangerous and would take 30 years to phase it out?

The Prime Minister: I read that most excellent speech and commend it to all who have not read it, and those who have read it to read it again. It set out an excellent basis for nuclear policy. It pointed out the importance of nuclear power, and I should have thought that right hon. and hon. Members would welcome it. It was a source of energy pioneered in this country and, rather than denigrate it, we should develop it.

Mr. Soley: As the Prime Minister was understandably moved when she visited the memorial to the holocaust in Israel, and bearing in mind that those terrible events came about as a result of one racial group trying to dominate another, when will she stop trying to appease the South African Government?

The Prime Minister: The last part of the question does not follow from the first. May I make it clear that this country believes in defending its freedom, and I wish that the Labour party would do the same.

Q2. **Mr. John Mark Taylor** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 1 July.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Taylor: Will my right hon. Friend find time during her busy day to reflect on whether she knows of any examples of countries securing their objectives by imposing sanctions? If she cannot, does she believe that the Leader of the Opposition might be able to do so?

The Prime Minister: I know of no country where sanctions have been effective as an instrument to bring about internal change. That is the point in this case. Sanctions have never brought about internal change.

Mr. Beith: Could a Government Minister be in a weaker position than to know when he negotiates with a foreign Government that his Government back home have not the political will to take action when he returns empty-handed? Is that not the lesson? That was the position in which Chamberlain put himself when he went to Munich.

The Prime Minister: The Government do not believe in general economic sanctions; the Labour Government did not believe in general economic sanctions when they were in power; the European Community does not believe in general economic sanctions; the leader of the SDP does not believe in general economic sanctions; the deputy

leader of the Labour party does not believe in general economic sanctions. The hon. Gentleman and the Leader of the Opposition are isolated if they do.

Mr. Rathbone: Will my right hon. Friend spare a moment during her busy day to consider something that many people do believe in — the launch of community radio in Britain? Will she accept that many people are disappointed by the postponement of that launch, which is the essence of radio broadcasting success elsewhere?

The Prime Minister: As my hon. Friend is aware, my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary made a statement about that. His decision was right and I believe that it will be generally supported.

Mr. Kinnock: On the day on which the Royal College of Physicians has published further conclusive evidence of the strong links between poverty, illness and early death, will the Prime Minister give us an undertaking that, in order not to add further to the pressures on the poor, she will accept the defeats inflicted on her Social Security Bill in the House of Lords?

The Prime Minister: I accept that in some cases the report on health and community medicine said that experience in Britain has not been as good as in other Western countries, although it has been a jolly sight better than it was under Labour. In other areas we are ahead. For example, the British figure for infant mortality, while not as good as a number of countries, is still better than that of Germany, the United States, Belgium and Austria, and life expectancy at birth in Britain is higher than that in France, Belgium, Germany and the United States. Perhaps the right hon. Gentleman will read the whole report.

Events in the other place are matters for consideration later.

Mr. Kinnock: That is an interesting answer, Mr. Speaker, but is the right hon. Lady aware that the number of people — old people, families and disabled people — in poverty has doubled under her Government? Does she realise that if she does not accept the changes to the Bill, 4 million people will be pushed deeper into poverty and placed under greater pressure as a result of the measures of her Government? Will she accept that if that occurs they will not only suffer greater poverty but greater risk of ill-health and early death? Is that what the family party wants?

The Prime Minister: The record of the Government on health, pensions and supplementary benefit is excellent. The right hon. Gentleman knows full well that if he defines poverty as being equal to supplementary benefit, every time that supplementary benefit is increased in real terms, which the Government have done, those in poverty increase. If we wanted technically to reduce the numbers in poverty we would put down the level of supplementary benefit to where it was under the Labour Government.

Q3. **Mr. Butterfill** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 1 July.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Butterfill: When my right hon. Friend meets the President of the Federal German Republic, will she express to him the horror and the sympathy of this House at the news that 12 of his compatriots were brutally murdered by East German border guards the other day? Will she express to him our regret that the Soviet Union continues to deploy 17 divisions in East Germany, propping up a puppet regime so repugnant to its own people that they are prepared to die to get away from it?

The Prime Minister: We have read the reports of the tragic incident to which my hon. Friend refers, but we are not in a position to confirm or deny it, for obvious reasons. It reminds us of our duty to maintain the four-power status of Berlin, and, in particular, the freedom of West Berlin — a duty which we shall honour. I am sure that we all look forward to hearing the address of the President of the Federal Republic tomorrow.

Mr. Ernie Ross: On a day when men of 90 years of age are demonstrating in another part of the world the futility of a war that should never have taken place, will the right hon. Lady give a guarantee to the House that our presidency of the European Council will be used to ensure that peace is extended throughout Europe and the rest of the world?

The Prime Minister: I am certain that my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary, who will be President of the Foreign Affairs Council, will carry out the job with great distinction.

Mr. Alexander: Will my right hon. Friend consider, in the course of the day, adding to the respect and affection in which she is widely held in the country *[Interruption]* by recommending to those with authority in these matters that the royal wedding day should be declared a public holiday?

The Prime Minister: No, Sir. We are acting in accordance with precedent in not declaring the day a public holiday, but I am sure that it will be a very happy day for everyone.

Q5. **Mr. Wallace** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 1 July.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Wallace: I am sure that the Prime Minister is aware that over £4 billion a year is spent on housing benefit, but is she aware that some private landlords are claiming, as direct payment of housing benefit, sums in excess of what would have been adjudicated a fair rent? Does the right hon. Lady not accept that that is a fraud on the taxpayer? Does she not think that, where public money is involved, all rents should be registered?

The Prime Minister: If excessive sums are claimed for housing benefit, or through supplementary benefit, the matter should be referred to the appropriate authorities, which will deal with it.

Q6. **Mr. Chope** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 1 July.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Chope: Will my right hon. Friend take time today to give a warm welcome to the national launch of the job restart scheme, which is the most far-reaching and imaginative scheme of its kind in Europe?

The Prime Minister: Yes, Sir. The job restart scheme has been generally welcomed by all who are interested in

trying to help the long-term unemployed find a job. The pilot schemes were very successful, and the scheme has now been extended to the whole country. I believe that most people will welcome its operation and that it will help most people who have hitherto been unemployed.

Q7. **Mr. James Hamilton** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 1 July.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Hamilton: Has the right hon. Lady taken time to study the System Three poll report that was carried out in Scotland, which states that one person in four in Scotland is bitterly opposed to the administration of the Health Service in Scotland? Is the right hon. Lady aware that one in three people have stated quite categorically that they disagree with the privatising of the ancillary services? Will she now align her Government with the people of Scotland, who are bitterly opposed to her Administration and have voted solidly against the Tory Government in Scotland?

The Prime Minister: More is spent per person on the Health Service in Scotland than is spent south of the border. I believe that far more is spent under this Government and that there is far better patient service in Scotland, more doctors and more nurses, than under the previous Administration. I believe that in general most people in Scotland are very grateful for the Health Service.

Q8. **Mr. Latham** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 1 July.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Latham: Would we need all these difficult decisions on defence spending if untold billions of pounds had not been wasted over the years by the Ministry of Defence on weapons systems on which there is hopeless overspending and which then do not work? Will my right hon. Friend read the reports of the Public Accounts Committee and ensure that the fullest possible backing is given to Mr. Peter Levene in giving the whole sleepy system a jolly good shake-up?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is aware of the enormous increases in expenditure on defence under the present Government. I agree with him that it is absolutely vital to secure effective expenditure on those resources and in particular to have regard to competition in procurement. I will pass on my hon. Friend's excellent message.

Q9. **Mr. Wigley** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 1 July.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Wigley: In view of the Prime Minister's belief that she should enter negotiations about disarmament from a position of strength, why is she willing for her Government to enter negotiations with the South African Government from a position of weakness, without any threat of sanctions whatsoever? Will the Prime Minister tell the House when she is going to stop appeasing apartheid?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman is a little confused. We are not talking about a battle in defence with South Africa [HON. MEMBERS: "We are."]

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Reverting to the question of South Africa, would the Prime Minister accept that, while there is very considerable support for the Foreign Secretary on his mission, if the South African Government fail to introduce major concessions as a result of that mission we would look to Her Majesty's Government to introduce additional measures as a mark of our great disapproval of what is going on in South Africa?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is aware that we have already introduced some measures first, as a result of an earlier Community meeting and then as a result of a Commonwealth meeting. I am sure that he will join me in saying that we hope that my right hon. and learned Friend's mission as the President of the Twelve in Europe will meet with success. Then we can reconsider the position.

Mr. Allen McKay: While the Prime Minister is talking about the record, would she like to put on record and comment on the fact that the rules of guidance delivered to social security officers have deprived miners' widows and miners who are sick and injured of £2 to £3 a week, as the concessionary coal allowance must now be considered in rent rebates?

The Prime Minister: As I said when the matter first came up, I am not aware of any changes in the instructions that have been given by the Government to those officers. As the hon. Gentleman is aware, if there is any dispute it can be taken to an appeal tribunal, of which I am sure his constituents will avail themselves.

European Council

3.30 pm

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement about the European Council of 26-27 June, which I attended together with my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary. The conclusions of the Council have been placed in the Library of the House.

The Council concentrated on five main issues: the situation in South Africa; the creation of jobs within the Community; the completion of the Common Market; the international aspects of agriculture; and concerted action in the light of the nuclear accident at Chernobyl.

On South Africa the European Council expressed its grave concern at the imposition of censorship and the reimposition of the state of emergency by the South African Government and, more generally, at the deteriorating situation in the country at large. It reaffirmed that the goal of the Twelve is the total abolition of apartheid. It also agreed on a concerted programme of financial and material assistance from the Community and member Governments to the victims of apartheid, in particular those affected by the disturbances in Crossroads, and to political prisoners, including those arrested under the recent state of emergency.

In our own case we shall be making available a further £15 million over five years, mainly for education and training of non-white South Africans, and additional help for transport projects in neighbouring states. This is in addition to the £22 million which we are already giving.

The Council called for the opening without delay of negotiations between the South African Government and leaders of the black people in South Africa. To make such a dialogue possible, it called on the South African Government unconditionally to release Nelson Mandela and other political prisoners and to lift the ban on the African National Congress and other political parties. The Council also agreed that the Community should in the next three months enter into consultations with other industrialised countries on further measures which might be needed, covering a ban on new investment, and the import of coal, iron, steel and gold coins from South Africa.

Finally, the Council asked my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary, in his capacity as President of the Foreign Ministers of the Twelve from today, to visit southern Africa in a further effort to establish conditions in which the necessary negotiations can commence.

On job creation, the European Council welcomed the programme put forward by the United Kingdom and some other member states for creating the conditions for employment growth. This calls for the job-creating capacity of small businesses to be maximised by reducing the burden of unnecessary regulations; for improved training; and for measures to help the long-term unemployed back into work. We want to see greater attention given to those matters within the Community and priority given to them in the operation of the social fund. This will be of particular value to the United Kingdom. Our proposals were clearly reflected in the Council's conclusions. We shall concentrate of implementing them during the United Kingdom's Presidency.

On the Common Market, the European Council urged more rapid decisions if the timetable of completing removal of the barriers to a genuine single market in the Community by 1992 is to be achieved. This will be another priority for the United Kingdom presidency because of the contribution which completion of the Market can make to creating jobs.

The Council selected some areas for early progress which are of particular interest to the United Kingdom, such as liberalisation of transport and of capital movements. On agriculture, the European Council recognised, as had the economic summit Seven in Tokyo, the need to look at agricultural subsidies and protectionism on a worldwide basis. It agreed that the problem of agricultural trade must be dealt with in the forthcoming round of international trade negotiations; that agricultural production in the European Community should be better adjusted to the market situation so that the share of public expenditure claimed by agriculture can be reduced; and that there should be bilateral discussions with other major agricultural suppliers to try to eliminate the problems of chronic surpluses and competitive subsidies.

The Council discussed the lessons to be learned from the nuclear accident at Chernobyl. It agreed on the need for better international collaboration on nuclear safety under the aegis of the International Atomic Energy Agency. It called for general contamination tolerance levels for the Community to be established quickly on a scientific basis. The Council recognised that nuclear power would continue to have a vital role in meeting energy needs in the Community in future.

The Council also called for rapid progress on the easing of restrictions on passenger traffic across Community frontiers; on mutual recognition of professional qualifications; and on the action programme against cancer. It welcomed the intention of the British presidency to hold a conference of Interior Ministers in the autumn to discuss ways of improving the Community's defences against terrorism, drug trafficking and illegal immigration. This European Council set useful priorities for the United Kingdom's presidency of the European Community over the next six months, particularly in the creation of jobs.

The Council adopted a positive and constructive approach to the bitterly difficult problem of South Africa. We are well aware of the magnitude of the task facing my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary in the mission on which he embarks, but all who genuinely want a peaceful solution will wish him well.

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn): I can at least endorse the Prime Minister's last sentence. We wish the Foreign Secretary well and regret that the actions of the Prime Minister herself have added hugely to the magnitude of the Foreign Secretary's task. Is it not shamefully obvious that in The Hague last week the Prime Minister was continuing her Nassau habit of first participating in an agreement at a Heads of Government conference and then using the first press conference to rat on that agreement?

Does the Prime Minister recall that the Eminent Persons Group, including her nominee, Lord Barber, gave the clear view that

"the Botha regime is not prepared to negotiate fundamental change",

has

"moved consciously away from any realistic negotiating process"

and has been
"moving in the opposite direction"
from lifting bans on political organisations?

Does the Prime Minister not further recognise that the members of the EPG concluded that they could not
"see merit in further discussions"
and said:
"the Government of South Africa made it impossible for us to proceed further"?
In the mere four weeks since the EPG wrote that, what has changed in South Africa other than the passing of two further Acts of tyrannical legislation, the imposition of totalitarian controls on reporting, thousands more detentions and disappearances, and at least 100 more violent deaths?

Against that background, why does the Prime Minister believe that the Foreign Secretary can succeed with pleading where so many others have signally failed over the past few years? Can she not recognise, as the EPG recognised, that the absence of sanctions measures defers change and accelerates the descent into violence? Does she not recognise that her resistance to action does not reduce violence but makes it even more certain, both inside South Africa and against South Africa's neighbouring states? Is she aware that the mission of the Foreign Secretary might be more credible if she did not have a record as the appeaser of apartheid? By her record she has ensured that she, and the Foreign Secretary are seen as nothing more than glove puppets without even the weapon of sanctions to back up the views of the EEC?

I must ask the Prime Minister a question which is in the minds of many people, of all colours, in many countries: if the atrocities of apartheid were committed by a black minority against a white majority, would she respond to that horror and injustice with obstruction and evasion as she is at present? In these matters, those who stand aside, like the Prime Minister, stand condemned.

The Prime Minister: The decision taken at The Hague last week was a decision of 12 nations of the Community. They were united on the position. Our approach remains to promote peaceful change in South Africa. The mission of my right hon. and learned Friend has that objective. It was supported by all 12 nations of the Community and it should be supported by every hon. Member.

The right hon. Gentleman talked about sanctions. The last Labour Government in power were against sanctions. The present responsible Governments of all 12 nations are also against sanctions. The deputy leader of the Labour party is against sanctions. Sanctions have never been known to bring about internal change. Sanctions in Rhodesia did not bring about internal change. The matter had to be resolved by negotiation. My right hon. and learned Friend will try to help to resolve the matter by negotiation. All people of good will will wish him well.

Sir Peter Tapsell (East Lindsey): In view of Britain's unique position in being, simultaneously, a member of the Security Council, the General Assembly, the EEC, the Commonwealth, and the Anglo-American alliance, is it not clear that my right hon. Friend is particularly well placed to play a constructive role in advising southern Africa on her affairs, and that she is wise to continue as she has in this long historical process — to retain her room for manoeuvre and negotiation at this stage rather than to indulge in the empty posturings of some right hon. Gentlemen opposite?

The Prime Minister: Yes, I am grateful to my hon. Friend. Mandatory sanctions were imposed on Rhodesia for nearly 15 years. They did not bring about internal change. They have never been known to bring about internal change.

Ms. Clare Short (Birmingham, Ladywood): What did?

The Prime Minister: The matter of Rhodesia had to be resolved by negotiations. How much better it would be to try to embark on negotiations now and to bend one's efforts to persuading the South African Government that that would be the wise course.

Dr. David Owen (Plymouth, Devonport): Does not the Prime Minister accept that there is a widespread view in the Commonwealth and in the other western industrialised countries that some sanctions need to be applied; the question is, what sanctions? Since the Prime Minister believes in negotiating from strength with the Soviet Union, why does she believe in negotiating from weakness with President Botha?

The Prime Minister: I do not believe that we are negotiating from weakness in any way. Certain measures have been taken against South Africa. Certain contingency plans outlined in the communiqué are being made. We are not negotiating from weakness. We are negotiating in a way which we believe will have the best chance of success. We do not think that threatening further sanctions immediately or automatically will help to bring about the negotiations that we desire between the South African Government and the representatives of the black South African people?

Mr. Michael Grylls (Surrey, North-West): My right hon. Friend spent a lot of time, rightly, in the summit considering the question of creating new jobs in the Community and reducing unemployment. Has it occurred to her that if she had allowed the Community to take trade and industrial sanctions, they would have reduced jobs in Britain as well as jobs for moderate blacks in South Africa? That would be the arch-hypocritical position to follow. Will my right hon. Friend keep up her good work, maintain her stand, and do everything she can to encourage the South African Government to keep up the momentum of internal reform which they have already started?

The Prime Minister: We shall follow my hon. Friend's advice. If there were ever any question of going for total economic sanctions, such measures would cause much more unemployment here and in South Africa as well as other fundamental strategic problems, putting the supply of raw materials into the hands of the Soviet Union and causing strategic defence problems. It would not bring about the change which we all wish to see.

Mr. Guy Barnett (Greenwich): As the right hon. Lady clearly regards economic sanctions as almost totally ineffective in putting pressure on the South African regime, why does she not recommend the use of force?

The Prime Minister: I do not recommend the use of force. I recommend the use of negotiation. Is the use of force now the policy of the Labour party?

Sir Ian Lloyd (Havant): Did the Council at any stage in the Brussels discussions attempt to define precisely what it meant by the abolition of apartheid? Did it mean merely the abolition of the appalling legislation to which the

[Sir Ian Lloyd]

Leader of the Opposition referred and the legislation which has appeared on the statute book since 1948, or did the definition imply that the standard of living—social, economic and political—of 20 million people should be raised in a short time to that of 5 million people? If it was the latter, surely it is a resource-intensive problem, unprecedented in scale, which will require billions, not millions, of pounds in aid? Is the West prepared to put its money where its mouth is?

The Prime Minister: In wanting to get rid of apartheid, we wish to get rid of the appalling difficulties which the black South Africans are made to suffer by virtue of the colour of their skin. The results of negotiations on a new constitution for South Africa would, of course, be a matter for those who took part in them. We should like to see those negotiations start. We should like them to succeed against a background of keeping the economic success of South Africa which exists now.

Mr. Jack Ashley (Stoke-on-Trent, South): Is the right hon. Lady failing or refusing to see the obvious parallels between the South African regime today and the regime in Germany in the mid-1930s, with its belief in no democracy, no free speech, a super-race, inferior citizens and police repression? Will the right hon. Lady recognise that her appeasement—that is what it is—which is using almost precisely the same excuses as were used in 1938 and 1939, will be received with the same amused contempt in Pretoria as Chamberlain's appeasement was in Germany?

The Prime Minister: I do not think that many of us find a parallel in that. The right hon. Gentleman seems to be pursuing the previous question and wanting us to embark on force against South Africa. That might be the new Labour policy; it is not ours.

Sir John Farr (Harborough): Despite all the pressure which my right hon. Friend will be under in the coming weeks to apply sanctions against South Africa, will she bear in mind that sanctions not only did not work in Rhodesia but, during that time, strengthened that country's economy?

The Prime Minister: I believe that that is so. There could be no way in which economic sanctions would work in South Africa, with its enormous coastline and with considerable numbers of countries and people who would bend all their efforts to conducting trade with South Africa which other countries would forgo. We should be embarking upon the whole thing for nothing. We should have more unemployment here, only to see the jobs picked up elsewhere. It would damage the cause of black South Africans, the economy of South Africa and the prospect of a peaceful South Africa finally emerging.

Mr. Ted Rowlands (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney): The Prime Minister has announced that the Secretary of State must make two specific demands: first, the freedom of Nelson Mandela and, secondly, the legitimisation of the African National Congress. Will that be the Foreign Secretary's remit when he goes to South Africa?

The Prime Minister: Yes, of course, in accordance with the communiqué which states:

"In this context the European Council calls on the South African government:

— to unconditionally release Nelson Mandela and the other political prisoners;

— to lift the ban on the African National Congress, the Pan Africanist Congress of Azania and other political parties.

In the meantime in the next three months the Community will enter into consultations".

That was clearly and explicitly set out in the communiqué. Many of us believe that that is the key to getting negotiations started, which is what most of us desire.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): Is my right hon. Friend aware that, despite the criticism that is frequently levelled against her for her uncaring attitude to peoples of the world and especially people of this country, in this instance she is showing an understanding of the reality of the position in southern Africa which should be appreciated by many other countries in the world? Would she sustain her opposition to sanctions, which will help nobody in this country or in South Africa? Will she use her ability to negotiate and consult, which the Opposition so often advise Her Majesty's Government to use when dealing with the Soviet Union and other such countries, as the basis of progress in what can be achieved towards the reform that we require in the Republic of South Africa?

The Prime Minister: We shall maintain our opposition to general economic sanctions on the basis that they would not produce the changes in South Africa that we would like to see. We shall maintain our efforts to get negotiations going because we believe that they would produce the results, if they could be got going, that we too want to see in abolishing apartheid and having a strong economy in South Africa.

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): The Prime Minister referred to the liberalisation of capital movements. Will she tell the House what she and the Council had in mind?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman will be aware that from this country we have liberalisation of capital movements. That is not so with regard to some other countries in the European Economic Community, some of which still maintain controls on their foreign exchange movements. A number of us do not and we wish to have free movement of capital throughout the Community.

Mr. John Browne (Winchester): Would my right hon. Friend accept that any peaceful solution in South Africa must, in the end, be acceptable to those in power? If so, why does she support proposals that offer no protection whatsoever to the white or coloured minorities rather than proposals for a universal franchise based on cantonal power that would offer protection to the minorities, and therefore be acceptable to those in power and have at least a chance of a peaceful solution?

The Prime Minister: May I make our view clear? It was a view also accepted by the Commonwealth at Nassau. It is not for us or anyone else to say what arrangements would come out of those negotiations for the protection of minorities and what would result from a wider constitutional convention. The arrangements will not be decided until the negotiations start. We believe that we may be able to help in promoting those negotiations. That was the view the Commonwealth took. Once they are promoted, it will be for all the people of South Africa—the black South Africans, the white South Africans, the Indians and the Cape coloureds — to decide on the future constitution they would like.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): Why is it that the Prime Minister answers all the questions about

sanctions with a condemnation of general or total sanctions without reference to specific sanctions? Is that an accidental confusion on her part or is she preservin,- her room for manoeuvre so that she can support specific economic sanctions if they are recommended by the Foreign Secretary on his return?

The Prime Minister: Ah—so the hon. Gentleman is against general economic sanctions as well. We are getting somewhere. The hon. Gentleman is against general economic sanctions, but he may be in favour of selective sanctions. A number of selective and particular sanctions are already in place, as the hon. Gentleman is aware, through the action of the Community. *[Interruption.]* I hear the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) interrupting. When the right hon. Gentleman was in the Labour Government he wanted to sell defence weapons to South Africa.

Mr. Denis Healey (Leeds, East): No! Absolute nonsense!

Mr. Speaker: Order. I will call the right hon. Gentleman at the end.

The Prime Minister: Perhaps I may finish. The Crossman diaries, in dealing with whether armaments should be sold to South Africa, which I understand the then Prime Minister was very much against, said:

"George Brown began the attack saying that though he realized it was very painful one couldn't really go on being so unrealistic about the sale of arms. He was then supported by Denis Healey, who said one must surely make a distinction between arms which could be used for suppressing insurrection . . . and strategic arms—That is to say, the Air Force and the Navy which are needed for our own Commonwealth interests. He said we need the Simonstown base to be kept going by South Africa in our own interest and therefore we should sell South Africa maritime arms but not arms for domestic use."

If the right hon. Member for Leeds, East denies that, I will be happy to accept his denial.

Hon. Members: Answer!

Mr. Patrick McLoughlin (Derbyshire, West): Will my right hon. Friend agree that, while we all abhor the situation in South Africa——

Ms. Clare Short: No, you do not.

Mr. McLoughlin: —in relation to apartheid in South Africa, many people in this country believe—I hope that the Council of Ministers considered this — that we should not forget the abuses of human rights in other countries, such as the Soviet Union, which has invaded Afghanistan? Will my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister bear that point in mind when she considers these issues abroad?

The Prime Minister: We are very much aware of the abuses of human rights and of the problems elsewhere in the Commonwealth. We still wish to be instrumental in trying to bring about the end of apartheid in South Africa and to bring about negotiations which will maintain the economic success of South Africa, to the benefit of the people there and to the rest of Southern Africa, which benefits tremendously from the success of the South African economy. That is the view which we will continue to pursue.

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton (Fyfe, Central): How does the Prime Minister explain the fact that the great majority of the British people and almost all members of the Commonwealth believe that she is the greatest friend in the West of the barbaric Government in South Africa? How does she hope to persuade the Commonwealth in August that she is on the right course?

The Prime Minister: As I said, the mission which my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs undertakes when he travels to South Africa in an attempt to establish conditions under which negotiations can be brought about, is in a way a continuation of the Nassau mission which was very nearly successful. The Eminent Persons Group made much progress and it is the wish of the 12 countries of the Community that our Foreign Secretary should go to South Africa to represent them. I would have thought that that should be a matter of pride for this country.

Mr. Julian Amery (Brighton, Pavilion): Will my right hon. Friend agree that, while personalities and parties are significant in these matters, the dismantling of apartheid really calls for the removal of the Group Areas Act and the inclusion of representative black Africans in the political process? Will my right hon. Friend ask her right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary to concentrate on those two principles rather than on personalities and parties?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my right hon. Friend about the removal of the Group Areas Act. That is absolutely crucial. I also agree that black South Africans should take part in the process of government. My right hon. and learned Friend's task was defined in paragraph 6 of the Communiqué.

"The European Council decided to ask the UK Presidency Foreign Minister to visit southern Africa, in a further effort to establish conditions in which the necessary dialogue can commence."

That is my right hon. and learned Friend's particular role, not to specify what should happen when negotiations commence.

Mr. Gordon Brown (Dunfermline, East): Will the Prime Minister confirm that, like her hon. Friend the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, she personally supports one person, one vote, black majority rule in South Africa?

The Prime Minister: I have already said — [HON. MEMBERS: "Yes or no?"]—that what comes out of the negotiations is not for us to determine. We will attempt to bring about the negotiations which we believe will lead to a system of government in South Africa that is acceptable to all people of whatever background.

Mr. John Carlisle (Luton, North): Should not my right hon. Friend's brave initiative and the lifeline that she has now offered to all South African people be welcomed by Conservative Members, the public, and in particular by those in South Africa? Do they not contrast sharply with the words of the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey), who is deliberately stirring up violence and racial hatred in South Africa through his comments? Will she advise my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary to look for more positive measures and that if progress is slow, the gun should not be held at the head of the South African Government by saying that economic sanctions will be imposed at the end of the day?

The Prime Minister: I have already outlined the role of my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary. I agree that the Opposition are behaving disgracefully in trying to undermine his mission.

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): Does the Prime Minister not understand that Governments who wish to negotiate with their own people do not imprison every leader with whom they could talk, and do not impose public order Acts, making it impossible for anyone to speak on behalf of any section of the black community? Does she not understand that her hypocrisy is totally unacceptable to many people in this country?

The Prime Minister: The decision to which I have referred was a decision made by 12 countries of the Community. They recognised in the communiqué that a dialogue cannot take place as long as recognised leaders of the black community are detained and their organisations are proscribed. That is why the communiqué went on to make statements about the release of Nelson Mandela and about lifting the ban on the African National Congress as being the view of 12 Community countries. There are, of course, many black leaders in addition to those who are detained, but if a dialogue is to take place, those who are detained should also be released and could take part in the negotiations. I had hoped that the hon. Lady might think that the views of 12 countries were worthy of consideration and of following up.

Mr. Michael Alison (Selby): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I distinctly heard the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody), use the word "hypocrisy" about my right hon. friend the Prime Minister. May I suggest that you ask her to withdraw it?

Mr. Speaker: I did not hear that, but the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) is a respected parliamentarian, and if she used that word, I am sure that she would wish to withdraw it.

Mrs. Dunwoody: My respect for you, Mr. Speaker, is very great; I withdraw the word "hypocrisy" and substitute for it "a total lack of standards".

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I must bear in mind that there is another statement this afternoon, followed by a ten-minute Bill, an application under Standing Order No. 10 and an important debate. Accordingly, I shall allow questions on this statement to continue for a further eight minutes. We must then move on.

Mr. Henry Bellingham (Norfolk, North-West): When my right hon. Friend was in The Hague, did she have a chance to consider the recent poll of blacks in South Africa, which showed that 76 per cent. of them were against the present violence? Does she agree that the Shadow Foreign Secretary's failure to meet Chief Buthelezi, who is the representative of many millions of blacks in South Africa, was a grave omission, and indicative of his bias and narrow mindedness?

The Prime Minister: It was because we were anxious to avoid a further escalation of violence that the 12 countries wished negotiations to be entered into. That is why they asked my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary to go. I am sure that most people in South Africa are overwhelming against violence. They want to see change brought about peacefully, with a successful economy in South Africa. I agree about the importance of talking to Chief Buthelezi, who represents the largest group of black South Africans—about 7 million Zulus.

Mr. Andrew MacKay (Berkshire, East): Does my right hon. Friend agree that Chief Buthelezi represents a very significant section of black opinion in South Africa? If so, in the difficult weeks ahead, will she bear in mind his speech last weekend, when he said that it was not in the interests of South Africa or of black people in that country to introduce mandatory sanctions?

The Prime Minister: I believe that that is the view held by many, and probably by the majority of, South Africans, when they realise just how much poverty and hardship sanctions would cause to almost all people in South Africa. It would be a very retrograde step, that would bring hardship there and here. It is not a moral but an immoral solution.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Has the Prime Minister any idea how much she has disgraced and humiliated the reputation and honour of this country by her appalling behaviour over South Africa? Is it any wonder that she is held in such great respect by the South African authorities, when they know that on every occasion she can be relied on in western Europe to resist measures to upset and undermine their tyranny? Is it any wonder that some people compare her with one of her predecessors, who could always be relied on in the 1930s to do anything to comfort Nazism, and who was known as the most notorious appeaser of his time?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman is trying hard, but he is uttering the sternest of strictures against Socialist Governments in Europe, who wholeheartedly agree with the conclusion that we have just reached. Socialist Governments in power, even Socialist Governments in Britain, have also come out against mandatory economic sanctions. As the deputy Leader of the Opposition said when he was in a position of responsibility—which I hope he will never be again—

"I do not believe that 'a policy of general economic sanctions would be in the interests either of the British people or of South Africa.'"—[*Official Report*, 7 July 1976; Vol. 914, c. 1354.]

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead): When the Prime Minister is searching for effective selective sanctions, will she bear in mind an instance when such sanctions were effective? I refer to the fact that the Americans were prepared to use sanctions against Britain at the time of Suez, and that that led, within days, to a reversal of our policy.

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman will be the first to realise that South Africa's position is totally and utterly different. South Africa has enormous internal resources of agricultural products and materials, and could go on maintaining itself. It could sell its raw materials and finished products through third countries while still maintaining quite a good bit of trade.

Mr. Ivor Stanbrook (Orpington): As everyone knows that my right hon. Friend hates apartheid and wants to see it brought to an early end, and as everyone understands her view that economic sanctions may not prove effective, is there not an even greater duty on her and the British Government to propose positive alternative steps in order to bring that evil doctrine and detestable regime to an early end?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend will be aware that we proposed positive steps to help the black South Africans. The sum of £22 million is already being disbursed in South Africa and in the front-line states in order to help black South Africans with education and to supply alternative transport routes. We are adding to that about £15 million as a positive way of helping those whom we wish to help most.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): At the Council meeting, did the Prime Minister take the opportunity to contrast her approval of the South African regime by not imposing sanctions against it, with her refusal to condemn the United States for its act of war against the people of Nicaragua? Are not the utmost double standards at work if she is prepared to support apartheid but not to do anything to prevent the democratic Government of Nicaragua from being overthrown?

The Prime Minister: As the hon. Gentleman knows, we are trying to help to bring apartheid to an end in South Africa through negotiation. I should have thought that the hon. Gentleman was in favour of peaceful change and would have noticed that there have been some movements that deserve his applause. I refer, for example, to bringing to an end forced resettlements and getting rid of the morality laws. The hon. Gentleman goes on about Nicaragua, but he knows that the Nicaraguan Government have decided to implement the existing state of emergency more severely, and have just closed the main independent newspaper.—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am listening to the questions, not to what is going on below the Gangway.

Sir Peter Emery (Honiton): Will my right hon. Friend provide some balance and try to show that a vast number of matters other than South Africa are debated and dealt with at The Hague? Will she assure the House that, during the six months of Britain's presidency, we shall massively pursue the need to attempt to establish international standards for nuclear energy safety, both by the establishment of nuclear energy plants and by the reporting of nuclear energy accidents? This is of major importance for the whole world.

The Prime Minister: We discussed the Chernobyl accident and decided to pursue our efforts to improve the safety of nuclear installations through the International Atomic Energy Agency, which is the only authority that has the requisite power to deal with the safety of nuclear installations. As to the safety of those who work in nuclear installations, we shall pursue that matter through the Community, under article 3 of the Euratom treaty.

Dr. Oonagh McDonald (Thurrock): Will not the Prime Minister accept that, by her actions at The Hague, she has bought time for herself, not for South Africa? Will she not futher accept that, as a first step towards full economic sanctions, financial sanctions on a debtor country such as South Africa will push Pretoria to negotiate and ultimately bring about democracy in that country.

The Prime Minister: I am not at all sure what, precisely, the hon. Lady is proposing. The retaliation on the resources that belong to other countries inside South Africa that would result from the hon. Lady's proposal could give an enormous financial benefit to South Africa.

Mr. Allan Roberts (Bootle): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I shall take the points of order at the end, in the usual place.

Mr. Roberts: It will be too late then.

Mr. Speaker: Order. the hon. Gentleman will have to wait.

Mr. Roberts: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order!

Transport Council

4.11 pm

The Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. John Moore): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I will make a statement about the meeting of Transport Ministers which took place in Luxembourg on 30 June and which discussed road haulage and aviation. In advance of the Council I submitted to the Select Committees on European Legislation last week an explanatory memorandum about a Community standard for drive axle weights. I was most grateful to them for their speedy response, and this statement responds to the suggestion that, following the Council, I should report progress to the House.

On road haulage, the Council agreed on a Community standard of 11·5 tonnes for the drive axle of five and six-axled vehicles, to apply from 1992. As the House may recall, a 1984 directive set agreed standards for most of the weights and dimensions for road haulage vehicles operating between Community countries. The drive axle weight for these larger vehicles was left outstanding, with a requirement that it should be agreed as a matter of urgency. This is the decision which has now been taken.

As in the case of the earlier directive, which set some overall vehicle weights which exceeded our maximum of 38 tonnes, I was able successfully to negotiate, a derogation of unspecified length for the United Kingdom, to enable us to keep our current drive axle weight maximum of 10·5 tonnes. The directive states categorically that the duration of this derogation will be decided by unanimity, which means that our agreement is needed to what is decided. As my predecessor made clear, we remain committed to the undertaking that there should be no increase in the maximum weight until Parliament agrees and our roads are suitable.

To accompany the agreement on a drive axle weight standard, we successfully obtained Council agreement on the main lines of the way forward to full international road haulage liberalisation within the Community. First, and most important, the Council agreed on a cumulative increase in the Community quota of 40 per cent. per annum between now and 1992. Community permits are valid throughout the Community, giving road haulage vehicles valuable freedom to travel in any Community country. This will therefore provide new opportunities for our hauliers to compete freely on equal terms, and will progressively liberate them from the cumbersome bureaucracy of the present bilateral permit system.

Secondly, it was agreed that, while bilateral quotas exist, they will be adjusted to meet traffic needs, including the full requirements of transit traffic. Thirdly, the Council confirmed that from the end of 1992 the bilateral permit system will disappear altogether. The detailed arrangements to implement these principles will now be worked out within the Community, and our aim will be to finalise the necessary Community instruments so far as possible by the end of our presidency.

On aviation, the meeting confirmed that there remains a wide divergence of views, but the Council agreed on two important principles. First, there needs to be a package of measures to promote increased competition, covering market entry, air fares and the capacity that airlines can operate. Secondly, these measures are elements in the process of completing the internal market by 1992.

As with road haulage, there will need to be a gradual movement to fully liberal arrangements, but the need to complete that process by the end of 1992 has been established.

These are useful starting points. There remains a great deal to be done, and we must not underestimate the difficulties that lie ahead. My aim in the British presidency, which starts today, will be to build on these basic principles and, if possible, to reach agreement on the content of a first stage in the process towards the 1992 target. But success in this will depend on whether member states collectively are willing to put aside the restrictive practices to which they are accustomed. I put this question to the Council but did not get a clear answer. I shall need to pursue it during the British presidency. If the answer is that, despite the principles agreed yesterday, member states are not willing to make the effort, they will have to accept that the alternative is increasing court action and other steps to seek direct application of the treaty of Rome, particularly its competition rules.

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North): I thank the Secretary of State for coming to the House to make this statement.

On the question of axle weights, will he make it clear and confirm that the derogation to which he has agreed is unaffected by the European Communities (Amendment) Bill, which is currently going through Parliament? Secondly, will he confirm his opposition to any increase in lorry weights above 38 tonnes and above the axle weights in the derogation, and that the phrase in his statement

"no increase in the maximum weight until Parliament agrees and our roads are suitable"

is not a precursor for a change in policy?

Is the 38-tonne limit for European vehicles coming to this country still protected under the liberalisation of road haulage? Is the Secretary of State able to say what steps he has taken, or will take, to protect United Kingdom jobs under liberalisation if unfair competition emerges, especially in the context of social conditions for those who are employed in the road haulage industry?

On the question of aviation, will the Secretary of State say precisely what he means by "fully liberal arrangements"? Is this deregulation under another name? He will know that deregulation in the United States has led to lower safety standards, bankruptcies and a chaotic situation. I am sure that the Secretary of State would not want that situation to be paralleled in this country. Therefore, will he give a categorical assurance that he will make safety of paramount importance and that he will retain licensing arrangements to control the safety provisions?

How will the impending liberalisation affect the proposed sell-off of British Airways? Would it not be much better for the Secretary of State to concede that the privatisation of British Airways is now dead and finished with? Is he able to say how his regulatory system and the wide powers that are contained in the Airports Bill, which is currently going through the House, are consistent with liberalisation? For example, will he be able to control air traffic movements to different airports? Will the Secretary of State be able to pursue a policy of that kind if air traffic is to be liberalised? Does the right hon. Gentleman intend to abandon that policy, which is contained in the Airports Bill?

Has Mr. Sutherland, the EEC Minister with responsibility for competition, now withdrawn his threat

to sponsor court actions until some progress has been made on liberalisation, or lower fares, or however the Secretary of State finally defines it? How soon does he think it will be before progress is made in reaching a compromise solution? Sadly, many airlines believe that the current uncertainty is damaging their business prospects and their opportunity to plan for the future. Will the Secretary of State confirm and ensure that, before any arrangements or deals are concluded, either on road haulage or on aviation policy, Parliament will be fully consulted and that the matter will be fully debated so that we may, I hope, be able to influence the right hon. Gentleman in reaching his final conclusions?

Mr. Moore: I shall try to cover the points that were made, and if I do not cover every detail I shall seek to write to the hon. Gentleman.

With regard to the point that he raised on weights and whether the European Communities (Amendment) Bill now going through Parliament in any way limits the unanimity provision that I secured, the answer is that it is in no way affected. The unanimity provision that I sought was parallel to that which my predecessor sought in 1984, and that takes place in regard to article 75(3). That obviously stays, as it is outside the legislation.

As to whether this is a precursor of any change, the answer is no, the Government's policy remains precisely as it was. We obviously have to get our bridges and roads in shape. My predecessor made the position quite clear to Parliament. The hon. Gentleman will know—he is very experienced in these matters—that there is a need for a considerable process of assessment of our bridges. At present it seems that about 20 per cent. of our bridges would be adequate for the traffic, but most need considerable enhancement.

With regard to the point that the hon. Gentleman made on the 38-tonne limit, this in no way enables foreign or other juggernauts above that point to cross our frontier, and in terms of derogation this is totally protected.

As to the hon. Gentleman's point on the protection of jobs, one of the crucial features of the liberalisation of lorry permits was the way in which our hauliers and our businesses wishing to go overseas would not be inhibited by the excessive bureaucratic permit structure that exists today. To that extent I hope and trust that this will amount to increased job opportunities not only for business but for our truckers.

The hon. Gentleman made other specific points. He asked me to define what I meant by liberalisation in terms of the treaty. What I do not mean is any diminution of safety. Safety in the air is clearly a crucial precursor to anything that we may seek to do in this respect. The three—four, some might say—basic arguments behind aviation liberalisation relate to greater market access, improvements in respect of fares, and capacity, within the competition rules. Our objectives will be to seek scope for real competition on fares, covering types of fares as well as fare levels to give the consumer a better deal. That is critical to us. We shall also seek scope for airlines to mount capacity on the basis of their commercial judgment and scope for airlines to be able to enter the markets and compete on routes that are already served or to start up new routes more easily with proper application of the competition rules.

The hon. Gentleman asked whether all this is consistent with the British Airports Authority legislation that is going through Parliament and with the pattern of proper regulation. I see no reason to assume otherwise, especially in relation to the other point that he made regarding British Airways. British Airways has nothing to fear—quite the contrary. There will be an enhancement of competition opportunities in the Community. This will apply to other airlines also, such as British Caledonian—as, indeed, we saw from the excellent example of the British Midland service to Amsterdam yesterday. They all have everything to gain by this. I will of course seek, as I sought before the Scrutiny Committee, the support of Parliament on these substantial issues.

Mr. Terence Higgins (Worthing): Will my right hon. Friend accept that completion of the internal market is an essential feature of the EEC, to which we are fully entitled, and for which we are already paying a very high price in contributions to the common agricultural policy? Will he therefore accept that there is no need to make any further concessions to secure it?

I congratulate my right hon. Friend on the line that he has taken on lorry weights and axle weights, and the derogation that he has succeeded in securing. When that package was agreed by the House, grave doubts were expressed about towbar vehicles, which are impossible to overtake on anything other than a motorway. Will he consider carefully whether restrictions rather than liberalisation should take place in that respect?

Mr. Moore: I thank my right hon. Friend for his comments. He has great knowledge of this matter. He is, or course, right. The commitment to the completion of the internal market is absolute, and all that we can do to help we obviously must do. However, I accept his point. I saw no need for concessions in this area—quite the contrary.

With regard to aviation, with some Community and Council colleagues we were seeking to argue very much what I would regard as the right case for the consumer and for our aviation industry.

On the question of towbars, I know that my right hon. Friend has deep knowledge of this subject. There is no change in the derogations that I was able to secure. The derogation on 40-tonne lorries which took place, as I recall, in December 1984 maintained the weight load at 32·5 tonnes for towbar lorries, and there was the 38-tonne derogation for non-towbar lorries. I shall look at his point without any commitment at this time.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): Is it not the case in regard to aviation that the principles that the Minister has enunciated are those pursued by his predecessor without success throughout his tenure of office? How much longer will it be before the Government are prepared to take action in the European Court?

Mr. Moore: The hon. Gentleman's point reminds me that I had not completely answered all the points of the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes), who asked specifically about Commissioner Sutherland. I apologise for that.

The Commission has the decision whether it institutes article 89 proceedings. To the extent that that is a matter for the Commission, I cannot comment on whether it will seek to continue that. Although we would prefer to see the Council of Ministers and the Community as a whole succeed in this area, without recourse to law, I do not see that we can argue aggressively against other actions by the Commission. I would see this as a parallel process.

[Mr. Moore]

I am not sure that I accept the underlying critical note behind the hon. Gentleman's question. There have been substantive changes. Apart from the United Kingdom's continued leadership in this area, rightly, on behalf of the consumer and of our aviation industry, we saw a major change last week in the Council of Ministers at The Hague summit, where access, fares and capacity were the three key legs on which it was agreed that competition in aviation must be pursued. For the first time we have a Commission document. It is not adequate for the United Kingdom, but it is a Commission statement that includes capacity, fares and competition in advance of Council considerations. We achieved an agreement yesterday to the three fundamentals — access, capacity and fares, along with competition. As I said in my statement, I accept that implementation will be difficult. I know that the hon. Gentleman will seek to help me and British consumers to wage the good fight.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): Will my right hon. Friend tell the House in simple language what the United Kingdom wants for aviation in Europe? Can he also refute categorically the suggestion that there is any hard evidence that deregulation in the United States has resulted in a lowering of safety standards? Any analysis of the accidents in the United States shows clearly that this is not so. Accidents that can be directly attributed to lack of maintenance occurred on aircraft on flights in no way connected with deregulation.

Mr. Moore: I do not think that it is my role to comment on the United States' thriving airline industry, which seeks to serve the consumer with a sense of safety. That would be the role of Members of a different Parliament.

My hon. Friend asked what we want. I thought that I had been perfectly clear. We are asking options for consumers within a proper pattern of regulated safety to allow them to move freely on the same kind of price and opportunity terms that exist in other similar aviation marketplaces. We do not have that today. This will advantage not only the consumer but, I believe, our aviation industry and the European aviation industry. Those are two clear patterns of advantage.

Mr. Lewis Carter-Jones (Eccles): In respect of his term of office, can the right hon. Gentleman, for the sake of the House, name the countries which he expects to present the greatest difficulty in obtaining liberalisation?

Mr. Moore: I feel that that would limit my international effectiveness, if not my term of office, and I would prefer to seek to persuade rather than to argue in a confrontational way at the Dispatch Box.

Mr. Robert McCrindle (Brentwood and Ongar): I welcome the continuing activity of my right hon. Friend on aviation liberalisation. Has he turned his attention to the possibility of action that could be taken by the British Government without reference to other members of the EEC? If he were to lean on British Airways to abrogate the agreements that exist between them and their European opposite numbers, that would surely give the opportunity for fares from this country to continental destinations to be reduced, even though it may not necessarily give similar advantage to people flying from, say, Germany or France. After a period, might not public opinion in those countries begin to press the authorities if people realised that we had advantages which they did not?

Mr. Moore: I know my hon. Friend's intimate knowledge of and connection with the airline industry. Therefore, he will be aware that I announced to the House on 18 June that we were reviewing the machinery and procedure needed to allow us to apply the competition rules under article 88. I made it clear at the Council of Ministers that I shall do so if it proves impossible to reach a satisfactory agreement within the Council.

Mr. Gavin Strang (Edinburgh, East): Will the Minister recognise that there is a potential conflict between civil aviation deregulation and safety standards? [HON. MEMBERS: "No."] It is certainly the case that if prices are driven down far enough there will be a reduction in safety standards. Will the Secretary of State accept that Europe has a good record in airline safety? Will he ensure that nothing detracts from that?

Mr. Moore: The hon. Gentleman must remember the critical importance that we all place on safety. I know that that applies to the official Opposition. Safety is within the purview of the CAA. No airline flies under our safety regulations without CAA approval. The hon. Gentleman should not assume that there is a conflict between safety and the opportunities for the consumer through competition, so long as we ensure that the CAA is responsible. I do not believe that there is a conflict.

Mr. Keith Speed (Ashford): Is my right hon. Friend aware that, if we applied the same restrictions to German and other imports as they apply to our aircraft industry, particularly our thriving independents, there would be uproar in Europe? May I reinforce him in everything that he is trying to do to liberalise the position, which will help consumers throughout Europe, and particularly the British aviation industry, which is the best in Europe?

Mr. Moore: I feel I ought to agree with almost everything that my hon. Friend said. Yesterday I made it clear — and I ask for the support of both sides of the House — that we need the support of the consumer to press upon Governments less liberal in their attitudes than ours the need to develop competition that will benefit not just our consumers but our independent aviation industry.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): I thank the Minister for mentioning the scrutiny procedure. He will realise that the decision does not necessarily preclude debate. In respect of the axle weight derogation, he also mentioned getting bridges into shape. Does that mean that at some time in the future it is envisaged that the British Government will voluntarily cede this and that the axle weight limit will go up?

Mr. Moore: I did not actually say that. On the first point, I thank the hon. Gentleman for his courtesy. I appreciate the way in which the Scrutiny Committee was able to help us secure what was in the national interest. That was helpful to me in my negotiations. What I said clearly was that we have been going through an assessment of our bridges and roads. With the present pattern of usage and present weights it is clear that they require work. It is also clear from what we have learnt in Europe that the Commission regards the technical axle weight equivalent of 40 tonnes to be 11.5 tonnes. We have agreed to no more and no less than the existing derogation. I also said clearly

today that we need to consult Parliament before we can go further and that we need to know whether the bridges and roads are in the right shape. I did not go further than that.

Mr. Anthony Steen (South Hams): First, I congratulate my right hon. Friend on assuming the presidency of the Transport Council of the European Commission. I thank him for the efforts that he made in trying to get all European countries to adopt an open skies approach. Does he agree that it is appalling that after so many years only Holland has got rid of a duopoly between capital cities, in that only Holland allows airlines other than the state airline to fly from Heathrow to its capital? Surely pressure could be put on the Commission to speed up the process whereby the open skies policy applies to the whole of Europe, because that would benefit not just our consumers, but consumers of other European countries.

Mr. Moore: I ought to remind my hon. Friend that my predecessor and my hon. Friend the Minister responsible for aviation, the Member for Worcestershire, South (Mr. Spicer), who is with me, have secured benefits for air flights not simply in regard to Holland, but in regard to Belgium, Luxembourg and Germany. I take the point that my hon. Friend made. I believe that he was in Amsterdam yesterday with my colleague on the inauguration of the new flight by British Midland. There are clear opportunities there for the consumer and for the aviation industry of this country. I take the first point that he made with a sense of discomfort. I am not sure that acquiring the presidency of the Transport Council today will be an unmixed blessing.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): As he is bringing a fresh mind to the job, and as he is at the beginning of his presidency of the Transport Committee in Europe, has the Minister any constructive ideas about how many heavy loads could usefully be transferred from road to rail, not only with the coming of the Channel tunnel, but with the problems throughout Europe of bridges that are no longer as strong and as safe as they once were because of the heavy loads and the deterioration of the fabric of the bridges?

Mr. Moore: The hon. Gentleman has a legitimate point. When I first took over this brief only a few weeks ago I considered carefully the Channel tunnel proposal. In debates on the Channel tunnel my hon. Friend the Member for Ashford (Mr. Speed) reminded us just how significant to so much of Kent was the opportunity to put off road on to rail freight that would no longer damage the fabric of the rural environment of Kent. It is an area that I am only too happy to look at with care. I do not think that this is the occasion on which to speak at length, but it is a legitimate area to consider. We have to value not only our rural fabric but our railway infrastructure as well.

Sir Peter Emery (Honiton): Will my right hon. Friend accept the congratulations of all hon. Members in this country, where the continuation of the axle weight is of greater importance probably than anywhere else? Will he bear in mind that our opponents, particularly the Liberals and the SDP, cast great doubt on the ability of the Government to maintain this? He deserves to be congratulated on being able to give that assurance. Will he pursue with the same pressure and the same success, among all the other aviation problems, lower fares for the consumer? If we can get lower fares, many of the other things will probably fall into place. That should be the principal and primary objective.

Mr. Moore: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his remarks. I thought that they were about to prompt a reaction from below the Opposition Gangway. My hon. Friend is right. Those of us who have considered the experiences over the last few years in regard to the way in which consumers can fly between Holland and this country see the obvious benefits of safe, secure and decent flying, but at a considerably lower price because of competition.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham North-West): Is the Secretary of State aware that from his earlier answer it seems as though he is preparing the way for heavier lorries in future? Is he aware of the concern among many residents of towns and cities throughout the country that we already have far too many heavy lorries from Europe? As he has just become Secretary of State, will he tell the House what his attitude is towards the GLC lorry ban? Will he undertake to enforce, and indeed extend, the provisions of the lorry ban so that Londoners at least can sleep easily in their beds at night?

Mr. Moore: I hate to think what would happen if the hon. Gentleman had been representing this country at a place where the standard for most lorry axle weights, for example, in France and in Spain, averages 13 tonnes and where they wanted a common axle weight of 12 tonnes. We have secured, with the support of both sides of the House, I think, the maintenance of exactly the same pattern of derogation that we succeeded in achieving before — no more and no less — which is precisely what our national needs are. I do not think that I need repeat that again. We are precisely where we were, and I see no reason to expect to have to change that.

Mr. Martin M. Brandon-Bravo (Nottingham, South): In so far as my right hon. Friend's remarks apply to road haulage, will this mean less bureaucracy and less form filling? I ask that specifically on behalf of a road haulier in my constituency. As a result of a minor error that road haulier suffered a confiscatory fine by the French customs which was in excess of the value of the vehicle and all its goods. On appeal, the penalty was reduced to £60,000. All that was involved was an error of form filling of 19 rolls of fabric. Can my right hon. Friend ensure that our road hauliers are not treated in such a piratical way when they cross the Channel?

Mr. Moore: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. It is an important point to illustrate, because it will benefit our hauliers and thereafter obviously help British business and British workers. At the moment Community permits allow unlimited journeys throughout the Community for the period for which they are valid. What we have done will considerably reduce the amount of bureaucracy faced by hauliers who at present, as my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, South (Mr. Brandon-Bravo) rightly says, often need several bilateral permits for a single journey. It will make it easier for hauliers on their return journey to pick up loads in other countries. It will not only reduce the administrative burden on hauliers but will give them the opportunity to work more competitively against their continental competitors.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): Without prompting by the hon. Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery), I was going to congratulate the new Secretary of State on coming back with a 10·5 tonnes maximum axle limit. However, he will be aware that there would be great resistance to a suggestion that the axle limit should be increased.

Mat I press him slightly further on two matters? First is there any proposal, during his presidency, to deal urgently with safety issues arising from road haulage throughout the European Community?

Given that there is to a package of proposals on aviation between now and 1992, including competition, regulation and deregulation, can consumers expect, in the first part of that period, a reduction in the artificially high air fares for flights around Europe?

Mr. Moore: There are no specific road haulage safety proposals, although I know the hon. Gentleman will be aware that we are in European Safety Year. Obviously we are seeking other initiatives in that area.

With regard to aviation, 1992 is the end of the period for complete liberalisation. Having had a reasonable first step yesterday in achieving the principles, I shall seek to start putting some flesh on to them. Therefore, I am trying, through pressure, to achieve some success, which will essentially, quite rightly, be for the benefit of the consumer.

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): Does my right hon. Friend agree that some of our European partners, especially West Germany—if he is afraid to mention it—seem hell-bent on doing everything that they can to maintain the scandalous cartel on air fares, which rips off the consumer right, left and centre? If no progress has been made on this subject at the end of my right hon. Friend's six-month presidency of the Council of Ministers—as I am afraid will be the case—will he take unilateral action along the lines advocated by my hon. Friend the Member for Brentwood and Ongar (Mr. McCrindle) and encourage our airlines to take matters into their own hands?

Mr. Moore: I am, though I am not sure that I feel naturally communautaire, the President of the European Council as from today, but I am not sure that I ought to be particular about which of my colleagues on the Council of Ministers I ought to push harder than others. Having said that, I hope that my hon. Friend heard what I said earlier—I said it carefully—about the way in which we are seeking to establish the methods and procedure of article 88 which is important.

Mr. John Watts (Slough): Following my right hon. Friend's initiative, what does he expect the main benefits to be for the road haulage industry and the consumers from the agreement reached? Does he expect any beneficial impact upon any European truck manufacturers, including Ford Iveco in my constituency?

Mr. Moore: As I suggested earlier, I expect that it will reduce the form filling and some of the unnecessary bureaucratic burden on our haulage industry. To that extent the agreement will be an advantage to consumers and to businesses in Britain.

It clearly must have an advantage for British manufacturing industry, to the extent that the absence of the need for permits throughout Europe will allow British manufacturers to have an advantage. I hope that it will benefit my hon. Friend's constituents.

Mr. Tony Favell (Stockport): What reason did my right hon. Friend's European counterparts give for continuing the present European aviation system, which, after all does nothing but promote inefficiency? During his six months presidency, will my right hon. Friend take every opportunity to point out to his counterparts that the world's favourite airlines are cost competitive?

Mr. Moore: I do not think that my hon. Friend or the House would wish me to take many hours to debate what took place yesterday. I am a little perplexed because, in many ways, many of our continental friends suffer from a fear of the unknown and they are not as aware as we are of the benefits of competition in aviation. It is our duty and that of consumers throughout Europe to make them better aware of those advantages.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels (Leicester, East): I welcome the liberalisation of the road haulage industry. I represent an east midlands constituency and I have to travel up and down the M1 every week. Does my right hon. Friend accept that there are far too many foreign lorries on our roads and that not enough of our lorries are able to bring back goods from foreign countries? With the liberalisation, it is very important to cut out the form filling and ensure that our lorries are full. We would therefore get a share of an extremely lucrative cake.

Mr. Moore: What we have done will clearly benefit our hauliers. To that extent my hon. Friend is right.

Sir John Farr (Harborough): Will my right hon. Friend consider an important matter which is a threat to British jobs? This is the export from Belgium of road trailers which are subsidised by the Belgian Government to the extent of 20 per cent. These road trailers are already eating into our domestic market and affecting very important manufacturers in the midlands.

Mr. Moore: Although that does not fit precisely into the statement, I shall look into the matter that my hon. Friend has raised.

Points of Order

4.46 pm

Mr. David Crouch (Canterbury): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. The point of order is a sartorial one, which I hope you will feel well qualified to judge. I make no complaint this afternoon of the attire of the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) [HON. MEMBERS: "Why not?"] Because I will refer the House and yourself Mr. Speaker, to the rules and conventions which appertain in the House. The other day, during this heatwave, I read that some judges had decided to remove their wigs in court. If you were to remove your wig, Mr. Speaker, I am not sure whether we could go on sitting; there is no rule about it, but I would feel that a convention had been broken.

Your deputies, Sir, wear an almost unsuitable rig for a hot day but this place is air-conditioned. They wear a tailcoat or a cutaway — and they do bring dignity to the Chamber, as of course do you, Mr. Speaker.

We have no rules or conventions about dress but I once asked your predecessor, Mr. Speaker, whether he could see an hon. Member who was not wearing a tie and he said that he had some difficulty in doing so. This afternoon I thought you had some difficulty in seeing the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey.

Mr. Speaker: I had no difficulty in seeing the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes). As to dress——

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland) *rose*——

Mr. Dalyell (Linlithgow): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am dealing with the question of dress, which has been raised by the hon. Member for Canterbury (Mr. Crouch). As the Chamber is air-conditioned, and as it is a long-standing convention that we treat the House with respect, I think that, in tune with what goes on outside this place these days at dinner parties and so on, Members should come into the Chamber wearing a tie. I would not object if Members came in shirtsleeves in this hot weather, but I think that ties should always be worn.

Mr. Dalyell: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Before takes place, may I ask whether it has ever happened in your experience that a succession of senior Whips, junior Ministers and now the Secretary of State for Defence have signed the ballot for private Members' motions? Can we take that, if the Secretary of State wins, his motion will be one of total confidence in the conduct of the Prime Minister in relation to F111s, the Falklands and Westland?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman has been here a long time and he is aware that it is perfectly in order for Ministers to sign a ballot in the name of someone else. That has always been the case.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday, I raised a point of order on the application under Standing Order No. 10 and you rightly said that all points of view would no doubt be heard, as they were today, on the South African issue. However, this is an honourable House and some hon. Members have interests which have led to their making free trips and so on. I have been to the Library and checked and the hon. Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) has not concealed the fact that he went to South Africa as a guest of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in South Africa. The hon. Member for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle) also went, partly sponsored by South African Airways. I am not talking about an ordinary Question Time, but when there is an important statement such as we have had today, surely it is not too much to ask that hon. Members should declare clearly that they have gone on such free trips so that the House will accordingly be able to assess how far one can accept what they say when they put forward their point of view, always in favour of the South African regime.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman well knows the conventions and rules that hon. Members should declare such trips in the Register of Interests. It has never been a rule here that they declare an interest when asking questions or supplementary questions.

Mr. James Couchman (Gillingham): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I should like to bring to your attention a significant abuse of the House by hon. Members representing the Liberal party. I regret that so few of them are in their places. There is only the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes). As reported in yesterday's *Hansard* at column *368*, the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) had asked a written question that has been answered by my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Home Office, which relates specifically to the disappearance of a handgun from Gillingham police station in my constituency.

You will know, Mr. Speaker, that I do not often rise on points of order — I am no whiner — but this is now the third occasion on which members of the Liberal party have asked questions which relate specifically to my constituency.

On 11 June 1986, the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) asked a question which was generally accepted locally as relating specifically to a piece of land in my constituency — the Great Lines in Gillingham — and that appeared at column *187*.

On 27 November 1985, the hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown), in an oral supplementary question, asked a question relating to Chatham dockyard, even though I was in the Chamber at the time.

That seems to me to be an abuse of the House. Those hon. Gentlemen have obviously been set up by their colleagues in my constituency to ask those questions. If that is not an abuse of the House, it is at the very least a discourtesy and against the conventions of the House, and I shall have only one recourse and that is to become very interested in the affairs of Montgomery, Orkney and Shetland and Yeovil.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Let me deal with one point of order at a time. It has long been a convention that we do not take up individual cases in constituencies of other hon. Members. It is perfectly in order to ask a question of general interest in a constituency, but we should stick to the convention of the House that we do not interfere in each other's constituencies, because that would lead to chaos.

Mr. Simon Hughes: May I deal with the two points of order that have been raised? [HON. MEMBERS: "What do you mean, deal with?"]

Mr. Speaker: Order. I want to hear this.

Mr. Hughes: I hope that the hon. Member for Gillingham (Mr. Couchman) will be aware that the questions asked by my colleagues, who are not here to answer, were asked in their capacity as spokesmen for the party *[Interruption.]* More specifically, a question about handguns is perfectly appropriate for a spokesman on home affairs of any party to raise, no matter where it arises. I hope that the House will accept that that too is a convention which has always been accepted. I am grateful to you, Mr. Speaker, for your modern and sympathetic ruling earlier on dress. When I stood in for my hon. Friend the Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Ross) at short notice, out of courtesy to the House, I borrowed a tie from a member of my Whips Office staff so that I could be properly dressed.

Mr. Speaker: The fact that a member of a minority party happens to be a spokesman has no relation to our conventions in the House which, as a general principle, should be observed by everybody.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. The hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) mentioned me in his point of order a moment or two ago. Will you confirm that the procedure of the House is that hon. Members do not have to declare any form of interest at Question Time, but should declare an interest if they participate in a debate? Is there any difference between going to the Soviet Union, Afghanistan, Poland or Czechoslovakia and going to the Republic of South Africa, whether as a guest of the Council of Churches or the Government of the Republic of South Africa? Is there any reason why I should have declared that in my supplementary question earlier today?

Mr. Speaker: I have already answered that. It is not necessary for hon. Members to declare an interest when asking supplementary questions.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. During the Prime Minister's statement it will be within your recollection, and it will be recorded in the *Official Report*, that when the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) rose, like a bullet from a gun, to deny that he had supported the sale of arms to South Africa, whereupon the Prime Minister gave chapter and verse supporting what was common knowledge, that he had favoured the selling of arms to South Africa since 1968, you said that you would call him at the end of the statement, but you did not do so? Would you be willing to tell us why you did not do so?

Mr. Speaker: I thought that the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) was rising because he wished to be called at the end of the Prime Minister's statement. In the event, he did not do so.

Sir John Farr (Harborough): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. May I ask you about business late at night? It says on the Order Paper at page 4096 that at ten o'clock a motion will be moved stating:

"That, at this day's sitting, the Motion relating to European Communities (Amendment) Bill (Allocation of Time) may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour."

Those of us who have grave reservations about guillotining a constitutional Bill with such severe and far-reaching implications as this thought that it was an excellent idea to have an open-ended debate later tonight on whether the guillotine should or should not be imposed and the timetable introduced. But page 4101 of the Order Paper says:

"Mr. Speaker will put any Question necessary to dispose of proceedings on the above Motion not more than Three hours after their commencement, pursuant to Standing Order No. 46."

Am I right—I hope that I am not—in assuming that there is a chance that you may possibly, when three hours have elapsed after the commencement of discussion on the time-table motion tonight, put the question?

Mr. Speaker: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for raising that matter. I should make it plain to the House that the ten o'clock business motion does not affect the length of proceedings on the allocation of time order. It enables the debate on that motion to be proceeded with after ten o'clock. I have a separate duty under Standing Order No. 46 to put any Question necessary to dispose of such proceedings not more than three hours after the commencement of those proceedings. That interpretation of the Standing Orders is well precedented.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): On a point of order Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: We have an important debate. It will take up valuable time.

Mr. Marlow: We were discussing earlier on points of order the Register of Members' Interests. We all know that the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) went to South Africa to posture but we did not know that he went to take photographs for *The Sun*. I am not saying that this is the case, but if he received any money from *The Sun* for taking those photographs, would it be necessary for him to declare that?

Mr. Speaker: That is a hypothetical question that has nothing to do with the debate that we are due to have.

Greek Cement

5 pm

Mr. J. F. Pawsey (Rugby and Kenilworth): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"The import of subsidised Greek cement".

I am gravely concerned that the import of subsidised Greek cement will have a most damaging effect on our home-based cement industry. I am pleased to see my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Department of Trade and Industry, in the House listening to my application. I appreciate his action, as will my constituents.

Following the collapse of the middle east as a major market for Greek cement, the United Kingdom has been targeted as a soft touch for the dumping of substantial quantities of cement. We have been selected as the first new target, probably because of our relatively stable market conditions and because Greece and the United Kingdom are members of the EEC.

About 10 days ago, the floating silo Sement VI arrived at Tilbury docks. It seems likely that further silos will be established at Liverpool, Avonmouth and possibly Southampton. The dumped cement may be sold at £38 per delivered tonne, which is 26 per cent. cheaper than that which is produced by the three major British manufacturers, including Rugby Portland Cement plc, which is in my constituency. Unless stopped, that cement will be on sale within the next four to six weeks.

The House should be aware of the long-term damage that will be done to the United Kingdom industry. It should be remembered that the industry is already suffering as a result of the downturn in construction. The appearance of foreign cement selling at 26 per cent. cheaper than the home-produced product will result in plant closures and substantial job losses. The cement is selling so much cheaper than the home-produced item because it enjoys a subsidy of 18 per cent. from the Greek Government. Moreover, Greece protects its home-based market by substantial tariffs. That is grossly unfair and discriminatory.

I am most worried about the British cement industry, which has a good reputation for investment and productivity. It will be deeply resented, not just by my constituents but throughout Britain, if dumped Greek imports are allowed to destroy our home industry.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he thinks should have urgent consideration, namely,

"The import of subsidised Greek cement."

I listened carefully to what the hon. Gentleman said, but I regret that I do not consider the matter which he has raised as appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 10. I hope that he will find another way of raising the matter in the House. I cannot submit his application to the House.

BALLOT FOR NOTICES OF MOTIONS FOR MONDAY 14 JULY

Members successful in the ballot were:

Mr. Andy Stewart
Mr. Derek Spencer
Mr. Stuart Bell

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. May I suggest that the hon. Member who has been successful in the ballot tables a motion of confidence in the Prime Minister's conduct in relation to the Falklands, the F111 and Westland?

Mr. Speaker: That is not a decision which I can influence.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Mr. Speaker: With the leave of the House, I shall put together the four motions relating to Statutory Instruments.

Ordered,

That the draft Weights and Measures Act 1963 (Miscellaneous Foods) (Amendment) Order 1986 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments &c.

That the draft Functions of Traffic Wardens (Amendment) Order 1986 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments &c.

That the draft Road Races (Northern Ireland) Order 1986 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments &c.

That the draft Hovercraft (Civil Liability) Order 1986 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments &c.—*[Mr. Neubert.]*

Welsh Language

5.4 pm

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to amend the Welsh Language Act 1967; and to make further provision relating to the use of the Welsh language in Wales; and for connected purposes.

Few hon. Members will be unaware of the considerable and growing interest that has been taken in the Welsh language during the past 20 years. The survival of the Welsh language is one of the miracles of modern Wales. At the last census, more than 500,000 people in Wales could speak Welsh — almost 20 per cent. of the population. Probably at least another 250,000 people have a good understanding of the language although they do not speak it. In my constituency, more than 80 per cent. of the population can speak Welsh and two out of every three constituency letters that I receive are written in Welsh.

It is the normal working language in the community, and Cyngor Dosbarth Dwyfor, one of the two district councils in my area, undertakes its work exclusively in the Welsh language. During recent years, the Welsh Schools Movement has grown to such an extent that, by now, almost one third of primary school children in areas such as Pontypridd and Caerphilly — most of whose parents do not speak Welsh — receive their education through the medium of the Welsh language.

Yet the official status of the language is far from clear. Although the Acts of 1535 and 1536 which banned he Welsh language from official use have been amended by the Welsh Courts Act 1942 and the Welsh Language Act 1967, which gives the language some new status, people still do not know what their language rights are. After centuries of having been told, or having it implied, that there is something inferior in speaking their language, it is hardly surprising that some uncertainty still exists among Welsh people.

In the early 1960s, a new interest grew in the Welsh language, especially after the historic broadcast by the late Mr. Saunders Lewis in 1962, entitled "Tynged yr Iaith". Soon afterwards, in 1964, the question of status was higlighted in the court case of Evans *v.* Thomas. The Hughes-Parry commission which reported in 1965 on the status of the language made widespread and radical recommendations. Some of those were incorporated in the Welsh Language Act 1967, which was a significant step forward. However, after 20 years of living with that Act, it is plain that there are massive shortcomings which must be put right.

A main plank of the Hughes-Parry report was the formulation of the principle of equal validity of the Welsh and English languages in Wales, whereby anything said or written in either language would be equally valid. The report made a specific recommendation. Recommendation (3) states:

"The principle of equal validity should be adopted as the basic principle governing the future use of Welsh in the administration of justice and the conduct of public administration."

However, in the 1967 Act the provisions were not so clear-cut. The Act established the equal validity of Welsh when spoken in the courts, but it did not give all written legal documents such equal validity. More importantly, it did not establish a general principle of equal validity in the conduct of public business as recommended by the Hughes-Parry report and certainly not in general day-to-day life. There is a widespread misunderstanding in Wales on this matter.

During the years, those shortcomings have manifested themselves in a host of problems: solicitors being unable to present certain documents in Welsh to the court, parents unable to register the birth of their children in Welsh, people having cheques made out in Welsh refused — I had yet another letter of complaint about this only last week — prisoners being told that they cannot speak Welsh with visiting relatives, companies not being allowed to register their names in Welsh, and company accounts being refused by Companies house because they were kept in Welsh. The list in enormous, and enough to show that the spirit of the Hughes-Parry report is most certainly not working out as the authors of that report intended.

A main objective of the Bill is to clear up the unsatisfactory position which exists, and to afford the Welsh and English languages full official status, with written or oral statements having equal validity in whichever language they are made.

But the Welsh Language Act 1967 also failed to bring about conditions which would turn the excellent principle of equal validity into meaningful reality for the individual. The entire structure of the courts and administration was largely untouched by the Act and no requirement was placed on public authorities in Wales to facilitate a proper choice of the language for the individual citizen.

When confronted with an English-only form to fill in, 95 per cent. of people will fill it in in English because that is the implied requirement of the form. Four per cent. may choose to fill it in in Welsh, and 1 per cent. may ask why no Welsh form is available. To give the individual respondent a meaningful choice of language, there must be a dimension of bilingualism in the form iteself. Either it should have both languages on it, which is practical in a large proportion of cases or forms should be equally available in Welsh and English. To make equal validity a reality for the private citizen, the apparatus of public administration must be equal-handed. The Bill provides for public notices and forms to be bilingual, to give the individual the right to choose which language he or she uses for reading or for writing.

The Bill allows a defendant to choose in which language he or she wishes the court to hear the case. Nothing could be fairer than that. The Bill also aims at establishing a right in law for children and young people to be able to learn the Welsh language and have their education in the medium of Welsh within reasonable distance of their homes. This already happens in many parts of Wales, but not everywhere, and in some areas there have been bitter controversies when parents feel that they have not had a proper opportunity for their children to be educated through the medium of Welsh.

Welsh Office policy on the matter is encapsulated in a written reply that I received this week, which states that education through the medium of Welsh should be available within the constraints of available resources to all children whose parents are desirous of it. However, that definition has a prelude, to the effect that it is for individual authorities to determine the nature of the provision in their own area. That is the rub. Although some authorities have a very good track record, others have been reluctant to give all children in their area that option.

The Secretary of State has acknowledged that there is a need for better co-ordination in regard to the provision of instruction through the medium of Welsh. The Bill gives a framework establishing a right to such Welsh-medium education throughout Wales. It does not force Welsh-medium education on anyone. It merely provides a right in law.

The Bill would also allow employees of large companies and public authorities a certain amount of statutory time off to learn the Welsh language. That might indeed help such employees in their work, and give them an opportunity that they never had at school. Again, the provision is permissive. It does not force anyone to learn Welsh against his will.

The Bill covers a number of other matters: the standardisation of road signs; the establishment of an office of Language Commissioner for Wales, with a duty to try to conciliate and arbitrate in language disputes and to advise on the implementation of the Act; a requirement for structure plans to have regard for the Welsh language in the same way as they currently have regard to the conservation of the natural environment; rights to register births, deaths and marriages in Welsh, write cheques in Welsh and present company accounts in Welsh; and a right for prisoners to communicate in Welsh.

In various ways, the Bill addresses a host of practical problems that I have encountered in my day-to-day work as a Member of Parliament and which are faced from time to time by the Welsh-speaking community. The Bill takes nothing away from non-Welsh speakers. Throughout the Bill, the objective is to give people language rights, not to force a language on them. That being so, I am sure that it will appeal to the vast majority of people in Wales as to hon. Members on both sides of the House.

The fate of the Welsh language is not a responsibility consigned to any one party. I am glad that I have the support of members of all the four parties that represent Wales in the Chamber as sponsors of the Bill.

The language is not just a matter for those of us who are Welsh speakers, often by accident of birth. The Welsh language belongs to us all, and goodwill for Welsh speakers and non-Welsh speakers alike will be needed if its revival is to gain further momentum.

However, goodwill by itself is not enough. Fortunately, there is also tremendous enthusiasm, as we have seen over the past 20 years. Thousands of young people have campaigned for the language, especially through the Welsh Language Society. Hundreds of young people who care deeply for the language have gone to prison as a result of civil disobedience in such campaigns. Perhaps they have cared too much. Because we in responsibility have not taken up proposals that have commanded widespread support, perhaps our own shortcomings have contributed to the feelings of frustration and desperation that have occasionally fuelled excessive zeal.

The securing of the right environment for the survival of the language and the culture and values that go with it should not rest on the perennial battles of the younger generation against the perceived intransigence of an insensitive state. We need more than state neutrality, for that will do little to reverse the tide that has for centuries worked against the language. We need language rights firmly established in law—they have become the norm in other multilingual states—as in the case of Catalan, Basque and Galician in Spain and Flemish, French and German in Belgium. We must break out of the myopic insularity that has tended to blinker matters related to languages in these islands.

There is abundant evidence that there is a desire in Wales for an updating of the Welsh Language Act. Last year, the Colwyn bay tribunal showed the inadequacy of present legislation. Numerous councils, societies and denominational bodies have called for amendments to the Act. A working party including many distinguished members such as Lord Prys-Davies has been drawing up proposals over the past two years. A new petition is now circulating in Wales and I have no doubt that it will attract tens of thousands of signatures.

The time is ripe for change. What better time for change could there be than now, 450 years after the 1536 Act which threatened "utterly to extirp" the Welsh language? Next year will be 20 years from the passing of the previous Act, and if the Act is in force by 1988, that could be a fitting commemoration of the 400th anniversary of the translation of the Bible into Welsh by Bishop Morgan. The time is indeed appropriate for the Bill.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Dafydd Wigley, Mr. D. E. Thomas, Mr. Donald Stewart, Mrs. Ann Clwyd, Mr. Lewis Carter-Jones, Mr. Geraint Howells, Mr. Keith Best, Dr. Roger Thomas, Mr. Richard Livsey, Mr. Gareth Wardell, Mr. Gordon Wilson and Mr. John Hume.

WELSH LANGUAGE

Mr. Dafydd Wigley accordingly presented a Bill to amend the Welsh Language Act 1967; to make further provision relating to the use of the Welsh language in Wales; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 4 July 1986 and to be printed. [Bill 192.]

Orders of the Day

Defence

[SECOND DAY'S DEBATE]

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on amendment to Question [30 June]:

That this House approves the Statement on the Defence Estimates 1986, contained in Cmnd. 9763.—*[Mr. Younger]*

Which amendment was to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

'believes that the plans outlined in the Statement on the Defence Estimates 1986, Cmnd. 9763, and in particular the Government's plans to buy the Trident nuclear system, are leading to damaging cuts in Britain's conventional defence capabilities at home and abroad and in Britain's defence industrial base; calls upon the Government to cancel Trident and to use the money saved for more practical non-nuclear defence purposes; declares that the security and the defence of the United Kingdom will be best served in future by maintaining strong conventional defences within the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation and not by acquiring a new generation of nuclear weaponry of any kind; and calls upon the Government to take an active part in securing the removal of all nuclear weapons from the United Kingdom and the reduction and abolition of all nuclear weapons, and also to make plain its opposition to the production and deployment of chemical weapons by the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the United States of America and any other nations', instead thereof.—*[Mr. Denzil Davies.]*

Question again proposed, That the amendment be made.

Mr. Speaker: As the House well knows, we had a rather late start today, because of statements, other matters on the Order Paper and points of order. I propose to put a limit on speeches of 10 minutes between 7 and 9 o'clock, because there is a very long list of right hon. and hon. Members who wish to take part in the debate. I hope that those called before 7 o'clock will not abuse their position, having been called early. I intend today to give some precedence to those who were conscientious in their attendance during the debate yesterday.

5.16 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement (Mr. John Lee): In any democracy it is right that there should be a debate on how much of the nation's wealth is spent on defence, and how that allocated amount should be split between the various defence roles, including nuclear and conventional defence, and between the three services—or perhaps only two if certain of their Lordships in the other place have their way.

I welcome the contributions to the debate yesterday and look forward to further speeches from right hon. and hon. Members today. I should also like to pay tribute to the contribution from the Defence Select Committee, whose weighty and constructive report was published last week.

The Government are proud to proclaim their record on defence. The facts speak for themselves. Spending on defence has benefited from seven years of real growth since 1979 and the total budget for 1986-87 is some £18·5 billion. Of this, some £8·3 billion—or 45 per cent.—is to be spent on equipment for the armed forces, or virtually £1 million every hour.

We are buying a vast quantity of new equipment for the services and sustaining substantial employment in this country through our procurement spend. Nevertheless, as my right hon. Friend acknowledged to the Defence Select Committee, there are some difficult decisions ahead as the defence budget moves to a period of slight real decline. However, there is no question of having to withdraw from any major commitment or significant part thereof.

United Kingdom procurement spending now takes up 45 per cent. of the budget—the highest figure in the NATO Alliance. It has risen from a modest figure of 34 per cent. in 1975-76. Unlike the previous Labour Government, who increased the equipment percentage of the budget at the expense of service men's pay packets, the present Government have increased defence spending, paid our soldiers, sailors and airmen a realistic rate of pay and also, since 1979, increased spending on procurement in real terms by one third or £2 billion. As my right hon. and hon. Friends said yesterday, the quality of our service men is more important even than their equipment; they are our greatest asset. I join my right hon. and hon. Friends in paying tribute to their professionalism.

I should also like to pay tribute to Ministry of Defence civil servants in Whitehall, the research and development establishments—which have a world-wide reputation for expertise — and others. Indeed, one of the annual engagements that I fulfil, which gives me great pleasure, is to officiate at the award ceremony of British Empire Medals to long-serving and meritorious employees.

The Government are firmly committed to the maintenance of the strongest defences for the United Kingdom. We are committed to the maintenance of an independent strategic nuclear deterrent—earlier this year we ordered the first Trident submarine, HMS Vanguard — and to improving and increasing the quality and quantity of conventional equipment for the armed forces.

We often hear arguments about Trident being the cuckoo in the nest of conventional defence improvements. That is simply not the case. The reality is that our existing expenditure on the strategic nuclear force is only some 3·5 per cent. of the budget. While expenditure on Trident is substantial, it has to be seen in context. Over the 20-year period of Trident's introduction into service, the procurement cost of just under £9·9 billion compares with expenditure on British forces Germany over a comparable period at current levels of £46 billion, or nearly five times the total Trident spend. Put another way, Trident's total spend over its 20-year life is about half the total defence budget in any one year.

Too often employment implications of defence spending are overlooked. Some 1·2 million people in the United Kingdom derive their jobs directly or indirectly from defence. It is time Left wingers in the official Opposition party realised the extent of jobs sustained. Indeed, individually many hon. Members opposite do just that when they come to see me, almost on a daily basis, leading delegations to lobby me and other Ministers on orders. Too often it is a case of one voice for the corridors of Whitehall and another for the Labour party conference.

Any attempts by the Labour party to reduce defence spending, if it ever came to power, would unquestionably impact on employment. Moreover, 90 to 95 per cent. of the equipment budget is spent in the United Kingdom, either on national programmes or on the United Kingdom's work share of collaborative programmes.

Indeed, it is interesting to observe that United Kingdom defence industries with a combination of substantial home spend and a demanding customer in the form of our armed services, spurred on by Warsaw pact

technolgical progress, have produced products of a quality and sophistication to equal any in the world. Contrast that with our dismal performance in the consumer field, and perhaps there are lessons to be learned. It just shows what can be done.

I should now like to turn to the main theme of my speech — the increased value for money in defence procurement. I shall come later to the equipment orders that the Government have placed and the main programmes of the three services.

Major credit for increased value for money in defence procurement must go to my right hon. Friend the Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine), who initiated many lasting changes in the way MOD thinks. In addition, my right hon. Friend was responsible for appointing Mr. Peter Levene, the Chief of Defence Procurement, to whom I pay tribute for his excellent work in tightening MOD's procurement and for making the Procurement Executive a more discerning, commercially minded, hard-nosed customer. I am only glad that we pay Mr. Levene a fixed salary, rather than a percentage of the savings he has brought about.

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): While the Minister is lauding the activities of the Procurement Executive, will he explain why yesterday, a few weeks before the contemplated order for frigates, the Secretary of State could not tell us the number of frigates that he is likely to order, far less the yards in which the orders will be placed?

Mr. Lee: I shall deal with the question of frigates later.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence is fully committed to our continuing efforts to get greater efficiency into our procurement spend.

I summarise the broad thrust of our initiatives under the acronym CCCPR — not the Soviet threat, but competition, collaboration, contractorisation, privatisation, and rationalisation. I will deal with each in turn.

First, I shall deal with competition and our drive to achieve the best value for money. The percentage by value of contracts placed following competition or in a competitive environment has increased considerably over the past three years. In 1983-84 it was 38 per cent.; in 1984-85, 46 per cent.; in 1985-86, 64 per cent. That is an increase of about two thirds over three years, which the Public Accounts Committee and the Defence Select Committee have specifically praised. Competition has achieved demonstrable and highly significant savings. We estimate that competition savings produced about £100 million on the Warrior APC, £60 million on the basic trainer for the Royal Air Force and £20 million, including batch order savings, on three SSK diesel electric submarines.

On a more prosaic level, we ran a competition for the supply of bread and bread rolls. The best customer discount following the competition—the yeast expensive —was 42 per cent. lower than the retail price which previously formed the basis of the price.

Mr. Robert Atkins (South Ribble): I was going to say that I would rise to the occasion. My hon. Friend talks about competitive tendering and the success of his programme. Does he accept that there is concern in some circles that when competitive tendering involves foreign countries tendering for equipment in the United Kingdom in order to reduce the price and make the deal more potentially competitive, it can nevertheless have a detrimental effect on home-based industries which must provide their specifications for the tenders? Regarding royal ordnance factories in particular, in which I declare an interest, my hon. Friend will know that there is considerable concern about Belgium, West Germany and France competing for tenders in the United Kingdom in a way which royal ordnance factories cannot compete abroad.

Mr. Lee: I shall come to royal ordnance factories later, but I take my hon. Friend's point. I repeat that 90 to 95 per cent. of our procurement spend is spent in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Martin J. O'Neill (Clackmannan): Will the Minister explain why competition was not applied to the refitting contract for the royal yacht Britannia?

Mr. Lee: In taking decisions on refits for the royal yacht Britannia and others, we must strike some sort of balance between the core programme for the royal dockyards and the amount that we can give to the private sector and make available through competition. The trade unions in Devonport entered into a virtual no-strike agreement with us and made it particularly attractive to put Britannia into Devonport.

We are also maximising competition at the subcontract level, and taking steps to make firms more aware of contracting opportunities, including, shortly, a fortnightly publication listing major invitations to tender and MOD contracts.

Over the past 10 years a regime of generous interim payments has ensured that in many cases firms have continued to receive reimbursement of costs and profit from MOD, even if projects have fallen behind and deliveries have been delayed. In the past we have made interim payments of up to 100 per cent. of costs incurred by a contractor, even including interim payment of profit. We intend to reduce these payments, and interim payment of profit will normally be discontinued. The essence of our new approach is to ensure that our contractors have a strong incentive to supply and perform on time. We demand a more direct relationship between defence spending and contractors' achievement. There have been no major awards of such contracts for two years, and they now account for less than 10 per cent. by value of MOD contracts.

I now turn to collaboration, which many hon. Members discussed yesterday, including my hon. Friend the Member for Wealden (Sir G. Johnson Smith) who would like to be present this afternoon but is chairing a Select Committee.

Collaboration helps to increase the standardisation and interoperability of equipment in service with NATO's forces; enables us and our allies to make better collective use of the same resources available to us for defence; enhances the technological capabilities of our industries; and demonstrates the political will of Alliance nations to work together for our common defence. That is the background to the initiative taken by the European Defence Ministers in the Independent European Programme Group.

Before leaving collaboration, it would be wrong to ignore the European fighter aircraft. Project definition is proceeding satisfactorily on the basis of the aircraft

[Mr. Lee]

characteristics agreed last summer in Turin to a planned conclusion later this year, when decisions on the way ahead will be taken.

Mr. John McWilliam (Blaydon): I hope that the Minister will not leave collaboration without telling the House whether he is satisfied that our artillery forces do not have FH70 shells because the Germans, with whom he is trying to collaborate, cannot make them.

Mr. Lee: I shall deal with the SP70 later in my speech when I discuss the Army programme.

I am pleased that the Select Committee on Defence in its report on the SDE86 welcomed the progress achieved on the collaborative front, but rightly noted that it would take some years for the savings from recent initiatives to accrue to the defence budget.

Thirdly, I should like to deal with contractorisation. It is our policy not to retain in the public sector any defence support activity unless this is operationally essential or unless there are demonstrable savings in such a course. We start from a position of asking why the Government are doing this. Examples of contractorisation in the Ministry of Defence are cleaning, laundering and some aircraft servicing. As the House will be aware, we are also embarking on the introduction of commercial management for the royal dockyards.

Mr. Peter Viggers (Gosport): I should like to ask my hon. Friend a question about the privatisation of MOD services. Is he aware that a number of Ministry of Defence workers in my constituency and elsewhere feel that they are not being kept fully in the picture by the Ministry of Defence about the way in which contractorisation is being implemented? As they are not told until very late in the day about how their jobs will be affected, they feel that they cannot plan their future. Will my hon. Friend do his best to try to inform them more fully about the future of contractorisation?

Mr. Lee: We try our best, but if my hon. Friend the Member for Gosport (Mr. Viggers) will tell me the name of the establishment, I will look into the matter to see what I can do to speed the flow of information.

The Dockyard Services Bill is currently progressing through another place, and the level of commercial interest in managing the dockyards remains satisfactory. We await responses to our invitation to tender from potential bidders at the end of this month. We expect to be able to announce the outcome by November and to have the new system up and running by April next year.

Mr. Douglas: How many?

Mr. Lee: The hon. Member for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas), from a sedentary position, shouts, "How many?" He has a specific interest in Rosyth. I can tell him that we expect to have interest and specific tenders from three groups — Babcock Weir, Balfour Beatty Thorn-EMI and Press Offshore.

Fourthly, I shall deal with privatisation. There has been much debate recently on the future of Royal Ordnance plc, and the situation is still somewhat fluid. There is little I can add to the answers given by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence on 18 June. He said:

"It remains my intention to privatise Royal Ordnance, and I am giving further consideration to the means of achieving this."—[*Official Report*, 18 June 1986; Vol. 99, c. 1034.]

In the meantime a lot is being done to make Royal Ordnance plc more efficient. Its range of products on display last week at the British Army equipment exhibition was very impressive, and I pay tribute to the firm's vigorous pursuit of export opportunities. That has the full support of my Department.

Dr. Keith Hampson (Leeds, North-West): As my hon. Friend knows, there is great anxiety in Leeds. There has been much distress in the company. In view of that, can my hon. Friend explain what took place? On what basis was the change decided, because clearly the privatisation approved by the House will not proceed in the way that it was agreed? Is it because of the Challenger tank order, or are we definitely going ahead with Challenger?

Mr. Lee: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State made the position clear. A number of factors were taken into account, and it was decided that the time was not appropriate for the flotation that we originally hoped for.

Finally, I shall deal with rationalisation. As part of efficiency drives, we look to ensure that the individual services do not duplicate facilities that could sensibly be undertaken on a unified basis. Successes in this area include catering training, parts of defence medical services and even the defence staffs of the Ministry of Defence itself. I should like to take this opportunity to announce that, having reviewed the proposed move of textile and clothing contracts work from Leeds to Glasgow in the light of comments from several right hon. and hon. Members and the Public Accounts Committee, I have decided that the work will remain in Leeds.

Mr. Spencer Batiste (Elmet): Will my hon. Friend accept the thanks of many people in Leeds for the sound judgment that he, as a textile MP, has shown? It is sensible to leave the textile and clothing branch in Leeds and not to pursue the senseless moving of jobs from one part of Britain to another. I hope that as an engineering MP my hon. Friend will show the same good judgment when he considers the future of the royal ordnance factory at Barnbow and the seventh regiment of Challenger tanks.

Mr. Lee: I am grateful for the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Elmet (Mr. Batiste) on the retention of the clothing operations in Leeds. There is nothing useful that I can add about the royal ordnance plants in Leeds, but obviously we will take all factors into account.

Mr. Robert C. Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, North): The Minister is not normally a devious character, but he was a lot less than frank with his hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, North-West (Dr. Hampson). If privatisation proceeds, will not Barnbow have to compete in open tender against companies like Vickers at Scotswood on Tyne? That is causing more than a flutter in the dovecotes.

Mr. Lee: We are taking all factors into account in considering the future of tank orders. At this time I have no more to say about that subject. It is my intention that the planned economies and the improved efficiency offered by the move from Leeds to Glasgow shall become priority targets for the Leeds staff.

Hon. Members may be forgiven for overlooking the small box on page 51 of the "Statement on the Defence Estimates" on energy efficiency. However, the Select Committee on Defence published a memorandum on this subject in its recent report, and I am grateful for this.

The MOD is playing a full part in the Department of Energy's campaign this year. The MOD is a major user and its non-operational energy bill runs at over £240 million a year. It is clearly sensible for the MOD to make the most of potential savings. We have already reduced our consumption by 30 per cent. since the oil crisis of the early 1970s, and, to give further impetus to improvements on energy efficiency, I have recently set up a steering group of senior officers to oversee implementation of an energy efficiency programme with a target of a further 25 per cent. reduction in the MOD's energy bill over the next five years.

I should like to say a few words about MOD support for defence exports. This is understandably an area where commercial confidentiality and the secrecy requirements of customers limit what can be said, but, as I said earlier, defence exports sustain 120,000 jobs in the United Kingdom and this figure is set to rise following the increase of 17 per cent. in real terms in sales last year to £2·9 billion. This is around 9 per cent. of the world market. I pay tribute to the work of our defence export services organisation and to our defence attachés overseas for assisting British industry to this achievement. These figures do not include the outstanding Saudi aerospace deal concluded last year.

I am sure that the House will welcome today's announcement that the Australian army has selected Land Rover to fulfil a £50 million order for a 2,900-vehicle requirement. That order was won in the face of stiff international competition.

Mr. Kevin McNamara (Kingston upon Hull, North): The Minister will be aware of much speculation in the press about the soundness of the Saudi order because of the fall in the price of oil. Can he give a categorical assurance that there is no question of that contract not going ahead?

Mr. Lee: I am not in the business of giving categorical assurances. The Saudi contract is not being renegotiated, as was suggested by the right hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) at Question Time yesterday. The fall in the price of oil has affected the payments for the contract, and an element of discusson is taking place about that.

Mr. McNamara: The Minister says that discussion is taking place on the question of payments. Will he confirm that there is no question of the deal falling through?

Mr. Lee: I have nothing to add to what I have said. With respect to the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara), we are talking about an extremely serious and major contract.

Mr. McNamara: That is right.

Mr. Lee: Defence Ministers and other members of the Government travel extensively in support of United Kingdom defence exports. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister is a vigorous and effective supporter of these efforts and played a key role in the Saudi order. In the nearly three years that I have been in post I have visited many contries in support of United Kingdom defence exporters. I have been to Brazil, Ecuador, Indonesia, Malaysia, Nigeria, Singapore, South Korea, Switzerland, Thailand, Yugoslavia and Zimbabwe, and, of course I have visited a number of NATO countries. [HON. MEMBERS: "Ha, ha!"] My travel is exceeded only by that of my hon. Friend the Member for South Ribble (Mr. Atkins).

Ministers also support extensively the defence equipment exhibitions. This year has seen the highly successful British Army equipment exhibition, opened last week by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence. During my visit, I unveiled two new armoured vehicles for the export market, and saw many exciting new British products, as did a number of right hon. and hon. Members.

I am sure that we are all looking forward to the best Farnborough air show for many years this September, with, hopefully, three new British aircraft making their flying debuts — the British Aerospace ATP, the Hawk 200, and the EAP.

Mr. Robert Atkins: As my hon. Friend knows, the EAP is the first British fighter for 30 years. Will he do his best, and ask his right hon. Friend to do his best, to ensure that, as with the Hanover air show where the German Chancellor is present and the French exhibition where the French President is present, the Prime Minister will go to Farnborough to witness the flying of the EAP in competition with the Rafale, which is the French version, in order to give the seal of approval to a superb aeroplane which will be the follow-on to the European fighter?

Mr. Lee: I shall endeavour to draw the attention of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister to my hon. Friend's sensible suggestion.

Mr. Alfred Dubs (Battersea): The hon. Gentleman referred to the British Army equipment exhibition. Can he say a little about the nature of those sales, because some equipment appears to be going to countries that are using the equipment not to equip their armies, navies, and so on, but for internal repression? Some of the world's most oppressive regimes send their buyers to such exhibitions. Does that bother the hon. Gentleman?

Mr. Lee: We are extremely careful. We endeavour to play cricket and to be fair. Sometimes, we are criticised for that. All items of defence equipment that come up for export need to be licensed. Obviously, we take into account the individual circumstances of the countries which endeavour to purchase. If it is our view that the regime is questionable and that the arms would be used for internal repressive purposes, we do not grant an export licence.

Mr. Robert C. Brown: Can the hon. Gentleman give an assurance that when he plays cricket regarding such exports, he will play better cricket than the English team is doing at the moment?

Mr. Lee: I turn to the re-equipment programmes of the three services.

Since 1979, this Government have ordered 52 warships for the Royal Navy to a total value at today's prices of some £4·5 billion. These include nine frigates—as we have said before, it is our intention to announce further orders for type 23 frigates before the House rises—five nuclear-powered fleet submarines, four diesel-electric submarines, 21 mine counter-measure vessels and, of course, HMS Vanguard, the first Trident submarine. Seven of these vessels have been ordered since last year's White Paper including two further first-of-class vessels —HMS Sandown—a single-role minehunter—and RFA

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Fort Victoria — an auxiliary oiler replenishment vessel. In addition, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced yesterday that tenders will be sought for up to four more fleet minesweepers.

Aside from the type 23 frigate orders I mentioned, I am happy to confirm to the House that it is our intention to make an announcement on future amphibious capability later this year. I acknowledge the importance attached to this capability by the Defence Select Committee and can confirm that the concept of an aviation support ship is included in our studies. I look forward to spending 24 hours at sea aboard HMS Intrepid later this month to see at first hand the work of the amphibious forces. Fearless and Intrepid are, of course, planned to continue in service until the mid-1990s.

We have not neglected new equipment for the Navy. The Sting Ray lightweight torpedo is now in service, and earlier this year we announced an order with Marconi Underwater Systems Ltd. for more than 2,000 Sting Rays, and development of the Spearfish heavyweight torpedo is continuing. Our existing heavyweight torpedo — the Tigerfish — has demonstrated a notable improvement in performance.

Mr. Peter Griffiths (Portsmouth, North): The sinking of the Lowestoft by Tigerfish was followed by an extremely successful series of sea trials off the coast of Florida. Does my hon. Friend agree that that makes Tigerfish an extremely valuable contender for the contract for the United States navy for a conventional heavyweight torpedo, and that it would be desirable if all efforts, not only of the Marconi company but of our defence sales staff abroad, were made to assist in our gaining what would be a valuable break into the American arms market?

Mr. Lee: I am happy to do what my hon. Friend asks. We wish it well. We expect it to be an effective weapon. It deserves serious consideration by the United States navy. It will have the full support of our Department and our defence export services organisation.

Mr. Keith Speed (Ashford): Is it not a fact that to maintain a frigate force of 50—I hope that it is 50 and not "about 50"—it is essential to order at least three new frigates a year, unless we are to have a Navy composed of aging Leanders and type 12s which are expensive in terms of fuel and personnel? Therefore, if three type 23 frigates were not ordered this year, all hon. Members and the public would regard with grave suspicion the maintenance of those 50 frigates.

Mr. Lee: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I have nothing further to add in terms of orders, except to say that the figure is not 50—I know that my hon. Friend will be sad about that—but is about 50. It is a question of both new orders and the length of time that we decide to run on ships, as my hon. Friend knows.

Our underwater navy — which currently comprises four Polaris SSBNs, 14 nuclear-powered fleet submarines, to be augmented by HMS Torbay around the turn of the year, and 15 diesel-electric submarines—is unquestionably the most powerful outside the two super-powers.

The last year has also seen developments in air defence for the fleet. We have ordered a further seven Phalanx and nine Dutch Goalkeeper close-in weapons systems for fitting to Her Majesty's ships — bringing the total of these systems ordered to 30 Phalanx and 15 Goalkeeper. We have also ordered a further quantity of Sea Dart area air defence missiles.

The Royal Air Force is now deriving the benefit in front-line service of a major re-equipment programme. Already, nearly 500 RAF aircraft have been ordered since 1979. The centrepiece of this modernisation is the collaborative Tornado aircraft, the strike-attack variant of which — the Tornado GR1 — now equips nine RAF squadrons, three in the United Kingdom and six in Germany.

The Tornado GR1 is capable of the highest levels of performance, as was reflected very satisfactorily for the second year running by Tornado crews from 27 Squadron carrying off the prizes at the USAF strategic air command bombing competition. I give all credit to those involved.

The Tornado GR1's all-weather low-level performance will enable it to penetrate Warsaw pact air defences, should the need arise, and deliver its weapons with great accuracy.

This year has seen the acceptance into service of the prime weapon for the Tornado GR1—the JP233 airfield denial weapon. Also accepted into service this year was the improved version of the BL755 anti-armour cluster bomb —primarily for the Harrier force, but also portable on the Tornado. Studies into a next generation of anti-armour missile are under way.

The first two prototype Harrier GR5 aircraft were delivered to the RAF during the course of last year to commence trials. Production aircraft from the first batch of 60 aircraft currently on order will start delivery next year and a quantity of long lead items for a second batch have recently been ordered. The size of the second batch aircraft order will be decided towards the end of the year. We are also working closely with our American collaborative partners on the GR5 on jointly developing a night attack system for the aircraft.

In the maritime role, the British Aerospace anti-surface ship missile Sea Eagle was accepted into service last year by the RAF's Buccaneer force. The aircraft themselves are being given an avionic update to exploit the full capabilities of this effective missile.

I should like to turn now to air defence. I have mentioned already the successful progress of the collaborative EFA programme. For United Kingdom air defence, deliveries of the Tornado ADV fighter have commenced to the operational conversion unit at RAF Coningsby. The first of seven Tornado fighter squadrons will form next year, and we will be increasing the number of fighters available to the United Kingdom air defence by running on two Phantom squadrons even after all Tornado squadrons are formed. Recently 74 Squadron, with its Phantom F4J aircraft—bought from the USA to compensate for aircraft deployed to the Falklands—became operational. The conversion of Hawk aircraft to carry Sidewinder missiles and a gun to augment air defence assets in war was completed last month by British Aerospace—four months ahead of schedule.

On the ground, the programme to replace completely United Kingdom air defence radars and communications links is well advanced. There is significant financial support from NATO for this. Last year a number of new radars were accepted into service.

Back in the air, the extensive enhancement of air-to-air refuelling capability continues with the completion of

deliveries to the first squadron of VC10 three-point tankers and the delivery of the first three of the first batch of six TriStar strategic tankers. A further three TriStars have been bought and competitions will be held in due course for the conversion of these aircraft and more VC10s to tankers.

However, our greatest concern in air defence is airborne early warning. The House is well aware of the difficulties with the Nimrod AEW programme. The present position is that we have received proposals for AEW systems from six contractors, including GEC Avionics, Boeing, Grumman and Lockheed. Contractors have been asked to submit firm price bids by the beginning of next week, 7 July. There is nothing that I can usefully add at this stage.

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): I do not want to pre-empt the decision which my hon. Friend must begin to consider on 7 July. However, in view of the reported comments of the Commander-in-Chief, Strike Command, that AEW is "unequivocally", to use his words, "a crucial part of air defence", will my hon. Friend, in considering the choice between the E3, Hawkeye, Orion, Nimrod and Grumman, assure the House at least that he will be guided solely by the RAF's own criteria of cost, time scale and, above all, performance?

Mr. Lee: I am happy to say that the operational considerations are paramount. We must get the system that is necessary for the defence of this country. Obviously, cost comes into it, but the operational aspects must come first.

Mr. James Couchman (Gillingham): Will my hon. Friend bear in mind in making his decision, which we all recognise is crucial, that if the Nimrod system is cancelled per se 2,500 jobs will be at risk, Britain will be excluded from AEW technology for perhaps 30 years and from the potential for exports worth perhaps £2 billion or more and the British taxpayer wil be faced with the cost of a write-off of perhaps £900 million?

Mr. Lee: Of course I understand my hon. Friend's constituency interest, and I say that in the nicest way. I make it clear that we are running a real competition.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): Will my hon. Friend remember that, in every instance in which the RAF has had foisted on it a political choice of aircraft or equipment, in time the choice has been found never to have worked and always to have been costly to maintain and operate? We must not make the same mistake again.

Mr. Lee: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his remarks. I well remember his comments on our decision to purchase the RAF trainer, the Shorts Tucano.

Turning now to the Army equipment programme, I am pleased to be able to report steady progress in improving and updating the Army's equipment, particularly its armoured vehicles, artillery, air defence, small arms and communications.

Starting with the most important piece of equipment, the mark 1 infantryman, we are equipping him with a new rifle—the SA80—of which 175,000 were ordered last year and for which further tenders have just been sought from United Kingdom prime contractors. After some problems with setting up large-scale production, the weapon will, we hope, enter service in quantity early next year. In the meantime, weapons are being delivered to our training organisation.

Without wishing to give the impression of favouritism, it nevertheless seems clear to me that the gunners did rather well last year from Army orders. I recently announced the order for three regiments of the multiple-launch rocket system — a very effective depth-fire weapon that will give BAOR a major capability improvement over existing M107 guns. I am very pleased that most of the European offtake, including the United Kingdom's main production order, from this multinational programme will be made in Europe, bringing a total of £250 million of work to the United Kingdom alone. The MLRS programme represents a considerable success for European collaboration and transatlantic co-operation. It is a model for other programmes.

The gunners will benefit also from the battlefield artillery target engagement system—BATES—a kind of clearing house for potential targets, made by Marconi Space and Defence Systems, which was ordered last year. To gather information for BATES and other systems, we also ordered the Phoenix remotely piloted vehicle.

While on the Royal Artillery, I must mention also the SP70 self-propelled gun, whose name, sadly, is increasingly inappropriate and revealing as we go into 1986. The House will wish to be aware that the national armaments directors of the trilateral participating nations are currently reviewing the whole troubled programme and will shortly be putting recommendations to Ministers on the way ahead. From the United Kingdom point of view, we are looking for an effective system to enter service as soon as possible.

We have ordered also, since the previous defence debate, bomblet shells for the artillery which will offer a marked improvement in lethality and coverage over the present high explosive shell, in certain circumstances.

In the anti-tank role, the Challenger main battle tank, with much improved mobility and protection over Chieftain, is now entering service with BAOR in quantity. Six regiments have so far been ordered, and we are considering a seventh. Collaborative studies into the next generation main battle tank are at an early stage. For Challengers that get bogged down, we have ordered—after successful competition last year—a quantity of ARRVs. We hope shortly to place orders for the LAW 80 and collaborative development of the Milan successor, known as TRIGAT, in which, it is hoped, will involve eight European nations. That is expected to be launched at the end of the year. We expect to mount a variant of TRIGAT on the light attack helicopter, on which we hope shortly to sign an agreement to proceed with project definition based on the A129 helicopter, with the Italians, Dutch and Spanish. In the meantime, more Lynx helicopters fitted with TOW missiles will be entering service during the next 12 months to enhance firepower in the central region.

While on helicopters, I should like to say that our studies of battlefield mobility requirements are being pressed ahead with dispatch, but I am advised by our military experts that a clear way ahead will not emerge before the end of year. For the Royal Corps of Transport, we hope soon to place orders for the DROPS logistic system. The signallers will also be pleased with the entry into service this year of the Plessey Ptarmigan trunk communications system for BAOR. Command and control will be further improved with the Plessey Wavell ADP system, which also entered service last year. As my

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right hon. Friend the Secretary of State confirmed yesterday the production order with Marconi for the full width attack mine fuse for Barmine is being placed.

Mr. Lewis Carter-Jones (Eccles): The hon. Gentleman went so fast that I did not realise he had covered helicopters. Is he suggesting that the AST404 has now gone out of the window? Is he aware that he paid tribute to the previous secretary of State for Defence—the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine)—who took a certain view on Westland? That view does not seem to accord with the one that the hon. Gentleman has presented to us. Does he realise that more than 15 months ago hon. Members on both sides of the House came to see him about the difficulties faced by Westland? Those difficulties still exist. Will the hon. Gentleman please bear in mind that Rolls-Royce has an interest in this and that the RTM322 engine is involved? There has been a very long delay on helicopers.

Mr. Lee: We are fully cognisant of the position at Westland. I was there within the past few weeks to commission the simulator for the EH101 helicopter. I can say nothing further at this juncture about helicopters.

Mr. Paddy Ashdown (Yeovil): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Lee: Well, I give way.

Mr. Ashdown: I am sure that the House appreciates fully the hon. Gentleman's generosity in giving way so much. Will he be able to announce in the near future at least the order for the 15 Sea Kings, which has been in the pipeline for so long? I am sure that the hon. Gentleman recognises that the order is eagerly awaited. I am sure that he must be able to say when the announcement will be made.

Mr. Lee: I gave way to the hon. Gentleman because I appreciate his deep and genuine constituency interest in this matter. No decision has been taken on the size and timing of a future Sea King order.

Rounding off my remarks about the Army, I return to the mark 1 infantryman. To lighten his load, we have ordered 23 battalions worth of a combination of the GKN Warrior tracked APC which, with its Rarden cannon in the turret makes a major enhancement to infantry firepower together with the Saxon wheeled APC. All regular infantry units in BAOR will be mechanised with Warrior 4 which accords with the new mobile concept of BAOR defensive operations described in the "Statement on the Defence Estimates".

Also lightening the infantryman's load—in another sense—is the new mark 6 composite-material helmet now in service with units in Northern Ireland and which will gradually replace the unpopular old steel helmet in all three services and the Territorial Army. I am told that our troops are very pleased with the lighter and more comfortable new helmet, which also affords greater protection.

Our forces and the taxpayer are entitled to expect the most efficient and sensible use of our substantial budget. In the past I think it is fair to say that, as a generalisation, our defence industries have had a pretty good innings. We certainly want a prosperous and profitable defence contracting sector from which to penetrate overseas markets, but the days of cost-plus contracts and bloated progress payments are gone.

A massive advance has been made by this Government on all fronts to tighten our management, our controls and the numbers we employ. Our task is not finished, but our three services and our nation should be proud of what we have achieved.

6 pm

Mr. Kevin McNamara (Kingston upon Hull, North): It would be inappropriate if we did not start today by noting that it is the 70th anniversary of the battle of the Somme. On the first day of that offensive, we suffered 60,000 casualties, 20,000 of them dead. The occasion is a fine one for us to remember that war is too important to be left to generals and it is also important for us to remember the degree of responsibility that we have to our service men when we are conducting this type of debate. Therefore, I believe that the approach taken by both sides of the House is that, when we are looking at this matter, we are looking at what is rationally the best way of defending our country and protecting the lives of our service men.

During that battle, which was to last four and a half months, there were numerous uses of chemical weapons. They were either sprayed across the battlefield or fired by shells, and the results were always horrifying. As Wilfred Owen said:

> "If you could hear, at every jolt, the blood come gargling from the froth-corrupted lungs, obscene as cancer, bitter as the cud".

It is for that reason that I refer to the last sentence of our amendment which states that we will not, under any circumstances, accept binary chemical weapons in this country, we will not be party to their manufacture and, we will not agree to their being used, in so far as we are able to control it, by members of NATO.

Mr. Churchill (Davyhulme) *rose*—

Mr. McNamara: I will give way to those people who were here for the debate yesterday. Time is limited. I have specifically reduced the amount I was going to say on chemical warfare because other hon. Members will want to make their point. I am merely establishing the principle of where we stand. I will give way to people who were here yesterday but otherwise I will get on with the debate.

Mr. Viggers *rose*—

Mr. McNamara: I will not give way to that hon. Gentleman until he publicly apologises to me, as he did in private.

Yesterday, the Under-Secretary referred to the conduct and quality of the armed forces and the help being given to them. Yesterday he paid proper attention to the help that has been given with regard to low wages and said that a review has been established to look into the pay and allowances. The Opposition welcome that review. Whatever the excuses, ideas or rationale behind it, for service men in Germany the cut in the overseas allowance was a cut in their wages. It was a cut in the basis on which they had budgeted for themselves and their families and it was a real cut, no matter how much we may rationalise it in the House. Therefore, ways of trying to meet that sort of problem for our service men in Germany have to be examined carefully.

The Under-Secretary did not mention a matter which has been to the forefront in the press over the past three

or four weeks—allegations of colour discrimination in the armed forces, in their promotion policies and in their recruitment policies. Reading the replies we got from the Under-Secretary, one almost felt that one was in a "Catch-22" situation. The House will remember the background of "Catch-22" and the American airmen who felt that they had flown too many missions:

"Orr was crazy and could be grounded. All he had to do was to ask; and as soon as he did, he would no longer be crazy and would have to fly more missions. Orr would be crazy to fly more missions and sane if he didn't, but if he was sane he had to fly them. If he flew them he was crazy and didn't have to; but if he didn't want to he was sane and had to."

That is the same Catch-22 we have had from the Ministry in reply to the questions on racial discrimination. According to the Race Relations Act 1976, all recruitment and promotion is based solely on merit. However, ethnic minorities are hardly ever promoted. There is no discrimination in the armed forces because the Ministry of Defence is an equal opportunities employer, even though no ethnic minorities were represented in the trooping of the colour and none will take part in ceremonial duties outside Buckingham palace, except the Regiment of Ghurkas. Very few are senior NCOs and career officers within the armed forces.

If any discrimination did occur, we are told, the individual could have his case investigated under the redress of grievances procedure. Since no cases have been brought under the redress of grievances procedure, obviously there is no discrimination. As there is no discrimination, there is no need for this type of ethnic monitoring system to ensure equality. That was the rationale and reasoning behind the replies of the Ministry of Defence. However, it was the Prime Minister who put the bomb below the Ministry's position because she said in reply to me:

"The possibility of introducing ethnic monitoring to the armed forces is being considered as part of their routine duties by those in the Ministry of Defence who are responsible for service personnel, policies and practices."—[*Official Report*, Friday 20 June 1986; Vol. 99, c. 659.]

If there is no discrimination or complaint, why should the Prime Minister think it is necessary to have a routine inquiry into it? Evidently, there is discrimination in the armed forces, so a deadlock is introduced.

It seems to the Opposition that a system must be set up to look seriously into ethnic recruitment within the armed forces, not on the basis of positive discrimination to ensure that people who are not capable or able to do the job are promoted, but to ensure that those who are capable and able are promoted. The argument that the Ministry puts forward—that all promotion is on merit—is insulting to the ethnic minorities in this country, because it suggests that they have no merit and are not worthy of being considered as senior NCOs and commissioned ranks. *The Observer* said that it is no longer enough for organisations such as the Ministry of Defence to say blandly that they do not discriminate, without providing monitoring evidence to support the assertion.

It is interesting that nearly 100 flag and field officers in the United States armed forces are black and Major-General Blunt, a black officer in the United States armed forces, said:

"Until the leadership of the British Army make the decision to open up the higher ranks of the Army to Blacks, there will be racial problems in the British Army."

I would go so far as to say that there will be racial problems within the United Kingdom. If we regard the armed forces as the first strength and first organisation to protect our country and our people, if blacks and Asians can be in that force it shows that they have been accepted as responsible citizens within our society. That is more fundamental perhaps than any of the other positive policies that are being considered in the United Kingdom.

The Under-Secretary made an interesting statement about the aviation support vessel. It is an interesting concept. I do not want to pursue it too much now, but perhaps his right hon. Friend the Minister will address it when he replies. Is it merely a helicopter support ship? Is it the Arapaho proposal taken and examined or is it a mini-carrier? What exactly does it refer to?

In listening to the Under-Secretary I was also interested to hear what he had to say about the future of the European fighter aircraft. That point was interesting because, in the wording of page 7 of the report of the Select Committee on Defence, there is a query over the European fighter aircraft's future. In reply to a question from the hon. Member for Arundel (Mr. Marshall) the Secretary of State said:

"None of us would regard ourselves as fully committed or firmly committed at all to the next stages. That will have to be taken when it arises. But it is the case that in the next three years ahead there is a small amount of expenditure on development, experimental work, etc.".

In discussions on this matter the Under-Secretary of State said that, when the Ministry comes to the end of project definition at the beginning of the autumn, it will then consider which course should be taken.

As I understand it, there has already been slippage in this matter. I was originally under the impression that the decision was to be taken at the beginning of the year and that we would then talk about firm orders and manufacturing capability. Now, because of slippage, I understand that the contracted parties are not likely to take a decision until the middle of next year at the earliest. Is that correct? What does that mean in terms of programme slippage? Does it mean, as the Opposition suspect, that there will be no firm orders until after 1988? If that is the case, that will represent yet another Government cut.

I was also interested to read about Skynet in the Estimates and the White Paper. As a result of the accidents involving Challenger and Ariane, there has been a setback in our hopes for our satellites. It is important that we should have an independent defence capability. I would therefore like to raise the issue of HOTOL as a possible replacement for the two systems to which I have already referred.

Why has the Ministry of Defence not taken a more positive interest in the HOTOL development? If HOTOL is to have a future, the project must be important to our defence, as it will be able to get our satellites—which are necessary for defence — quickly, efficiently and cheaply into the sky.

We have been told that the Americans at NASA have decided to take on board the same concept and are pouring vast funds into the air orient express. We would like to think that the Ministry of Defence is as active in seeking European support for HOTOL as the French are in seeking interest in their Hermes project. HOTOL appears to be far more interesting and to hold out greater hope for our defence and for satellite communications than Hermes. It would also be a great step forward for the Ministry of Defence.

[Mr. McNamara]

The Secretary of State was remarkably coy yesterday about star wars. That is understandable, as the whole scene has changed since the former Secretary of State for Defence trumpeted that we would have $1·5 billion-worth of orders for SDI coming to British industry. The retiring British ambassador to the United States was quoted in the *Daily Telegraph* on Saturday as saying:

"He rates Anglo-American negotiations over President Reagan's 'Star Wars' project one of the major achievements of the past four years, with Britain taking part 'not just as a contractor but a partner'."

Great! Star wars will involve some $26 billion, which is an astronomical sum of money, and we will be involved as a partner.

However, it turns out that we are to be a limited partner, a partner limited to such an extent that the contracts that we have received arising from the secret memorandum of understanding are less than 1 per cent. or 0·5 per cent. of the $1·5 billion that was recently announced. In fact, the programme has been so disastrous that the Ministry has been forced to bring into the Department from outside industry Mr. Jim Powell of British Aerospace to rescue the British component of SDI as envisaged by the Ministry. Understandably, the Secretary of State was coy on this matter, and understandably, there was little discussion of it from the Under-Secretary of State when he considered its progress.

Frankly, the Opposition believe that British industry is correct to take a caustic and suspicious view of SDI. It is seen by British industry as little more than a confidence trick to drain away our technology and, perhaps more importantly, our technologists. It has been sold by President Reagan as a non-nuclear defence system. That is its logic. Yet it can only work, according to the Americans, if there are nuclear explosions in space to generate the necessary X-rays and laser beams.

The whole world now knows that SDI is dangerous and expensive nonsense. It is dangerous for world peace because it accelerates the arms race, and is dangerous for British industry because it can seduce away our technicians and technology. I am pleased that British industry is regarding it very carefully.

Sir Humphrey Atkins (Spelthorne): If highly skilled people in this country want to take part in this kind of research and development and our firms do not take part, will these people not go to America anyway?

Mr. McNamara: They may indeed do that. Unlike the Russians, we do not have any prohibition on the free transfer of our citizens. If they wish to go to America, that is a matter for them. If they want to be seduced by the almighty dollar, there is nothing we can do about it, any more than we can do anything about the departure of our surgeons or physicians. However, there are compensations other than the size of one's bank balance for living in this country; otherwise, why would the right hon. Member for Spelthorne (Sir H. Atkins) and other hon. Members be here? We look forward to the time when my right hon. Friend the Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock) is Prime Minister and my right hon. Friend the Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) is Secretary of State for Defence.

The Secretary of State and the Under-Secretary of State were very coy about Nimrod and the future of the early warning system, yet it is of the utmost importance to this country. The Under-Secretary said that the tenders would be received by 7 July. Will they be the final tenders? How and when will the decision be reached? As I understand it, the Ministry of Defence is sending a team to Long Island in the second and third week of this month to consider what Grumman is doing at Bethpage. If the Ministry is doing that, how quickly will we get a decision? Will a decision be made this month as was originally envisaged?

Mr. Lee *indicated dissent.*

Mr. McNamara: The Under-Secretary of State shakes his head, so it appears that the decision will not be taken this month. The Under-Secretary gave an undertaking——

Mr. Lee: I hope that we will be able to announce a decision by the autumn.

Mr. McNamara: That is the kind of slippage that I welcome. I am grateful for the Under-Secretary's remarks and for the undertaking which he gave during the previous defence Question Time that the decision will be announced in the House. He gave that undertaking to me and I am grateful for it.

Mr. Lee: With great respect, the hon. Gentleman is not correct. I gave an undertaking to draw the hon. Gentleman's request to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. I said that would be normal practice to make such an announcement in the House. However, I did not give a categorical assurance.

Mr. McNamara: So something will be slipped out in the summer or in the early autumn when the House is in recess and there will be no announcement in the House.

Mr. Donald Thompson (Calder Valley): The hon. Member should not be cantankerous.

Mr. McNamara: I like to see Government Whips sitting on the Front Bench telling people not to be cantankerous, when all they do is mutter away, either criticising their own party for letting them down or criticising the Opposition for putting them in their place. Really, the hon. Member for Calder Valley (Mr. Thompson) should not speak in that way.

Nimrod is a very important matter for this country. It is important because there is a continuing gap in our defences which must be filled. It is important because the amounts of money dependent on the decisions made could affect defence expenditure in other important areas. The situation has not been helped by the Government moving the goal posts, just as they did over the PC9, the RAF trainer. Thus, I hope that the goal posts will not be moved again.

The Under-Secretary of State spoke about the various options, but if the order does not go to GEC, it will be a major blow for British industry. Indeed, the hon. Member for Gillingham (Mr. Couchman), who has part of GEC avionics in his constituency, spoke about that in his intervention to the Under-Secretary of State. If the order does not go to GEC, important investments made partly by the Government and partly by the company will be written off. It will mean that two companies effectively in the United States only will be recognised as being able to produce that type of radar. Europe will be out of the running for a long time. It will also mean that the heavy investment made in RAF Waddington will have been

wasted, even though the equipment has already been delivered and is in use. It has even been suggested that the future of RAF Waddington may be in question.

In order to meet the minimum RAF requirement, I understand that £250 million is required now for GEC, and a further £150 million is required to meet the original air staff requirement. That must be considered against a possible cost of £1·5 billion if we go for an American system. We are talking about 2,000 jobs and about leaving the field clear for the Americans. Europe would be contracting out of one of the most important areas of development in terms of defence and electronics generally.

Mr. Lee: Where does the £1·5 billion cost of purchasing an American system come from? What authority does the hon. Gentleman have for making that statement?

Mr. McNamara: That is a good question. The figure is based on the information that we could get. Indeed, I shall come to that point in a few moments. It is all a question of the amount of information available to the House, which in turn affects the level and quality of our debates. Indeed, I shall make the point now. The House lacks any proper informed discussion before decisions are made. We discuss issues after the Government have made decisions and have placed contracts. But the House and its Committees do not look at the on-line costs of major schemes. We have no outside way of monitoring the schemes. We have no way of looking at the way in which defence decisions are made. That point must be considered.

Mr. Lee: That may well be a subject for wider discussion another time, but I specifically asked the hon. Gentleman where he got the figure of £1·5 billion from. Is it just a figure that he has plucked from the air?

Mr. McNamara: That figure was authoritatively given to me by one of the groups interested in this matter.

Mr. Lee: The hon. Gentleman is saying——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. With respect, the Under-Secretary of State made a long speech. Many hon. Members are waiting to take part in the debate. I wonder whether some of those points could be left until the Minister replies to the debate.

Mr. McNamara: I accept what you say, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I turn to the statement made yesterday by the Secretary of State about defence cuts. He told us that he would be realistic. Yet everything that he said, in effect, cut our ability in conventional defence in favour of Trident. In the statement on the Defence Estimates, we are told that the Warsaw pact has 16,600 main battle tanks to NATO's 7,800. That is a ratio of more than 2:1 in favour of the Warsaw pact. Yesterday, the cancellation of the LAW mine was announced, together with a reduction in provision for future mine systems which could help to defeat a conventional attack. But if we do not have such conventional defences, the possibility of nuclear retaliation as a result of a flexible response is increased.

The Government have cut our conventional forces and our conventional capability in order to maintain Trident. The Defence Estimates claim that the Warsaw pact has a 2:1 advantage in terms of tactical fixed-wing aircraft. Yet yesterday, we were told that the second Harrier batch is likely to be postponed. We already know that the provision of the Tornado for the RAF is being considerably postponed in order to meet the Saudi order.

We are talking about cuts in our conventional forces and in our ability to meet a conventional attack, merely in order to fund Trident. The White Paper says that the Soviets have a 2·3:1 advantage because of submarines. Yet yesterday, we were told that the type 22 frigates will not have the new advanced sonar ray system. The Minister cannot tell us when we shall get the frigates that we need. We are told that the Navy will have "about 50" frigates instead of the 50 that we were promised. What does "about 50" mean? Does it mean forty-seven, forty-eight or forty-nine? We know that the Government are reneging yet again.

Indeed, the Government are reneging on the commitment to conventional defences and are thus increasing the possibility of a nuclear war. They are lowering the nuclear threshold in order to pursue the ephemeral idea that Trident is somehow important to this country's defence. They somehow think that a weapon of suicide is necessary.

The pivot of Labour's collective defence policy is membership of NATO. That membership will be continued and strengthened under a Labour Government, while we pursue our policy of maintaining and strengthening our conventional forces, and of unilateral nuclear disarmament. We shall negotiate with our American allies the removal of their nuclear weapons systems from the United Kingdom. The Labour party recognises and accepts that facilities in the United Kingdom that are given to the United States are for the joint collective defence of western Europe. American bases in the United Kingdom are here for NATO purposes. Labour is quite happy to see them maintained for NATO purposes and for uses originally envisaged by the Alliance, provided that all nuclear weaponry is withdrawn.

However, the use of United Kingdom bases for United States out-of-area purposes—that is, out of the NATO treaty area—are ventures that were not envisaged in the original exchange of notes establishing United States bases in the United Kingdom. The Labour party therefore believes that, given our non-nuclear defence policy and the fact that the use of bases for non-NATO purposes is contrary to the original spirit of establishing them in the United Kingdom, there will have to be a more formal discussion with the United States and the establishment of an open treaty outlining the limits and the extent to which the United States bases in the United Kingdom can be used within the role originally assigned to them, particularly in the light of the Libyan adventure.

We say "particularly in the light of the Libyan adventure", because out-of-area activities by NATO were specifically drawn in by the United States when NATO was being considered. At the time, the United States did not want to be drawn into colonial wars as Britain, France, Holland and Belgium divested themselves of their empires. Equally, we do not want to be drawn into what many people regard as the United States' colonial and misjudged wars.

We are not in favour of the United States supporting terrorism in Nicaragua. We think that the votes for that were wrong and will only destroy those very ideals so nobly called for in the Declaration of Independence.

Mr. Couchman: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. McNamara: With the greatest respect, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you have requested us to be brief. I have already given way once——

Mr. Couchman *rose*——

Mr. McNamara: I understand that the hon. Gentleman spoke yesterday, so I shall not give way; I want people to understand the position of the Labour party.

Yesterday, many hon. Members said that the United States would, in a fit of pique, remove all its weapons and go home if we asked it to take away its nuclear weapons. but I have a higher regard for that country than to think it would act in that way.

Other things in the United Kingdom are more important to the United States than even its nuclear bases and the F111s. One of them is Cheltenham. The United States ability to use our facilities in Cyprus is also more important to it than its nuclear bases. The Americans are hard-headed enough when negotiating to know that these matters are far more important. We can think and talk about them, because we are allies, but we are determined that eventually United States nuclear weapons will go, as ours will go.

The United States belongs to NATO for the same reason as the United Kingdom belongs to NATO. The United States regards it as being in its national interest to belong to NATO. When the United States decides that it is no longer in its national interest to remain a part of NATO, it will probably pick up its baseball bats and go home. It would be improper for the United States to be engaged in an alliance that it did not feel was in the strategic and economic interests of its people. We understand that. That is what alliances are made for. When the United States reaches that decision, whether it has nuclear bases in this country will matter not one jot. Should the population of the United States drift towards the Pacific coast and believe that its future is tied up with the Pacific basin, even the possession by the United States of a million nuclear bases in this country would not affect that decision.

Mr. Couchman: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. McNamara: No, I shall not give way.

Mr. Couchman *rose*——

Mr. McNamara: The Labour party will have nothing to do with binary chemical weapons. A Labour Government will negotiate with our United States allies the withdrawal of its nuclear weapons from this country. If the United States wants this country to provide other facilities for it, we shall try to reach an open agreement with it. But the House and the people will know about that agreement. It will not be secret. Furthermore, the decisions that are taken will not be secret.

I had intended to say to the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen)—who cannot be here, unfortunately, for very proper reasons, and who has made his apologies to both sides of the House—that one of the reasons for the failure of acceptance of Chevaline and other nuclear weapons in this country was that the British people did not know what was being decided on their behalf. Had the right hon. Gentleman been here, I should have said to him that, whatever side he took in the argument over Chevaline, it is certain that the decision that he reached in secret with some of my right hon. Friends was one of the reasons for the Labour party debacle which forced him to leave the party. The decision was taken in secret because my right hon. Friends knew how the Labour party felt about the matter. Nevertheless, that decision was taken.

We cannot support the White Paper. The Estimates are based upon the fallacy that the Government will be able to retain their conventional commitments but still push through Trident. We do not believe that that can be done, nor do we believe that this country can go forward in that way. The Opposition believe that until this country abandons the strange idea that it is still in the super-power class and stops hankering for the maintenance of its own nuclear deterrent, it will never come to terms with its proper role and place in the world. We shall be unable to face the real challenges because we shall still be hankering after past glories that we can no longer achieve. That is what the policy of the Secretary of State for Defence is all about—glories that we shall never be able to achieve. Thereby, the real defence of our country is put at risk.

6.33 pm

Mr. Julian Amery (Brighton, Pavilion): Well, now we know. My right hon. and hon. Friends and I must express gratitude to the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) for the very clear way in which he has laid the policy of the Labour party on the table—no British nuclear weapons, unilateral cancellation and the removal of American nuclear facilities from this country. However, we would remain a member of NATO and rely upon American protection in NATO.

NATO's strategy is dependent upon American nuclear power, whether exercised on the continent or from the United States. I am not sure, therefore, what is meant by the Labour party's commitment to the removal of American nuclear facilities from this country. We would lose the goodwill of the United States, which regards us as a valid member of the Alliance. If I were considering the matter from the point of view of the Pentagon, I might think that that rather wiser Socialist leader, Felipe Gonzalez, would be a better bet than the Labour party. The Americans might therefore move their nuclear facilities to Spain. This is the most inconsequential strategy that has ever been propounded on the Floor of the House of Commons since somebody suggested at the time of Tobruk that the Duke of Gloucester should be made commander-in-chief.

The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North, referred not once, but three or four times, to the "nonsense" of the strategic defence initiative. When the most powerful country in the world decides to pledge billions of dollars to the strategic defence initiative, surely a little more humility would be in order before reaching a judgment about whether this project is nonsense.

When this country is considering arms control and defence, one is worried about what is happening at Geneva and about the arms race. We have to ask ourselves what is behind the arms race and what caused it. I shall illustrate briefly what I believe to be the cause of the arms race.

I visited Romania in 1972 with my hon. Friend the Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill), where we talked to the Vice-President of Romania, a hardened Communist leader. He attached great importance to developing trade relations with the West. He said, "If you really want detente, you must always be a bit stronger than the Warsaw pact." He explained this in simple terms. He said that the dominant force in the Soviet Union is the military

and industrial complex, though not for ideological reasons. It is a praetorian guard that defends the regime, and the generals, field marshals, colonels, scientists, managers and others have more access to privilege and perquisites than anybody else in Soviet countries. Therefore they have to justify their existence, and wherever there is a chance for them to expand they will take it. So he said, "Do not give them the chance. Always be just a little bit stronger than they are."

This was in the period of the Nixon-Kissinger detente. There was a rough balance between the two sides. When that period passed, we entered into what I might call loosely the Carter era, when the United States, Britain —under a Labour Government—and other countries in NATO lowered their guard, while the Soviets did nothing of the kind. We opened a window of opportunity to the Soviets, which they were quick to exploit and of which they were quick to take advantage.

There was a daring Soviet operation in Angola. The Soviets married up 20,000 Cuban troops with a huge load of Soviet weaponry — at great risk to themselves but successfully. They consolidated their base at Aden. They took a grip on Ethiopia and waged a successful war, again with surrogates, against Somalia. They established a base in Cam Ranh in Vietnam and encouraged the Vietnamese occupation of Kampuchea, but what shook us most was their invasion of Afghanistan with Red Army forces. Not content with all that, they went on to put a lot of arms and money through surrogates into Nicaragua.

Afghanistan woke up the West at last when the United States began to rearm, and so did we in western Europe, and President Reagan — all credit to him — set about restoring a balance of power in military terms in the world, a balance of what I think is called in Marxist circles the correlation of forces — not just in hardware, although that was most important, but in active support for the national liberation movements in Angola, in Afghanistan, in Nicaragua and, I hope, shortly in Ethiopia, where the resettlement policy, encouraged by the Marxist Government, has killed as many people as the famine did last year.

I hope that we will give all the help that we can to the generous initiatives of the United States to help people defend themselves against the Communist tyrannies imposed on them from the outside. Our SAS has very good experience of the technologies that should be used in this direction. It is worth noting that the Chinese take a similar view, at any rate on Kampuchea and Afghanistan.

I think that we ought to look at arms control and regional problems together. Of course we want to see the burden of the arms race diminished, but I think that we also want to see comparable concessions from the Soviet side in what I call the regional conflicts that have destroyed the limited detente that existed in the early part of the last decade. So far, I see no sign of that.

The Soviets have reinforced Angola for the latest offensive against UNITA, they have sent more troops into Afghanistan than ever before and they have tightened their grip on Ethiopia. I think that this is a situation that we cannot accept. It goes to the heart of the problem of arms control.

Mr. Gorbachev faces a crucial dilemma. He faces immense economic difficulties at home, exacerbated by the fall in the price of oil, which has diminished by about 30 per cent. the Soviets' capacity to earn hard currency. There is no way in which he can compete in an arms race—unless, of course, he abandons any attempt to reform his own economy, and we have no particular interest in seeing him reform his economy while he remains in the position in which he is.

Arms control and regional solutions should go hand in hand. We want to see the Soviets out of Angola, out of Ethiopia, out of Afghanistan, and out of Kampuchea. I am sure that the Americans will look after Nicaragua themselves. The correlation of forces at the present time is increasingly favourable to the position that we are in. One notes the rather interesting speech that Mr. Gorbachev made in Warsaw, I think, the day before yesterday. He said that he was not acting under pressure —he went out of his way to stress that. The truth is that he is acting under pressure, and it is because the correlation of forces is favourable to the West in a way that it was not in President Carter's time that he is prepared to begin to talk and to discuss. It is for that reason that he has not run out of the Geneva talks, in spite of all the threats. It is for that reason that he has not abandoned the summit.

Mr. Dubs: The right hon. Gentleman mentioned Nicaragua and said, if I heard him correctly, that the Americans will look after Nicaragua. Is he saying that Nicaragua, a free and independent country, is somehow to have its affairs looked after by another power? Surely he does not mean that. Surely peace in the world depends upon countries being able to develop on their own without outside interference or the threat of outside attack.

Mr. Amery: I was saying just that, because I do not think that Nicaragua is a free and independent country. It is being subverted from outside. There is a strong Cuban and east European presence in there which has built up an army and the beginnings of an air force on really quite a threatening scale. When we begin to talk about intervening in the affairs of other countries, I do not know what the hon. Member's position is about South Africa, but it seems to me that everyone is quite prepared to play at that game at the momemt.

What worries me about this debate is the pressure under which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State finds himself to cut back on defence. He says that this is realistic. The same thing is happening in the United States. Congress is trying to cut back on the defence budget, and elections are coming along in the United States — and they are not all that far away here. If we relax, one can be sure that the Soviets will consolidate the gains that they have made and use them as springboards for the next advance. Where will it be — in Iran, in the Sudan, in Thailand? I do not know.

My right hon. Friend is beset by powerful adversaries. On the one hand there are those who want to cut taxation, and on the other there are those who want to increase expenditure on social services. They do not agree with each other, but they are absolutely agreed on one thing, and that is to cut back on defence, alas, yet the first priority is to maintain the security of our country. We should heed the advice given to me by the late Vice-President of Romania, "If you want detente, you must keep an edge over the Soviet Union."

6.46 pm

Mr. Jack Ashley (Stoke on Trent, South): The right hon. Member for Brighton, Pavilion (Mr. Amery) said

[Mr. Jack Ashley]

that he would like to broaden the scope of the debate a little. I should like to do the opposite and narrow the scope of it a little. It is a great strength of the House that we can discuss a wide range of issues, as the right hon. Gentleman has just done, and simultaneously listen to one specific aspect of the problems confronting us.

I want to ask the House to listen to a short speech on abolishing section 10 of the Crown Proceedings Act 1947, because this prevents service personnel who have been disabled by negligence from suing for damages. I am speaking of those who are on non-combatant duties. When service men are in battle, it is an acceptable doctrine that they should not be able to sue for negligence. That is very difficult to do. I am speaking of service personnel on non-combatant duties, who are deprived of their rights. I believe that it is wrong to do this when they are engaged in day-to-day duties.

The consequence of section 10 is that they receive grossly inadequate compensation. The Ministry of Defence argues that the pensions provided are adequate and are a substitute for compensation, but of course this is nonsense. My constituent, Mr. Martin Ketterick, who has been gravely disabled by alleged negligence, is receiving by way of pension only one third of what he would receive if he were able to sue for negligence. Other public servants, notably police and firemen, receive a pension and are able to sue for negligence.

A further consequence of section 10 is that disabled service men, disabled ex-service men or the relatives of those who are killed by negligence are denied information, and some of them are treated with disdain and arrogance by senior officers. I have abundant evidence to prove that point.

The arguments by the Ministry of Defence for preserving section 10 are ludicrous. It says, first, that there is no reasonable dividing line between military action and other duties; secondly, that to abolish section 10 would endanger discipline; thirdly, that its abolition would create anomalies; and fourthly, that service men may not be able to prove negligence. The first point is nonsense—any service man could tell the difference. Secondly, discipline has nothing to do with legal redress. Thirdly, the Ministry blithely disregards the anomalies that exist when a service man cannot sue, whereas other public servants can. Fourthly, whether a service man can prove his case is a matter for a court of law to decide, as happens with other public servants.

It is interesting that the Ministry of Defence has been reviewing section 10 since October 1983—for nearly three years. Since then I have tabled parliamentary questions, I have initiated a parliamentary debate and I have tabled early-day motions. I have also taken a deputation to see the Secretary of State. None of those actions has produced one word from the Ministry. When the deputation met the Secretary of State on 20 February this year he listened attentively and we thought that we had had a good hearing, but since then we have had nothing positive from the Department. In a parliamentary answer on 17 June the Under-Secretary said that the review was well advanced, but the Ministry was unable to give a date for its completion. The delay by the Ministry is a condemnation of its ability to make decisions. There is no point in the Ministry saying that this is a complex issue. Most issues are complex.

To take three years to decide on such an issue is preposterous. It raises the question of what the Ministry of Defence has to hide. I can disclose tonight that the Ministry of Defence has taken action, but it is surreptitious and deplorable. It has put a blackout on public information.

Two weeks ago, on 17 June, I went to No. 10 Downing street with representatives of the Section Ten Abolition Group, which I helped to establish in the House of Commons with disabled ex-service men and relatives of others who have been killed, to present a petition. After the petition was presented, I was told that recruiting officers in the Ministry of Defence had been instructed by the Ministry not to be drawn by recruits or their parents on section 10. They had been instructed to stonewall and to say that section 10 was under review. In other words, on an issue which could have profound effects upon the future of recruits, recruiting officers have strict instructions to say nothing. I invite the Minister to confirm, or deny, that story, now or when he replies to the debate.

What is even worse is that a disabled ex-service man who has suffered because of section 10 has been threatened by the Ministry of Defence. He has been ordered to keep quiet. Mr. John Meredith works as a civil servant in the Royal Artillery school. He has given devoted service to the armed forces. He enlisted as a boy in 1941 and was discharged in 1971, after 30 years service to the Army. He was registered disabled in 1972. He feels very bitter about section 10, which prevents him from suing for negligence. He feels equally bitter about the effort to gag him. The day before he came to see me and to present that petition to the Prime Minister, Mr. Meredith was threatened by a senior official that he must not say anything detrimental to the Crown. He was warned that if he did so he would lose his service pension, his disability pension and his job. He was ordered to put into writing what he was doing the following day when he came to London to discuss the issue.

The Ministry of Defence is behaving like a bully because it knows that, as the implications of section 10 become more well known, it will be widely condemned in the House and outside.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): I have much sympathy with the case that the right hon. Gentleman is advancing. Can he tell the House why Mr. Meredith, to whom he has referred at length, is contesting his position and the amount of disability allowance that he should receive from the Ministry of Defence? If the right hon. Gentleman did so——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Briefly.

Mr. Winterton—it would enable the House to come to a more considered opinion of the case.

Mr. Ashley: I appreciate the question. The point is that Mr. Meredith was severely disabled and under section 10 has been denied the right to sue. I cannot give exact figures, because he is not my constituent, but I have been associated with him and he has no doubt that if he were able to sue he would get far more than he is getting from the Ministry now. I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman was in the House when I referred to Martin Ketterick, but he can get only one third of what he might

have expected had he been able to sue. That was worked out by an actuary. I hope that that answers the question satisfactorily, even though I cannot give figures.

The Ministry is behaving abominably in trying to gag Mr. Meredith. The Ministry will not frighten him, because he is determined to speak out. The Minister should look into my allegation and give an answer this evening. The issue will be pursued.

The Section Ten Abolition Group is doing the job that should be done by the Ministry of Defence. The Ministry has a duty to inform all service personnel of the implications of section 10, so that they know their rights. STAG is putting advertisements in local newspapers telling service men and potential recruits of the implications of section 10. Some hon. Members and the Ministry of Defence do not like those advertisements, but they are simply stating the facts. To conceal the truth is to mislead. Therefore STAG is right to make the facts known. It is immoral to try to hide the truth, as the Ministry is trying to do, by showing its displeasure at the whole affair.

When he replies to the debate, the Minister should tell the House whether the Ministry is prepared to issue pamphlets or to indicate in some way to service personnel or to recruits exactly what section 10 means. The Minister has tried to put the case to me, but he should explain to all these people exactly what is happening.

Finally — I am sorry if I have taken longer than intended — the removal of section 10 will enable those who are entitled to compensation to receive it. I think that that would mark the end of the carelessness, arrogance and secrecy that we have seen. If I had time I could horrify the House with some of the letters from senior officers who have written, with disdain, to the widows of men who have been killed, stating that they had no right to information on how their husband was killed. That is appalling arrogance, and senior officers have no right to speak like that. There is a callousness in the services because senior officers are protected by section 10.

I hope that the Ministry of Defence will stop living in the past, complete the necessary reviews and give service men their rights. I want these rights in peace time, for non-combatant duties and not when people are at war. In peace time, they are as entitled to those rights as are other public servants.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I remind the House that the ten minutes rule on the length of speeches became effective at 7 o'clock.

7 pm

Mr. David Crouch (Canterbury): The right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley) is perfectly correct, in a debate on the Defence Estimates, although we are talking about matters concerning £18 billion, Trident, Tornado, and type 23 frigates, to raise the issue of disabled persons. It is right that the cases of individuals in the armed services should be mentioned if there is a case to be heard.

This evening I shall observe your injunction, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and speak for no more than 10 minutes. Indeed, I have not prepared myself to speak for longer. We are discussing the Defence Estimates. It is one thing to consider expenditure figures, as we are doing, but another to see that we get value for money.

I spent last week in the Falkland Islands. I was invited, together with other hon. Members from both sides of the House, by the Secretary of State for Defence to see something of what is done by the Falklands defence force. It was a remarkable experience. It was remarkable to see how the three services in the Falklands worked together, completely harmonised and in a state of high readiness, great alertness and war preparedness. None of us could have failed to be impressed by what we saw. We were impressed by the sophistication of the equipment and the skill of those who operate that equipment. There are not many people there — either men nor women — but the quality of those in the defence force is outstanding.

The maintenance of this force is of course expensive, because a modern integrated defence system is expensive. That expense is added to by the 8,000 miles that separates Britain from the Falklands. It is therefore especially expensive to maintain that defence force, but I argue that it could be much more expensive if the force was less sophisticated, less efficient or less well integrated and harmonised.

The cost of defending the Falklands could also be less expensive if we were able to achieve better, more normal relations with Argentina — the potential enemy which lies across the water. Until those better relations are achieved, the cost of defending the Falklands will be a burden — a necessary burden — that will figure in our Defence Estimates.

It can be levelled as a criticism of the islanders that they require such an expensive operation to safeguard their shores, but it is not just to safeguard those islanders. The force is there to safeguard a British independent territory. I hope that we can improve our relations with Argentina and so reduce the tension, the threat and therefore the need to maintain our forces at such a high state of readiness. Equally, Argentina should recognise that the defence of the Falklands is an established fact made necessary by its invasion of the islands four years ago. The Argentine Government and people should also recognise that there is no question of our discussing the sovereignty of the islands. We should talk to them about re-establishing good relations.

I have talked of the military operation in the Falklands, and I wanted its reality, its effectiveness and its necessity to be heard of in this country, where questions are being asked about whether we should spend the money on it. I wanted its reality, effectiveness and necessity to be heard of in the Argentine, where a sense of unreality about the Falklands Islands still persists. I wanted to report my impressions of the armed forces — the men, women and the equipment. In my view they are outstanding and more than a match for the threat that they face.

I believe that we should seek to strive to reduce that threat. I told the Falkland Islanders whom I met — the councillors and members of the Falkland Islands Committee — that in my part of England — Kent and Sussex — we once built a series of forts to defend our Channel shores against the threat of invasion by Napoleon. Today those forts — Martello towers — are empty and our relations with France are friendly. The threat has gone. That is an exaggerated example, but it is an example, nevertheless. We are even building a tunnel for even better and closer relations with the French, although it is not improving my relations with the people of Kent.

I wish to make two points about our impressions. One concerns the state of morale of our forces, who are 8,000 miles away from home. The post service is vital, and that

[Mr. David Crouch]

was stressed to us all the time. If it is so much as one day late, morale goes down very fast—the commander told us that. At present, delays are cut to a minimum and it takes about five days for mail to get there. That is accepted as pretty good. There is no delay once the mail gets there, despite the island's size. It is approximately the size of Wales and there are many outposts to which mail must be delivered. The mail service must be kept regular, efficient and fast.

The second matter that I wish to raise is that of Falklands Islands pay. I know that it is called theatre pay and that it is not much liked by the Ministry or by the serving officers. It is not paid for the first four-month tour of duty—that is the tour of duty on the Falklands—but only on the second tour of duty, provided that that second tour occurs within 18 months. If it is so much as one day over that limit, service men or women do not get service Falklands pay. There is a rumble of criticism about it. Some cases of unfairness can be found and some chaps have just missed out by two or three days. This situation needs to be studied by the Ministry, together with service personnel, to see what can be done to relieve that small criticism.

Finally, a little more entertainment would be appreciated by the forces on the Falklands. I was told that videos of the World Cup take seven weeks to get out there. That really is a bit too long. Wives and girlfriends can and have illegally taped those matches, even between England and Argentina, and have got them out there to their service husbands or boyfriends. If they can do that, the Ministry of Defence could probably get them out there more efficiently.

Sir Harry Secombe has been to the Falklands and was much appreciated. The type of entertainment that is required is what I would call a night club type of entertainment—*[Interruption.]* When I was there it was pretty well night all the time—that is, when it was not blowing a force 11 gale. Perhaps another description, to please hon. Members, would be a northern club type of entertainment. It needs someone who can work a club in an intimate style, because that is the only space that there is to work.

Those are my impressions—impressions involving a little politics and a lot of praise.

7.10 pm

Mr. Nicholas Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, East): It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Canterbury (Mr. Crouch). Unlike the hon. Gentleman, I shall make some reference to the Royal Navy, in particular, to the 50-ship navy, or, as we now call it, the "about 50-ship navy," more or less. Less, we all suspect.

As the House knows, four shipyards are tendering for the future type 23s. With the considerable economies of scale that accrue to the Ministry of Defence in placing more than one order with the same yard, it is obvious that someone would be disappointed. It is equally obvious that Members of Parliament, such as myself, with substantial constituency interests in the shipbuilding industry, will fight hard to ensure that there is fair play in these matters.

I want to raise two issues in that context, the first relating to lead yard status, and the second to the auxiliary oiler replenishment vessel order. It is possible, although I do not think it is intended by the Government, that current Ministry of Defence procurement policies could effectively prevent follow-on builders from bidding successfully against the first of class lead shipbuilder.

The lead shipbuilder holds a monopoly over the supply of information relating to the follow-on ship. If that monopoly position is not adequately controlled by the Ministry of Defence, it can be exploited effectively to drive follow-on yards out of the market, resulting in lead builders having a monopoly on construction as well.

What is being done to ensure that follow-on yards can compete on a fair and equitable basis with the lead builder? That is particularly important because, in the case of the type 23 frigate, the single role minehunter and all submarines, the lead builder has won the first of class contracts with no competition at all. All that will make complete nonsense of the principle of second source bidding which is already so much a feature of the Pentagon's procurement policy and which is the direction in which the Government claim to be moving.

The other point that I want to make is about fair play. The whole of Tyneside feels cheated over the placement of the AOR at Harland and Wolff. Those who believe that there has been foul play—time, of course, will tell—will find further evidence in something that I discovered this weekend.

Reading the second report of the Select Committee on Defence as a background document for this debate, I picked up the evidence to the Committee given by Mr. Levene, whose role in defence procurement is, of course, substantial. Mr. Levene has seriously misled the Committee over the AOR 2. In the course of so doing he has raised an important new doubt over the placement of the AOR 1. I find it hard to understand how that misleading of the Committee could have been accidental.

On 15 May at question 402 of the Select Committee's report, Mr. Levene, when questioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas), who is present today, said:

"As I understand it, Chairman—because this is an answer to questions when the Secretary of State made the announcement—Swans can make a bid for the second AOR and have 'a preferential position', but they have to meet *** million?"

The asterisk means that the figure is stated, but not printed. Mr. Levene confirmed: "*** million." That is, he gave a definite figure to the Select Committee.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Dudley, East (Dr. Gilbert), to make sure that the position was clear and could not be open to any misunderstanding, asked:

"Do they know what they have to meet?"

Mr. Levene said "Yes." The truthful answer would have been no. It is as straightforward as that. My right hon. Friend the Member for Dudley, East went on to ask:

"What was their reaction on that?"

Mr. Levene replied:

"They are still considering it."

That is completely untrue. Swan Hunter has nothing to consider. Yet Mr. Levene left the Select Committee with the impression that Swan Hunter was considering its response to a definite price. I was assured by the managing director of Swan Hunter, when I put the point to him over the weekend, that that is not the case at all. There is nothing to consider.

My hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, West at question 404, asked:

"They have the advantage now that they did not have before, of knowing an exact price they have to meet, and being able to acquire, I think, either through Harlands or through

Yarrows, the design capability or the design drawings—may be not the detailed design drawings, but certainly the major design drawings?"

Mr. Levene said, "That is quite right." An honest answer to that question would have been, "That is wholly wrong." It is not a fact that Swan Hunter has the advantage of knowing the exact price to meet. It does not have that knowledge. Swan Hunter does not have the major designs for the AOR 1, and it certainly does not have the detailed designs that a shipbuilder would need to make a costed bid.

That is a serious misleading of the Select Committee. It goes to the heart of Swan Hunter's ability to compete for the AOR 2 and in turn goes to the very heart of Swan Hunter surving at all. I, and my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Brown), who is present today, know what effect that would have on employment in Tyneside.

Serious questions are raised. Where are the drawings? I am talking not about the detailed design drawings, but the major design drawings. Why are they not available to Swan Hunter, as Mr. Levene says, quite wrongly, that they are? That leads one to ask: are they not ready? One is entitled to ask: who has seen them? How could Ministers tell the house, and, incidentally, let the Prime Minister say from the Dispatch Box, that Harland and Wolff's design was preferred if that design was not even ready? Even more serious is the doubt that all this places over Harland and Wolff's bid for the AOR 1, a bid that was only marginally below Swan Hunter's. Without finished designs that bid could not have been properly costed, only priced.

Is the wretched truth about this matter that Harland and Wolff, with the connivance of the Northern Ireland Office, has taken a gamble on the lead vessel—a dangerous gamble that will do no good for Northern Ireland or the Royal Navy, and which has, of course, already led to major redundancies on Tyneside? How could the Government let that happen, and why?

The issue will not go away. The AOR placement may yet turn out to be a bigger scandal than the Westland affair.

7.18 pm

Mr. Churchill (Davyhulme): I share the real concern expressed by the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley) about the application of section 10, especially in peacetime. Section 10 ufffairly discriminates against service employees of the Government in a way that would not apply to civilian employees. It is inappropriate that that should be used in peacetime to deny service personnel, or their dependants in the case of fatalities, the benefits and remuneration to which they would be entitled were they civilians.

The Government have a proud record in defence, with a 20 per cent. increase in defence expenditure in real terms to their credit. By shifting the balance even more in favour of defence equipment, they are getting as much as they possibly could out of existing defence resources. It is only fair to point out that under the Government—although one would not know it from the statements made by Labour Members—health, social security and education have all done significantly better than defence. But we must view with anxiety the decision to cut defence expenditure by 4·5 per cent. during the next three years. That is being done, as the Secretary of State conceded, not in response to any slackening of the pace of the Soviet military build-up, which continues to outbuild Britain's entire order of battle in terms of Navy, Army, Air Force and strategic weapons by four times each year, but rather in consequence of Treasury pressure. That inevitably means cuts in the defence equipment programme at a time when industry and the economy badly need such orders.

The Royal Navy's frigate programme has already slipped badly. The Royal Air Force's Tornado GR1 reconnaissance programme has now slipped to the right, and part of the Harrier GR5 order has been lost. The Army's LAW mine programme has been shelved and war stocks, while inevitably clouded in a smokescreen of mystery, are clearly being run down. Those are serious matters which will lead to greater pressure for the scrapping of the Trident missile. Trident remains the most potent and cost-effective system of Polaris replacement available. The right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) knows that, although for professional reasons, as a party leader, he cannot be caught publicly jumping into the Prime Minister's clothes. He knows that the European missile which he proposes will be more expensive and less effective, with an unacceptable time scale.

The resources that are earmarked for the procurement of Trident could provide approximately one armoured division in addition to the four that we have in Germany. In the face of more than 200 Soviet divisions, that is hardly likely to be a factor calculated to have a deterrent effect on the Soviet Union, by comparison with Trident whose potency would be enormous. Even its opponents are prepared to concede that.

I have a high regard for the United States Administration and the remarkable steps that they have taken in recent years to strengthen the Western defence. But talk of scrapping SALT 2 is a grave mistake if the United States still has serious hopes of achieving a strategic arms reduction treaty with the Soviet Union during the coming months. By all means let us spell out clearly the ways in which the Soviets have undoubtedly cheated on some of the arms control agreements, including deploying two new strategic systems when the treaty provides for only one. Let us stick to those agreements until it is clear whether we can achieve a more effective agreement in the present round of negotiations.

Another threat to arms control and to peace comes neither from Mr. Gorbachev nor from Mr. Reagan, but from an unexpected source—the British Labour party. That is why the leader of the Labour party, the right hon. Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock), has sought to engage the Reagan Administration in what would appear to be a conspiracy of silence. The right hon. Gentleman has sought an undertaking that the lips of United States spokesmen will be sealed on the consequences for the future of NATO if Labour's defence policies were implemented. Why is the right hon. Gentleman so unaccustomedly modest about that aspect of Labour policies? What does he have to hide?

The Leader of the Labour party knows full well that his party's anti-defence and anti-nuclear policies are not only the ones most calculated to appease the Labour Left wing, but most likely to deliver to Moscow the prize for which it has relentlessly striven over the years—the break-up of the NATO Alliance. Nothing is more certain to cause the break-up of NATO than the election of a Labour Government committed not only to abandon the British

[Mr. Churchill]

deterrent but to boot the Americans out of their nuclear bases in Britain. Labour's defence policies trample into the dust the bipartisan basis of British defence policy.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): About time, too.

Mr. Churchill: That has guided the two main parties in Britain during the past 40 years, and Labour Governments have patriotically upheld it. It places the British Labour party—no doubt the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) will cheer this—to the left of the Italian and French Communist parties, which respectively support NATO and the nuclear deterrent.

Does the Leader of the Opposition seriously believe that he could dictate to our United States ally with what weapons it is to be allowed the privilege of defending Britain, yet count on it remaining? If he does, he is making a major error of judgment. I suspect that he knows the truth and that he has been told that the present or any future American Administration faced with such a diktat would be most likely to withdraw not only from Britain but from Europe. Anyone who doubts that need only examine the reaction of the British and United States Governments faced with the attempt of the Socialist Government in New Zealand to dictate what categories of warship should be allowed to visit that country. Our categorical answer has been to break off all intended visits by Royal Navy or United States vessels to New Zealand.

I give the right hon. Gentleman credit for being no one's fool. He knows that there is every danger that that would be the American reaction. Is that not why he is so desperate to obtain American vows of secrecy on that subject? He knows that if it became public knowledge that a Labour victory would mean US withdrawal and a consequent end to NATO, which has been the foundation and cornerstone of 40 years of peace in Europe, the British electorate would give him short shrift and he could wave goodbye to any prospect of getting to No. 10.

I urge the right hon. Gentleman and his colleagues in the Labour party to consider the possibility that on the issue of British nuclear deterrence and United States bases in the United Kingdom, he may be mistaken and that the Governments of Attlee, Wilson and Callaghan were right. It is not too late for Labour to rethink its policy and to come up with a defence policy that will underpin, rather than undermine, peace.

7.28 pm

Mr Lewis Carter-Jones (Eccles): I shall commence with a quotation that explains part of the dilemma that we face in the debate. It is the foreward written by the Secretary of State for Defence to the booklet that we have all been sent. It states:

"Within NATO, the United Kingdom's contribution is unique. We are the only country both to contribute strategic nuclear, threatre nuclear and conventional forces to the Alliance and to commit forces to each of the three major NATO Commands."

When one has said that, one has explained the reason for the cuts. We are trying to spread the jam far too thinly.

So far, no one has said anything against frigates and no one has said anything against fighter aircraft. There is almost unanimity in the House on that, although we have not quite agreed on the definition of 50 frigates. We have heard the words "about 50", "maybe" and "could be", but no firm figure. In my day, five times 10 was 50. I am afraid that the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement, who is no longer in his place, had some difficulty in agreeing that figure.

I am delighted that we have made progress with the European fighter aircraft. I have no interest to declare either in the aircraft industry or in building frigates. We do not build them in Eccles. However, I share a canal with the hon. Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill).

We have made decisions on the fighter aircraft, but we have done so rather late. This is a theme that I have hammered over the years in the House. In the 1940s we had Spitfires and Hurricanes, but the trouble was we did not have enough of them. My own aircraft, the Mosquito, was coming along quite nicely at the time. With reference to the decision on the new fighter aircraft, we are talking about a date round about 1995. However, I have no doubt that the House and the country will accept that the country needs fighter aircraft and frigates.

Everyone has paid tribute to the Tornado. No doubt it is a superb aircraft, but if we are to have the aircraft in sufficient numbers, we must look very carefully at orders from Saudi Arabia and Oman for this aircraft. We have the prize problem of reconciling the balance of payments with supplying an excellent aircraft to the Royal Air Force.

The Ministry has a great reputation for being dilatory—I would almost go so far as to say indolent—with regard to the Lysander. I said "Lysander", because I was going to refer to Westland. In my old days, Westland built the Lysander. I did not realise that Westland built helicopters until I came to the House. However, decisions have not been made with regard to helicopters, which could be a disaster for the British helicopter industry and could put an extremely good Rolls-Royce component engine, the RTM 322, at risk. The Minister should pay close attention to that.

When a decision is finalised on an engine for the European fighter, we should take into account the fact that an aircraft has three elements—the airframe, avionics and the power plant. We are quite capable of building the power plant in this country, and Rolls-Royce must certainly have a part to play. I am concerned with preserving British technology and British jobs. The ordering programme is important in maintaining British technology at top level and in preserving British technology in this country.

I am worried about the SDI programme. It seems attractive, and it seems to offer employment prospects, but what worries me is that the Americans will pick up that at which we are best.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Absolutely.

Mr. Carter-Jones: They will pick up that at which we are superb. They will seem to pay an attractive price, but if what they are buying is intelligence and knowledge, it may turn out that they have bought it very cheaply.

In 1944, towards the end of the war, I was using what was probably the most advanced airborne avionics in the world at that time—the mark 10 air interceptor equipment. We had a tremendous lead at that time, but somehow or other that lead was lost and that know-how went to another country. We should try, to the best of our ability, to preserve leads in that field.

The Minister should not be too worried about the fact that the Americans refer to the financing of the airbus and say that they do not do things like that. Last month, in the presence of the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker), I saw the new engine for the Boeing 737, which is to be a prop jet, fitted to a Boeing 727, starboard side. This is the new generation engine. The letters NASA, in big print, spell National Aeronautics and Space Administration to me. No one will convince me that NASA is an example of private enterprise. It is not. If there is ever a chance to put defence money into British research, the Minister should do so willingly and openly.

The horizontal take-off and landing launcher — HOTOL — is supposed eventually to take us to Australia in 45 minutes. I cannot think of anyone who would wish to get there that quickly.

Mr. Tony Banks: Rupert Murdoch?

Mr. Carter-Jones: No, Mr. Murdoch now lives in America. I do not think that it is designed to fly to America yet.

HOTOL has a use because of its low-level orbit, which might make it suitable for searching and scanning the sky. Logically, that brings me to the plea advanced by the leader of the SDP. For reasons that I can understand, he was not in agreement with the spokesman for the Liberal party. Last night the right hon. Gentleman pushed the concept of the cruise missile. There is no doubt that with low-level fast approach work one can often avoid the radar of the opposing country. Ground returns were always a problem for radar from 1940 onwards. The right hon. Gentleman talked in terms of cruise becoming supersonic. Let us remember the troubles associated with Nimrod, GEC and the early warning system. I am trying to think of the avionic complications of keeping cruise at supersonic speeds at about 50 ft above the ground. To use an old cliché, cruise is a "shoot yourself in the foot" weapon. It is an own-goal weapon. If own-goal weapons have nuclear warheads, they can be devastating not only to enemies, but to one's friends and indeed to oneself. In my view, cruise is a non-starter.

I hope the Minister will acknowledge that the country is prepared to accept frigates, fighters and the conventional weapons that we need. In the other place, Lord Hill-Norton said:

> "First, I congratulate the Ministers, the editors and the authors on an extremely well-presented, well-written and generally informative document."

The noble Lord qualified his praise. He said "generally".

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Carter-Jones: I crave your indulgence, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for another two sentences.

> "It has been criticised in some knowledgeable quarters as being a bit glib, and so I suppose it is in the sense that most of the really difficult problems before the Government in the defence ministry are glossed over a bit easily". — [*Official Report, House of Lords*, 24 June 1986, Vol. 477, c. 302.]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I have to reproach the hon. Gentleman on another count as well. He is out of order in quoting from the record of the other place other than from a Minister in the current Session.

Mr. Carter-Jones: I stand corrected, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

7.39 pm

Mr. Julian Critchley (Aldershot): Yesterday, we listened to a remarkable speech from the Secretary of State. It was all about money and the theme of the speech was that the party was over. Since 1979, the Government have spent one third more in real terms on defence, but certain decisions have been taken which add up to the end of this particular party.

The 3 per cent. increase in real terms is to be no more and, more important, it appears that over the next three years we shall be £800 million short in the defence budget. What are the implications of so remarkable and frank announcement by the Secretary of State? Clearly, between now and the general election, the Secretary of State must postpone much, cancel a little, shuffle his cards where necessary, and go in for fudge. The only pleasure that he might derive in the next 18 months is that he may have a little fun at the expense of the Opposition parties.

What then is the choice that faces the simple elector when it comes to defence? It appears that the Labour party will abandon our nuclear weapons but stay within NATO. It will do so, despite the growth of American nationalism and the growth on this side of the Atlantic of anti-Americanism. It is arguable that by ridding ourselves of our nuclear weapons, at least Britain and Europe would become more dependent than ever before on the strategic nuclear guarantee of the United States.

A further factor relates to the United States air force bases in the United Kingdom. They and their nuclear weapons are to be given notice to quit. Presumably, that would be a matter for negotiation, but it could not fail to aggravate to some extent Anglo-American relations and, at the same time, put a big question mark over NATO strategy which as every defence expert knows, still depends on the first use of allied nuclear weapons against a Soviet conventional strike. For the Labour party to appear to be anti-American and to move the country into an ex-nuclear status would perhaps achieve the worst of both worlds.

The SDP-Liberal alliance speaks not with one voice but with two. Clearly, the SDP wants a successor system to Polaris and the Libs want out of the nuclear business. So my simple elector will presumably go to the two conferences at Harrogate and Eastbourne in September this year in search of a compromise of sorts. But a compromise between virginity and virility is hard to achieve. On balance, I suspect that the elector will be disappointed. It could be that the SDP would keep the rockets while the Liberals would fill the warheads with muesli.

Before the chairman of our great party rushes into print to rubbish his enemies, let him beware. What do we offer? The same package as before? More conventional weapons? A larger nuclear capability in the Trident programme? The truth is that were we to be re-elected, we could not afford to purchase a three-piece suit of such quality. We would have to cut our cloth. Is there anybody who can deny that the first duty of the new Conservative Secretary of State, given our re-election, is to set in course the most fundamental of fundamental defence reviews?

What would have to give under the circumstances? Would it be the Trident programme? I suspect that we would be too far down the road to make any appreciable savings under those circumstances. Would the argument so beloved by editors of *The Times*, that the Rhine Army be withdrawn and brought back to Aldershot to save

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money, become more attractive in 18 months' time? Would the Royal Air Force be further reduced in number and a question mark placed over the European fighter aircraft? Or does the next Conservative Government look to the spirit of Sir John Nott to shrink the surface fleet? This is where we all came in in 1982.

We must expect no help from the Soviet Union because I think that we shall enter into a long period of calm and tranquillity in foreign affairs. We all have our ideas about what should happen eventually when we have a fundamental defence review because the implications for defence and foreign policy are remarkably important. But we shall not find out until 365 days after polling day.

In conclusion, the Labour party would save some money at the expense of the NATO Alliance. The SDP-Liberal alliance has not yet got its act together. We in the Conservative party will discuss all aspects of defence between now and the general election except for the aspects of defence that really matter. You pays your money and you takes your choice.

7.45 pm

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): It is always interesting to hear the analysis of the hon. Member for Aldershot (Mr. Critchley), who is an interesting commentator. I suspect that not only he but others have been rehearsing the speeches that they make during the general election campaign. I hope I shall be forgiven for turning to a matter which the hon. Member for Canterbury (Mr. Crouch) suggested was amiss, a local issue which affects my constituents and those of my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) —the Rosyth dockyard.

I shall not follow the Minister in talking about the contractual relationships which may be pursued at present with those who may be bidding for the Rosyth and or Devonport dockyards. What details of information are likely to be forthcoming to my constituents, who are worried about the proposed development of the Rosyth base to facilitate the twin dock for nuclear submarines in the not-too-distant future? My constituents, especially those at Limekilns and Rosyth, need reassurances because they are likely to be faced with two nuclear-powered submarines of a different type and of a different dimension in terms of pressurised water reactor. They need specific assurances about the safety precautions that are likely to be taken should something go amiss with those boats.

The Secretary of State said that he would be fairly forthcoming to my constituents, and they have already had some meetings in the area. I hope that I can press the Minister to be even more forthcoming. While I accept that it is unlikely that the development of nuclear refitting facilities can take place anywhere other than at the Rosyth dockyard, my constituents need their fears allayed.

One aspect of the Dockyard Services Bill causes me anxiety. We should be able to assure many of the young people who are serving their apprenticeship in the dockyard that they should be able to complete their apprenticeship without fear of dismissal when it is completed. I press the Minister on that point, because it is extremely unfair to cry out for additional skills in Scotland and elsewhere, and simultaneously see those skills eroded and put on the scrap heap at the end of the apprenticeship period.

We have heard a lot of talk about frigates and frigate orders. The revelations by my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) must be answered, and I hope I have the Minister's attention about this. They are revelations in relation to the searching questions that I put during the examination of Mr. Levene, who was not evasive. He gave answers that seem to be contradicted by the views put forward by my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East.

The House would appreciate some answers about the ordering of frigates. Many hon. Members have put that point and the hon. Member for Aldershot (Mr. Critchley) pressed his Government to take a decision. The orders are likely to be announced within a few weeks and I hope that they will be announced in the House and not as part of a written answer, so that we can question the background and the views put to the Minister. We cannot get information about the numbers, far less about the yards that are likely to receive these orders.

In his speech yesterday the Secretary of State used a phrase which suggested that his defence policy ought to be one of stability and continuity. That is not the case in terms of Secretaries of State because we have seen the managerial man, the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) succeeded by the perjink politician, the right hon. Member for Ayr (Mr. Younger). He is a subtle and smooth politician and is likely to evade the decisions that the hon. Member for Aldershot pressed him to consider, albeit in the future.

I do not agree with the view that we should consider all four options. Something has to go, and if the Government were wise they would get rid of Trident. I put the following point to hon. Members who might challenge me on that. I cannot conceive of any situation in which British so-called independent nuclear deterrent, which is presently Polaris, or the French so-called independent nuclear deterrent could be used without the support and the agreement of the Americans. These deterrents add nothing to the NATO Alliance.

In the Defence Estimates there are some sleights of hand about making the necessary savings. In the Estimates, the Secretary of State looks at European collaboration, which of course is attractive until one examines it in detail. We admire the work undertaken by the right hon. Member for Henley in upgrading the growth of the independent European programme. But if we examine the shining light of European collaboration, the Tornado, it will be seen that it was a costly project and did not necessarily bring outstanding benefits in cost savings to the United Kingdom. That is not the way out. Modern defence equipment is capital intensive and extremely costly, especially in research and development.

Finally, I should like to turn to the important matter of the strategic defence initiative. The Defence Estimates show a high proportion of expenditure on research and development. I have consistently argued that that is too high a proportion of our total research and development programme locked up in defence.

In the Select Committee we examined the Government Chief Scientist. He clearly indicated that the Americans are not interested in us because they love our bonnie blue or brown eyes, but that they are interested in the high quality of our research and development, and especially that which has been undertaken by many of our scientific institutions. The Chairman of the Select Committee, the right hon. Member for Spelthorne (Sir H. Atkins) was

quite right when he said that, if we did not collaborate, much of our intellectual manpower, if I can put it that way, could easily be bid away. That is a distortion of our effort that damages our industrial base. We ought not to be sanguine about the way in which the Americans have trawled our research institutions and universities in order to bribe people away for the strategic defence initiative which, however one describes it, is extremely dubious in terms of total defence.

President Reagan in a speech in March 1983 took a certain view about how he could overcome difficulties that faced him about defending the United States. We ought to be careful about this type of collaboration. This is an interesting debate, and in his reply the Minister of State should give us certain assurances about naval orders that are important for the people of Scotland and especially for the people of Clydeside.

7.55 pm

Mr. Keith Best (Ynys Môn): Within the next two or three years there will have to be a major re-examination of the size of Britain's military commitments. Some short-term economies and the momentum built up over the last six years of spending growth may mean that awkward decisions can be postponed, but shortly we shall have to consider the priority attached to each commitment and decide whether the United Kingdom can continue to afford them all.

Personnel costs, if anything, are likely to rise. Consequently, it is the equipment budget that is likely to suffer the biggest reductions in funding and on one view this will fall by around 10 per cent. in real terms by 1988-89. Those who feel that a cancellation of Trident would provide the answer and ease the pressure on conventional weapons expenditure, need to be disabused. Certainly, if a Conservative Government cancelled Trident no doubt the saving would remain within the defence budget, although we would have lost one of the most significant elements in deterrence — namely, a second centre of decision making in Europe with a credible nuclear deterrent.

Although all the major Opposition parties are united in a commitment to abandon Trident, an SDP-dominated Government would have to use most, if not all, the savings from Trident in order to pay for an alternative replacement for Polaris, and it has become quite clear that a Labour or Liberal-dominated Government would channel any savings into other areas of Government expenditure and not into defence equipment. As it is unlikely that a Conservative Government will cancel Trident, the squeeze is on defence equipment, whether Trident is cancelled in the future or not.

We should remember that the United Kingdom wins wars because of the spirit and efficiency of British service personnel. We in Parliament have a duty to provide them with the best reasonably obtainable equipment. Financial consideration may mean that such equipment has to be increasingly multi-purpose rather than dedicated to specific tasks unless we are to curtail dramatically the various theatres in which we expect our service men to operate. That is why the Prime Minister is to be congratulated on looking again at the Royal Navy's decision for the new frigate. I appreciate that the type 23 was designed specifically to carry out highly specialised anti-submarine warfare in the eastern Atlantic. There could be no better ship than the type 23 for this purpose, but if a more general purpose vessel were to be considered, then the S90, the short fat hull, should merit greater attention. The S90 is cheaper and has greater natural stability than the long slim hull of the type 23 as well as providing a better weapons platform and a larger radar horizon.

The marine technology board of the Defence Scientific Advisory Council conducted trials of the two types and concluded that the S90 design failed to reach Ministry of Defence standards. It is uncertain by how much the standards were not reached and whether such shortcomings could be remedied fairly easily. If we are to maintain an adequate size of surface fleet at a cheaper cost then a multipurpose S90 frigate may well be the next generation that we should be looking towards after the type 23. We should build a prototype S90 so that it can be properly evaluated.

The greatest flexibility that we have and the element which we should ensure remains both credible and able to operate in a variety of different situations is our amphibious force. It is the only fully flexible aggressive force that we have that can be deployed out of, as well as within, the NATO area. It has the freedom to advance, withdraw, concentrate or disperse without violating frontiers or abandoning ground.

There are many circumstances in which such forces could be necessary other than in wartime. Top of the list comes the rescue or evacuation of one's own friendly nationals from a threat in a foreign country. I can attest to the efficiency of our amphibious forces in achieving that objective, having just come from serving on a large NATO naval exercise off the north coast of Scotland, which is continuing without my presence, in which that was practised. Secondly, there may be an invitation from a country with which a treaty commitment or similar agreement exists, such as Belize. There is the need to maintain freedom of passage through international waters when such freedom is threatened. Thirdly, there may be a threat to the security of access to vital raw materials.

The principal role of our amphibious forces within NATO will remain the defence of the northern flank. Equipment and capabilities must be provided with that in mind. That is against a background of the Soviet Union's growing use of amphibious forces which, by the 1990s, may be able to land in divisional strength to seize airfields in north Norway and perhaps in corps strength on the Baltic coasts with some 400 close air support aircraft.

Our amphibious forces must not only be well protected in their passage to Norway with ships that are properly designed for damage control but continue to have the ability to insert and withdraw forces by sea which the terrain of northern Norway makes impossible by land. We could expect the five air heads in northern Norway to be rendered inoperative by enemy action. In any event, an airlift would be impracticable as it would require 500 C130 Hercules loads and extend over several days with heavy equipment having to follow by sea. Only an amphibious force properly equipped and with dedicated transport can maintain complete independence and flexibility of operation.

To fulfil those many tasks, the decision must be taken now to replace or renovate Fearless and Intrepid, as well as the landing ships logistic, which will come to the end of their useful life in the mid-1990s. There is unanimity among service chiefs about the need for that. I know that matters are well advanced, but I hope that the two

[Mr. Keith Best]

replacements will maintain the same credibility by having extensive damage control facility and the doubling up of systems to ensure their survivability. I hope that Fearless and Intrepid will not necessarily be mothballed, but, taking a leaf out of the book of practice of the United States and the Soviet Union, will be renovated and their lives extended as far as practicably possible within existing hulls.

Beyond that, the most pressing need is a lift capability. Since the demise of the Commando ship, such as Bulwark, on which I had the privilege to serve, we have no dedicated large deck for multi-slot helicopter operations. On Bulwark in 1976 in the West Indies I was able to observe a Commando embarked for three months with a helicopter squadron with the ability to lift the whole Commando and its supporting arms to a deployment within two hours.

We need to carry at least two thirds of the amphibious forces in specialised ships which should also be able to transport and operate the helicopters and landing craft needed for ship-to-ship movement and subsequent resupply. We cannot afford the expensive and dangerous practice of cross-decking troops, equipment and vehicles to match them to the means of getting them ashore. There are obvious advantages in the force being able to deploy to the objective area already grouped together so that training, briefing and rehearsals can be conducted together.

In the view of Lieutenant-General Sir Steuart Pringle, the lesson of the Falklands was not that commercial ships can do the task but that without a corps of specialist ships, it could not have been embarked upon. We should have sufficient helicopters on specialised Commando shipping to be able to launch a simultaneous lift of two company groups—some 300 men with their associated equipment and support weapons — which means 24 Sea King equivalents. To deliver that number of aircraft simultaneously, a total of at least 12 operating spots is needed. For our amphibious forces to retain credibility and the ability to fulfil their multi-purpose role, we must ensure that we have at least one Commando carrier with the requisite number of helicopters.

It is reported that senior Royal Navy and Royal Marine staff officers have pressed for converted transports called aviation support ships since 1984. We now have no Commando carrier. I understand that the Government are giving serious thought to appointing British Aerospace Ship Systems as the prime contractor for conversion of the ro-ro merchant ship Contender Argent into a Hermes replacement for £100 million.

It is reported that Mr. John Thornton, the sales manager, told a conference that his company had completed a study for a more comprehensive conversion which would make it even more capable than the carrier Invincible with at least 12 Sea Harriers and the facilities to support 12 helicopters, six operating simultaneously, as well as a complete Commando as embarked force.

Those ships would have to be protected adequately. Understandably, there is genuine doubt about the ability of converted merchant vessels to withstand battle damage, as was demonstrated by the loss of the Atlantic Conveyor in the Falklands. We cannot afford to give our amphibious forces second best. They will bear the brunt of any conflict outside general war, as has been demonstrated by the only conflict in which this country has been involved in my memory. Such a programme should cost no more than £600 million. It is a small price to pay for what was described by Liddell Hart:

"amphibious flexibility is the greatest strategic asset that a sea-based power possesses. It creates a distraction to a continental enemy's concentration that is most advantageously disproportionate to the resources employed."

For our future security, the Government must take the correct decision. Many people will scrutinise it most carefully.

8.5 pm

Mr. Alfred Dubs (Battersea): Any organisation that is accused of racial discrimination tends to answer by saying, "We do not discriminate. We treat all people equally." When that organisation is then asked for the evidence that it does not discriminate, the organisation tends to say, "We do not need to monitor or collect evidence because it is our policy not to discriminate." That is precisely how the armed services, especially the Army, have responded to the well-documented evidence that racial discrimination takes place in the British Army. That discrimination takes place in recruitment and promotion for those who join.

In inner-city areas, both in north America and now in Britain, joining the Army has been the way in which disadvantaged young men and women, especially men, from ethnic minorities have found their way to getting jobs, further training and opportunities. If the Army does not provide equality of opportunity for people in that position, the Army is that much the poorer for it. Indeed, the country must be concerned that one important area of job opportunity directly under public control discriminates in a society where discrimination should not take place.

The discrimination varies from regiment to regiment. Some regiments appear not to take any black or Asian people at all. Other regiments appear to set quotas to keep numbers down. Other regiments have an open-door policy and attract young men of Afro-Caribbean or Asian origin. For some time, perhaps not today, the physical training corps did not take black people. For some time, perhaps not today, the military police did not take black people.

More importantly—it is still true—it is the regiments concerned with ceremonial duties which seem to have set their backs on having black people among their numbers. One only had to watch the Trooping of the Colour to see that not a single black face was present. The discrimination appears to apply to the Guards Regiment, the Life Guards and the Household Cavalry — ceremonial regiments which deal especially with duties outside Buckingham Palace and elsewhere when the royal family are present. That is of double concern because the Queen is head of a multiracial Commonwealth. It has been reported that the Prince of Wales expressed concern about the events and the features which I have described.

The Army says, "There is a traditional policy of recruitment. We tend to take people whose fathers served in regiments." That is bound to be disciminatory. In any area of employment in a society which is as multiracial as Britain's, the policy of giving people job opportunities only because their fathers had jobs there is bound to be discriminatory.

I do not refer just to recruitment. I refer also to the conditions within certain regiments and the opportunities for promotion. Life in the Army is tough. Nobody denies that. The Army is not for squeamish people. New recruits

suffer abuse. They suffer what I would call a certain amount of aggro. I am satisfied — I have spoken to black people who have served in the Army — that, over and beyond the normal toughness and rugged approach, especially towards new recruits, life is much tougher for black people in the Army than for white people. It is unnecessarily harsh because they suffer racial abuse and sometimes physical violence.

It is clear that the chances of promotion for black people are significantly less than for white people. The other day, in the Palace of Westminster I met one of my constituents who had served for 12 years in the Army. He had tried to become a lance-corporal. He reached that stage but then, as he said, he was "busted". He is a man of great intelligence, skill and aptitude and I am certain from what he said that he was a good — indeed, a first-class — soldier. Nevertheless, he got nowhere. It may interest the House to know that he has set up his own business and is now the managing director of a successful company. The Army thought that he was not good enough even to have one stripe.

There are a couple of black colonels in the Army — in, I believe, the medical corps and dental corps respectively — but how many black officers are there in the ordinary Army regiments? Perhaps one, perhaps none. Yes, at Sandhurst many black people are officer cadets, but they are all receiving training for the services in overseas countries, not for the British Army.

It need not be like that. I am not saying that everything about the American army is wonderful. I am old enough to remember when the American army came to this country in 1942. It had all-black regiments with white officers, and the only black officers were padres. The American army has changed. Recently, I saw a book on the future for black people in the American army which contained pages of photographs of one, two, three and four-star generals. I am told that at a recent gathering in New York there were 76 black generals and admirals. The American army has demonstrated that, without discriminating, it can still be effective. I criticise it in other respects but in this there are lessons to be learned from it.

This issue is a challenge. We cannot allow this discrimination to continue. It is bad for the Army and for the country. We need a clear statement of policy from the Minister that discrimination should not take place in the Army, in terms of recruitment or promotion, and that it should not take place in any regiment or any aspect of the British armed services. The Government's policy must be that discrimination should not and will not take place.

The Government should at last start monitoring — this has been under consideration for some time — applications for jobs and promotions in the armed services to ascertain whether racial discrimination, which should be done away with, continues to take place. Unless we monitor this process, and know exactly what is happening, there is still the possibility that discrimination will take place somewhere along the line. If the Army is all-white, most, if not all, promotion decisions will be made by white men. There is always a tendency, even if one does not discriminate deliberately, to select for jobs people in one's own image. In a country in which most decent jobs are decided by white interviewers, it is not surprising that most of the best jobs go to white men. The Army must be careful. Monitoring is one sanction which must apply.

It is necessary to give better advice to recruiting officers. Of course, young black men whose families have no tradition of service in the British Army will not know how best to apply and to proceed with an army career. It is up to the recruiting officers to give better advice and encouragement to those who apply.

If we do not get rid of discrimination in the armed forces, young black men will no longer apply to join. The Army will be the worse for that and it will block yet another avenue of job opportunity and career development for black people in our inner cities. Heaven knows, there are too few such avenues open to them. It is vital that, in a country which is supposed to believe that racial discrimination does not take place, we demonstrate in the very service that is under public control that such discrimination does not exist. This is a challenge to the Government, and I hope that they rise to it.

8.14 pm

Mr. Spencer Batiste (Elmet): I must be brief, and I therefore apologise to those hon. Members who have made interesting points if I cannot take them up, but I want to deal with a problem of vital interest to many of my constituents who work at the royal ordnance factory at Barnbow in building the Challenger tank.

Yesterday my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State spoke about the orders placed last year for Challenger and about the increase in competition in procurement generally. I want to put both statements in the context of my right hon. Friend's statement two weeks ago on the review of the privatisation of Royal Ordnance plc and his withholding of the further order for the 7th Regiment of Challenger tanks from ROF Barnbow.

I am an enthusiast for the privatisation of industrial operations. There are many reasons, but the main one is that those companies do better in the private sector for all concerned with them. The spectacular success record of those companies which have been privatised speaks for itself. The privatisation which has been achieved so far has involved either employee buy-outs or flotation, with employees taking up shares in their own companies. That is a vital ingredient in success.

Royal Ordnance plc had my full support during the passage of the enabling Bill, primarily because of the assurances by the then Secretary of State that privatisation would be by way of flotation of the group as a whole. In my view, and in the view of those who are familiar with Royal Ordnance plc, that group will be well suited to prosper in the private sector, because it is a strong, integrated group with many unique skills and resources.

Royal Ordnance plc went well down the route to flotation, when there was a public intervention by Vickers in the order for the 7th Regiment of Challenger. I do not blame Vickers for doing what would come naturally to anyone in competition, but the action of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State in appearing to respond to that intervention by withholding the order that he was about to place and by announcing a review of future arrangements for the flotation of Royal Ordnance plc has caused widespread concern, especially in Leeds.

I fully accept that it may be that the timetable for flotation is too tight. Many uniquely complicated factors are involved in the flotation and it is important that they are put right before the company is placed on the market. If my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will soon announce a new timetable for the flotation as planned in form and content, I shall have no complaint. However, I shall point to the several years of indecision and doubt

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which the employees have faced as a good example of why they would be better off in the private sector than under public control. But if the rumours of a planned break-up of the royal ordnance factories and the sale of ROF Barnbow to Vickers proves to be justified, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will have a fight on his hands.

In my view and, I believe, that of many, asset stripping is not an acceptable form of privatisation. The only basis on which Vickers would be interested in Barnbow would be in closing it down, removing its specialist plant and tooling and finishing off its only United Kingdom competitor for tanks. That would not increase the competition to which my right hon. Friend so proudly refers in the White Paper. The sale of Barnbow to Vickers wold be contrary to any sensible competition policy. Indeed, it would go much further than that, because it would cast a blight on the Government's good intentions on future privatisation proposals.

Royal Ordnance plc is a well-integrated group with much cross-supplying between its component companies. Almost all the companies in the group contribute to Challenger or to its ammunition and spares. It is the total package that is critical in the commercial context. The carve-up of Barnbow would only foreshadow the break-up of the group as whole and I for one would fight that every inch of the way.

This leads me to the order for the 7th Regiment, which is vital to Barnbow's survival. As I understand it, the pen of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State was hovering over the paper of the contract for signature when he drew back. We need to know whether the order is being cut or postponed, and whether it will be placed in the near future. If it is to be placed, it should be borne in mind that Barnbow is already tooled up, has already made some 300 Challenger tanks and has wide experience in manufacturing them, whereas Vickers is neither tooled up nor has any experience in making them.

Vickers is still in the tank business today only because of the injection of regional aid by the Government into the north-east. Many of us believe that it is vital that regional aid must not become a cloak for job stealing from areas which need the jobs they already have.

Given those facts, there is no way in which Vickers could undercut Barnbow for the Challenger unless it is given an edge in addition to the regional aid it has already received, such as extra funds for tooling and setting up. Where would be the saving to the Government in that? In any event, the Select Committee has shown in its report how difficult it is to quantify savings from competition, especially with complex products with long lead times.

Why the hesitancy in placing the order with Barnbow as was intended? The very fact of delay is costing jobs in Barnbow and is making it more difficult for the group to find orders overseas because of the fear that there will be a lack of continuity in what the group can supply. Why cause further doubts and anxieties on top of those that have been caused by the delays of the past two years? Why put at risk the future of the best tank in the world by breaking up the team that make it?

When the Bill to set up Royal Ordnance plc went through the House, the then Secretary of State gave assurances that, after examining all the facts, the group would be floated as a whole. Today, my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary has shown excellent judgment in announcing the retention of the clothing and textile depot in Leeds instead of moving it, as was originally proposed, to Glasgow. I said in an intervention that the moving of jobs from one area to another made no economic sense. I am glad that the Under-Secretary showed such good judgment in that respect.

I am now asking my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to show similar good judgment in confirming quickly a new programme and timetable for the flotation of Royal Ordnance plc in its present form and for a quick decision on the order for the 7th Regiment of the Challenger tank.

Royal Ordnance plc as a group can be a strong and vital force in the private sector defence industry if we give it its chance, and if we give a chance to those who work in it to prove what they can do.

8.23 pm

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): The hon. Member for Elmet (Mr. Batiste) has posed some pertinent questions about the future of the Royal Ordnance factory in which many of his constituents work and future orders for the Challenger tank.

I also immediately associate myself with the plea made by the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley) for the repeal of section 10 of the Crown Proceedings Act 1947 in respect of non-combatant service personnel. The right hon. Gentleman raised many points and I look forward to the Minister's response to them.

The theme running through many of the speeches this evening and yesterday was the budgetary crisis which the Secretary of State faces as he tries to match a declining level of resources in real terms with our defence needs and commitments. I make no apology for returning to that theme.

The "Statement on the Defence Estimates" admits that some difficult decisions will have to be taken, which is at least some movement and a more realistic assessment of the situation than that adopted by the Secretary of State's predecessor. However, I am still not convinced that the present Secretary of State or his Ministers have fully appreciated the scale of the problem—not least, in the reduction of the non-Trident equipment budget. If they have appreciated it, they are certainly not admitting to it.

In his reply last night, the Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Kettering (Mr. Freeman), admitted what everyone has known all along — that as a result of expenditure on Trident, which will be reaching its peak in the next few years, spending on non-Trident equipment will decrease. However, he omitted to quantify that decrease. Perhaps when the Minister replies this evening he will put some figures on that. He may also wish to comment on the accuracy of the calculations contained in a paper prepared by the Defence Information Group which, having made assumptions about spending on spares, repairs, and maintenance, estimates that spending on non-Trident new equipment will fall from £4·6 billion in 1984-85 to £3·5 billion in 1988-89. That is a reduction of 24 per cent. in real terms. If that is the scale of the cut, difficult decisions will indeed have to be made.

Last night the Minister, and this afternoon the Under-Secretary, tried to put in a plea of mitigation by assuring us that the cuts in expenditure would not really be cuts at all and that it was all a question of getting value for money. Few would dispute that there has been a strong argument over recent years that the Ministry of Defence should take tighter control over defence contracts. However, it is naive

to believe that greater efficiency in procurement, competition policy, or even joint procurement projects with our European allies, however admirable and desirable, will make up the shortfall as a result of declining defence expenditure.

If time had permitted I would have said a few more words about competition policy. The only point I would make is that taking competition policy perhaps too far could result in a number of companies and shipyards no longer being viable, as for example was mentioned by the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne East (Mr. Brown) when he questioned the future of the Swan Hunter yard. We might then find that no other shipyards were available to provide competition. If we reach that position, then the whole point of any competitive tendering policy could well be lost.

It has been quite obvious, not only from this debate but from many defence debates in recent months, that defence procurement policy and especially the delays in placing orders and, in some cases, the non-placing of orders, have been having grave effects on employment prospects in many parts of the country. On a number of occasions the hon. Member for Blaydon (Mr. McWilliam) has raised the issue of the royal ordnance factory in his constituency which has been manufacturing ammunition. My hon. Friends the Members for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) and for Isle of Wight (Mr. Ross) have on many occasions expressed concern about future employment prospects at Westland because of delays in decisions on helicopter procurement. There have been cries for help from the north-east where the future of the Swan Hunter yard is critical, and we have had cries from the Clyde shipyards and those who represent Clydeside constituencies. I am sure that when the right hon. Gentleman was Secretary of State for Scotland he was well aware of the need for defence orders to go to yards such as Scott Lithgow on the lower Clyde.

The social and economic consequences of a procurement policy cannot be ignored. If it is felt, understandably, that the defence budget should not be carrying the burden of what, in many respects, would be a social policy and a burden which should more appropriately be borne by the social security budget — surely our accounting systems are not so inflexible as to fail to allow for some reallocation of resources to take into account decisions which might be influenced more by social and economic

I have mentioned some of the difficult procurement decisions or non-decisions which have caused anxiety. The Select Committee, in its valuable report, in paragraph 15, states:

"merely 'managing' the defence budget in the way endorsed in"—

the 1985 Estimate—

"could result in a defence review by stealth."

I do not believe that it will be a defence review by stealth because stealth implies that some thought and deliberation has been given to it. I suspect that it will be a defence review by ad hockery. As each decision comes up, it will be either deferred or shelved, and in the next few years we will stumble from one crisis to another. That is why, over a number of months, my right hon. and hon. Friends have pressed for a proper defence review so that we can make a proper assessment of our commitments in relation to our resources.

We have heard again today about the latest instalment of what the future size of the frigate fleet will be. The Under-Secretary, opening the debate, said that it would be about 50. Perhaps the Minister, when he replies, will tell us when "about 50" will become "about 45." That seems to be fudge on a grand scale. I think that those ad hoc decisions are an ingredient of the most unpalatable brand of fudge served up by the present Administration.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) indicated that we identify Trident expenditure as the cuckoo in the nest — that item of expenditure which is leading to a major squeeze on other items of new defence equipment. He delivered an effective critique of the Trident programme and why it should be cancelled on the grounds of cost and escalation in our nuclear capacity. I believe that by proceeding with the Trident programme we are losing twice over. We are losing not only on the cost we must face in terms of conventional defence but also because of the stumbling block which Trident represents at a time when deep cuts are being sought in arms negotiation talks.

Let us consider, for example, the proposals put forward by Mr. Gorbachev on intermediate nuclear weapons which suggested that United States and Soviet intermediate nuclear weapons should be eliminated from Europe. Mr. Gorbachev did not ask as a condition for the scrapping of the United Kingdom or French nuclear weapon programmes, only that our forces should not be increased — in other words, that we should not escalate from Polaris to Trident. However, the Prime Minister on more than one occasion has refused to give even that commitment. That possible avenue for exploration and negotiation has been effectively blocked by the Government's obsession to keep the Trident programme alive.

I would now like to consider the progress which the alliance would like to see made towards the negotiation of a comprehensive test ban treaty. We have been told regularly by Ministers at the Dispatch Box, and it appears in the "Statement on the Defence Estimates," that the major problem in negotiating such a treaty is verification. That flies in the face of the views of an increasing number of scientists who believe that there are no longer any real technical obstacles to the negotiation of a verifiable comprehensive test ban treaty.

Last week in Nevada we saw the real reason why we have not taken any initiative over the test ban treaty. A nuclear device was exploded. No doubt that was part of the Trident programme. Again Trident is an obstacle to an initiative which we were well placed to take.

We should have responded more positively to the Gorbachev moratorium on nuclear testing. If we dismiss every overture and initiative as simple propaganda, nothing will be achieved. It is worth remembering that in the aftermath of the Cuban missile crisis it was President Kennedy who announced a unilateral moratorium on atmospheric testing. That was the first step on the way towards a partial test ban treaty. As one of the signatories to that treaty, Britain is well placed to take the initiative to have comprehensive test ban treaty negotiations started again.

Many nations which do not have nuclear weapons attach great importance to a nuclear test ban treaty. They see it as evidence of our good faith which we are obliged to show under the non-proliferation treaty. Since the debate on the Estimates last year, there has been a review

[Mr. James Wallace]

conference on the non-proliferation treaty. Exceptional disquiet was expressed by many nations over the lack of progress made in arms talks and the fact that, while they kept to their side of the bargain — there has been no proliferation and the treaty has been more successful than many people thought it would be when first signed — they still have to look to us to show good faith as we are obliged under the treaty.

I believe that not enough attention has been paid to common security, which was one of the main themes of the alliance's joint commission report. The improvement that we seek in international relations goes hand in hand with specific agreements on arms control, and there are many specific proposals to that end in our defence commission report.

I will cut my remarks short and conclude by saying that the alliance commission's proposals should be read. They contain a common thread of consistency and they will have a great appeal to the electorate when they are studied in detail before the next election.

8.32 pm

Mr. Martin M. Brandon-Bravo (Nottingham, South): I should like to support and underpin the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury (Mr. Crouch) about our visit last week to the Falkland Islands. I, too, pay tribute to the professionalism of the three arms of our services and to the integration of those three arms. I should like the Secretary of State to note the services' attitude to their mail, and also the comments on the oddities of that special pay.

Not until I was in the Falklands did the nonsense of distance strike home—not the distance from here to the Falklands, but the distance in the south Atlantic area from Argentina to Stanley, from Stanley to South Georgia, and from South Georgia to the South Sandwich Islands. I re-examined the atlas in the Library today, and it appears that the islands are almost halfway between Buenos Aires and Cape Town. The mind boggles at the comments that might come from the Opposition Benches if South Africa used the distance argument in a sovereignty debate. There is no logic in that argument. We might as well say that Cyprus is 40 miles from Turkey, but 400 miles from Greece. I know that my brother-in-law's mother is Jersey French. Distance clearly has nothing to do with the argument. The point is, we must defend what is right.

I do not share the view of those Opposition Members who have stated—I shall have to paraphrase, as I do not have the pamphlet with me—that they will negotiate away the "albatross" of the Falklands. I do not share that simplistic view. Frankly, I criticise the role played in this matter by the Commonwealth and that of the United Nations, who, above all else, should defend the right of any nation, however small its population, to have self-determination.

I should like to consider the main points of difference between the parties in this debate on defence. There is no point in defence unless that defence has the capability of matching, on its own or with a credible and secure alliance, a foreseeable threat to our country and its people. There is no point in having all the hardware unless that foreseeable threat perceives our will to use it. That was the great long-term benefit for peace that arose from the Falklands conflict.

Mr. Bob Clay (Sunderland, North): Oh, come on.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: The hon. Member may scoff at this but no one can argue that he wants a defence policy unless he has the will to say that if he had to use it he would.

Mr. Tony Banks: That is what worries us.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: If that is so, the hon. Gentleman must make his decisions.

That is why a conventional army without a nuclear capability in a nuclear world would be a pointless waste of resources. However large that conventional arm, a threat from whatever source of a nuclear reaction would render our conventional arm utterly useless. The Conservative party has the only credible and believable defence policy.

8.36 pm

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): There is an awful sense of detachedness about defence debates in this place. I listened very carefully to the Secretary of State's opening speech yesterday. To hear someone quietly and dispassionately talking about vast resources being devoted to weapons of death and destruction was unnerving, unreal and, at times, downright obscene. It was also supremely irrelevant to the real problems of this country and the rest of the world.

We are surrounded by poverty, famine and disease in the world, yet countless billions of dollars are spent on arms in this country and elsewhere. I should like to make a quick contrast. Yesterday, the Faculty of Community Medicine — part of the Royal College of Physicians — published a report which showed that Britain now has one of the worst health records among developed countries, after being a leader a generation ago.

Britain now devotes a smaller percentage of resources to health than any other European country, with the exception of Greece. Chapter 5 of the Estimates boasts that in 1986-87 the United Kingdom will spend more on defence in absolute terms than any other European country in NATO, second only to the United States. As a percentage of national output, we spend more on defence than any other NATO country, apart from Greece. That is not a matter for self-congratulation as we hear from the Government Benches. To be statistically portrayed as a nation of disease-ridden warmongers is not an attractive image and not one which even the Prime Minister would wish to foster. That merely demonstrates how perverted the values of our country have become since 1979.

I should like to raise two specific points in my short speech, and I hope that the Minister will answer them when he replies. They echo the comments of my hon. Friends the Members for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) and for Battersea (Mr. Dubs). I hope the Minister read the article that appeared in *The Observer* on 8 June. It claimed:

> "The seven regiments of the Household Division. . . operate an unofficial colour bar."

Apparently when it comes to Trooping the Colour one can have any colour one likes, as long as it is not black.

The Ministry of Defence has hotly denied that there is a colour bar. Of course, one would expect that. However, I hope that the Minister will call in some of the evidence. I shall quote from the article in *The Observer*. It says:

"One serving senior Guards NCO told us: 'There are no blacks in the Guards. There have never been and never will be. People do not want to see a black face under a bearskin. Blacks are generally persuaded to go elsewhere'."

There was also a letter in the *Sunday Telegraph* of 22 June. A regimental medical officer said that he saw a black recruit in the Brigade of Guards and was

"summoned to the CO's office to be told that he had just seen a black Grenadier on parade and what could I do about his medical discharge?"

The medical officer said that he could do nothing, because the man was A1 fit. Apparently, the education officer was contacted and the black Guardsman was given an aptitude IQ test. It was discovered that the recruit was too intelligent for life as a guardsman, so he was transferred to the RASC for training in motor vehicle maintenance.

In a way, those are just anecdotes. However, given the evidence in the *Observer* article and the statements that have been made by my hon. Friends, I hope that the Minister will take the matter seriously. I also hope that he will ensure that an inquiry is immediately launched into the colour bar that is allegedly being operated within the Household Division. There is clearly concern among Opposition Members on this issue.

Indeed, given the degree of concern, it is strange that the Minister should refuse point blank to have ethnic monitoring. That is not good enough. If the Minister is to be credible when denying such allegations, he must be able to produce the evidence to refute them. Without ethnic monitoring, he clearly cannot do so. The Army needs a policy of equal opportunities throughout. We also need ethnic monitoring, and we must have that inquiry into the allegations of a colour bar being operated in the Household Division.

My second point relates to the activities of the military attachés from the South African embassy in London.

Mr. McNamara: I take it that my hon. Friend does not just limit the operation of the colour bar to the Household Division, as other regiments and corps are involved.

Mr. Banks: Of course I should like the inquiry to be extended, but discrimination seems to be particularly bad in the Household Division. That is where the the colour bar seems to operate most rigidly. I therefore ask the Minister to pay serious attention to the concern expressed and to ensure that an inquiry is launched.

I asked the Minister a question about the activities of the South African military attachés, and he replied:

"During the past three years, South African attachés, as part of organised groups of attachés from other Foreign and Commonwealth countries, have made some 30 visits to defence establishments and attended six defence-related social or ceremonial functions."—[*Official Report*, 16 June 1986, Vol. 99, c. *471*.]

I hope that the Minister will hold discussions with the Foreign Secretary about expelling those South African military attachés from the United Kingdom. If he is not prepared to go that far, will he at least stop inviting them to defence establishments, where they are wined and dined at the expense of British taxpayers? When considering this, the Minister should bear in mind the role of the South African armed forces and the way in which they have invaded and occupied surrounding black states. He should also bear in mind the way in which they repress their own domestic population. I am sorry if the Minister finds that amusing, because it is not meant to be an amusing matter.

Those are the two matters to which I should like the Minister to respond.

8.45 pm

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): In the short time available, I shall confine my remarks to RAF matters. In doing so, I must declare an interest as a serving RAFVR officer.

I remind the Government that the EFA programme is very much welcomed by the RAF, along with the developments that are being made. We also welcome the fact that the demonstrator aircraft is now flying. Indeed, I remind my right hon. and hon. Friends that the F16 was originally built as a demonstrator and is now the most effective air superiority aircraft in the world. Therefore, there is hope that our demonstrator aircraft may spawn something worth while. We also welcome the Tornado programme and the Hawk air defence capability that has now been introduced.

I turn to an area that is causing concern — the airborne early warning task — but before doing so, I believe that the House would wish me to place on record our congratulations to all those who operate and maintain the elderly Shackleton aircraft fleet. There is no doubt that they have done a splendid job for many years. There must be no question of that vital area of RAF operations being required to accept aircraft or equipment that cannot fully meet the task requirements of the 1990s and the early part of the next century.

I remind the House that Soviet aircraft and sea-skimming Contour missiles will have the technology to confuse the present generation of radar. The need is for state of the art technology and for software. Anything less will not do. Decisions in that area can have a dramatic impact on the RAF's limited air defence capability.

Unless we can get the Tornado aircraft and the surface-to-air missiles locked on to targets at an early stage in the penetration of the United Kingdom's defence area, the massive investment that the nation has made in Tornado and other defence weapons systems will be substantially diminished in both value and effectiveness. That aspect of the United Kingdom's air defence needs must not be required to accept second best. Second best will not do. If GEC cannot meet the RAF's requirements, an alternative must be decided upon. That will be difficult, but it must be so. If that happens, other factors will also have to be considered, including the value of offset arrangements, the involvement of United Kingdom research and development, and the manufacturing and export order potential for anything that is bought.

It will not surprise my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State if I now turn to the basic trainer. What is the current situation? Is the programme on time? When will the RAF at Boscombe Down receive an aircraft for in-depth evaluation? When can the flying training units expect to receive their first production aircraft? Who will pay if modifications are required to bring the aircraft up to the air staff target requirement, or for any delays in the aircraft's introduction into service? By that I mean the cost of the revenue implications of running on the Jet Provost fleet.

I shall not delay the House with my concern over the helicopter needs of the Army and the RAF, as I believe that the matter was dealt with adequately in yesterday's debate. Suffice it to say, however, that I wish to add my name to the list of those who believe that an early decision is required, and I am glad that there will be a decision some time this year.

[Mr. Bill Walker]

The Bulldog and Chipmunk aircraft are both due for substantial modification and re-equipment programmes. Before embarking on those programmes, perhaps consideration should be given to replacing both aircraft. After all, the Chipmunk is a 1948 design. I suggest that one or two of the British flight trainers that are available will suit the job. The Trago Mills or the Slingsby aircraft could be effective.

I come to a subject dear to me, which involves the air cadets and the splendid job done by their gliding schools and by the central gliding school establishment. I welcome the comments made yesterday at the end of the debate, and I draw attention to the need to maintain adequate airfield capacity. In particular, I wish to mention the problems in the north-east of England, in central Scotland—in which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has an interest—and in southern England.

The problems that I wish to draw attention to involve the reactivating of No. 641 gliding school. The problems are not new. Indeed, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will be aware that many years ago—more than I care to mention—I was the last commanding officer of that school when it was active at RAF Dishforth, and before that at RAF Ouston which had been the base of the school for more than 20 years.

I believe that there is a real prospect of reactivating the school at what used to be RAF Ouston, which is now an army unit. To do so will require the agreement of the air traffic authorities at Newcastle airport. I do not wish to understate the difficulties that there may be in reaching an agreement. However, I believe that the radio equipment in the new air cadet training sail planes makes proper air control over operations at Ouston a viable proposition that should be pursued with considerable vigour.

The problems facing 662 gliding school at the army base at Kirknewton near Edinburgh are a different matter. They are more related to which of the services is the landlord and to the use of the aircraft hangars. The arrangements for air cadet gliding schools to operate from airfields that are run by one of the other services has, in the main, worked well. The best example that I can give is the marine base at Condor Arbroath where 662 gliding school has been based for almost 30 years, first with the Fleet Air Arm, with which I served as a chief flying instructor over 30 years ago, and later with the Marines. I wish only that the experience of 662 gliding school was the norm.

Sadly, there have been times when army units have not been as co-operative as the Royal Navy and the Marines. I hope that any members of the Army who read the debate will take note of the example set by the Marines and the Royal Navy. Because of this, and because airfields are not always suitable for conventional gliders, air cadets have been required to make use of their fleet of motor gliders, or self-launching gliders as they are sometimes called. The flexibility offered by this type of equipment cannot be overstated. If cadets in every part of the United Kingdom are to have access to gliding, a few more motor gliders will need to be purchased. In particular, I would recommend the purchase of the Grobb 109, which is the most cost-effective, off-the-shelf purchase.

A few extra motor gliders could help to solve the problem of operations from airfields that are unsuitable for conventional gliders. That is particularly the case in southern England. That may be of particular interest to my hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces who is to wind up the debate, because it affects West Malling which is in his constituency. It may make all the difference between gliding or no gliding for many hundreds, or possibly thousands, of cadets.

May I also ask what is the up-to-date situation with regard to the replacement of Land Rovers and the new winches for the gliding fleet at the conventional gliding schools. Finally, may I say how much the volunteer officers and instructors appreciated the remarks of my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement in winding up last night. It is always appreciated when this House recognises the service that is given by these volunteers, for which they receive no recompense. The air cadet organisation has depended for many decades upon volunteers who give their time for nothing. May I thank my right hon. Friend——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. I apologise for having to interrupt the hon. Gentleman, but he has run out of time.

8.52 pm

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): We all say things in this House that we live to regret. Yesterday, the Secretary of State said:

"The House may agree with me that the actions of today's Opposition make the Luddites of old like wizards of high technology by comparison." — [*Official Report*, 30 June 1986; Vol. 100, c. 717.]

That was said in relation to the strategic defence initiative. I was present at Ye Olde Cheddar Cheese in Fleet street when the Leader of the Opposition made his statement on SDI. That statement was gone through with many toothcombs by people who really know about these matters and it must be fully answered—as, indeed, must the Edinburgh meeting on 19 June between officials of the Secretary of State for Defence and scientists from Edinburgh university. I asked for that meeting on 9 December, to which the Secretary of State's predecessor, the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) agreed—and all credit to the right hon. Gentleman.

The Edinburgh scientists argued:

"The design of the SDI system and its computing basis would be necessarily flawed."

Their detailed arguments are known to the Ministry of Defence, and they have to be answered.

The Edinburgh scientists also argued:

"The implementation of that design in computer hardware and software would introduce further mistakes."

Professor Milner and his colleagues have to be answered. They also argued:

"The system could not be adequately tested to uncover the resulting problems"

and:

"Artificial Intelligence offers no magic solutions."

The people who say this are not only the European but probably the world leaders in artificial intelligence.

They argued:

"Once deployed, there would be failures that the system could not detect, which could be catastrophic"

and:

"British computing research would be diverted from more socially and industrially relevant work by SDI participation."

They also argued:

"The research community would be divided and weakened by security requirements"

and:

"The impact on the British economy of SDI participation would be negative."

In particular, they said:

"The SDI Battle Management System, if it were to be built, would be the largest and most complex real-time computer system ever. It would be composed of land, air- and space-based computers networked together, and its task would be to continuously monitor a vast array of sensors, determine when a hostile missile attack had occurred, determine the trajectories of the missiles, allocate first-layer weapons to missiles, direct their firing, assess the results and try again at the next layer."

This adds up to a game of celestial snooker.

Can we design such a computer system? And given such a design, could we construct it in a way that realised the design correctly? And having constructed it, could we trust it to do what we want it to do? The answer to all these questions, the experts say, is no.

The Secretary of State for Defence (Mr. George Younger): As this is a research programme to find the answers to exactly that sort of question, is not the logic of the hon. Gentleman's argument that his friends who hold these strong views should join the research programme and prove their case, if that is what they want to do?

Mr. Dalyell: The difficulty, they say, is that in the absence of a spare planet, which the Ministry of Defence does not have, there is no way of testing SDI, but if the Ministry of Defence is saying that all the Edinburgh questions will be answered, I shall regard that as an achievement of my speech.

What chances, Dr. Henry Thompson says, are there of anyone surviving the doubtless automatic response to that very real assault to examine the programme and correct the flaw? How, for instance, does the Secretary of State for Defence answer Jane Hesketh, who says:

"Although the system may be hierarchically defined, none of the above can be avoided, indeed they apply at all levels. Higher levels of the system must plan to cope with all the kinds of signals which may be manifested by lower levels, for whatever reason — correct operation, operator error, mechanical failure, component failure, power failure, enemy action etc."

Leaving Edinburgh, is it not a fact that the Prime Minister agreed to SDI in December 1984 on the basis of four conditions? One was that the United States would not try to achieve superiority; two, that deployment would be negotiated with the Soviet Union and would not violate the ABM treaty; three, that it would enhance, not undermine, deterrence; and four, that it would achieve security through East-West negotiations with reduced offensive weapons on both sides. I attended an all-day conference at Kensington town hall organised by Richard Ennals and Paul Walton on Wednesday last week, and my understanding is that three at least out of these four conditions have not been adhered to.

It is not simply a question of Luddites who are critical. The Institute of Strategic Studies is critical. The Senate Armed Services Committee in America has reduced the budget from $5·4 billion to $3·9 billion. There is undoubtedly great pressure from thousands of Washington lobbyists. Can we imagine an American situation where the Senate funds firms that are in competition with American firms? All right, as my hon. Friends have said, they may skim off the best of research at Heriot-Watt and elsewhere on optical physics and optical lasers, but when it comes to lucrative hardware,

Seven hundred members of the US Academy of Sciences and 54 Nobel prize winners have come out against it. Eighty Oxford academics in related subjects such as metallurgy and physics have come out against SDI. Many Scottish universities, reeling, as Glasgow as Edinburgh are, from financial cuts, have members who have come out against it.

I just ask, will the Secretary of State possibly interrupt me and say that he is prepared to answer point by point the continuing dialogue that the Edinburgh computer scientists are engaged in with his Department? Will he give the assurance that they will get a proper sustained hearing?

Mr. Younger: I am grateful to the hon. Member for giving me the opportunity. I will always do my best to answer any questions that he asks of me, of course, but if it is a question that his friends have strong views about the SDI programme, it is, I emphasise, a research programme and it is trying to find the answers which nobody knows to many of these problems. If he feels strongly about it, he should join in it and tell them the answers.

Mr. Dalyell: I have had my share of time.

9 pm

Mr. Conal Gregory (York): In this important debate on the Defence Estimates, I wish to raise two key points: first, the aspect of NATO purchasing of defence equipment, and, secondly, the issue of chemical weapons.

On the first point, a market place does not exist. The economic laws of nature do not apply. The civil commercial world does not exist. Indeed, the state is the consumer. Since we are discussing the survival of the protected, it is vital that our citizens have that security in both conventional and nuclear armaments, and that we ensure value for money. NATO has a collective military strategy but no collective approach towards providing the means to fulfil it. Surely we need some NATO structure for pooling resources. Too many NATO statements are of the motherhood variety such as, "We must safeguard the free world." Why is there not common funding for defence research? Although I understand that there are seven collaborative projects among NATO states, there is far too much duplication. In fact, a former Secretary of State for Defence has adequately explained this in some detail in speeches. Rather than my going through all the cases in the limited time available, I am sure that my right hon. Friend is aware of those and may allude to them in winding up.

Rather than have a fight between states that will develop a project, the Defence Ministers of NATO could spread out procurement among member states. I appreciate that there is an agreement on sharing technology such as between the United Kingdom and Spain and the valuable work of the Independent European Programme Group. This could be the embryo for a full-blown procurement programme.

I believe that there is an awareness in all NATO nations on both sides of the Atlantic that we face great challenges in our security arrangements. We must act as a collective, united group of democratic nations in meeting them.

The day has gone when Soviet quantitative superiority could be compensated by Western qualitative advantages. I am greatly worried about this gap of five to one on major equipment. Furthermore, the Western pact exercises its forces in a purely offensive manner. It is clear that Soviet military leaders, should they choose to attack, seek the capability rapidly to overrun NATO defence positions and bring a war in Europe to a rapid conclusion.

[Mr. Conal Gregory]

By modernising NATO's forces, the West can counter the threat from Soviet SS20 missiles and other weapons. Clearly a unified armed procurement policy within NATO will improve our defence position and the United Kingdom contribution to it.

My second point is about chemical weapons. In the late 1950s, Britain unilaterally abandoned chemical weapons. The pilot production plant for nerve agents in Cornwall was dismantled. Indeed, in the general election year of 1979 a party of international experts was invited to the Cornish site to see for themselves that it was possible to dismantle such production facilities safely. Today, as I understand it, Britain has no chemical weapons of her own and has no plans to re-acquire any. Research is concentrated on defensive measures, such as gasmasks and protective suits.

The United States has also stopped the manufacture of chemical weapons since 1969, but small stocks that are available to NATO exist in West Germany. I was discussing with NATO commanders last week on a visit to Brussels the difficulties that arise from that. Clearly, those stocks are becoming unstable after some 15 years. If there is to be replacement of that chemical weaponry, is it to be sited in Germany, in the United Kingdom, at say, Upper Heyford, or in the United States, our fellow member of NATO?

I appreciate the sincere belief of Opposition Members about the removal of nuclear deterrents, but they do not answer the convincing argument in connection with chemical weaponry—that, although we have abandoned chemical weaponry, the Soviets have not followed suit. The best way to cope with the difficulties is for all nations to agree to the conclusion of a comprehensive and verifiable ban not only on the use but on the manufacture and stockpiling of chemical weapons, and to agree to destroy existing stocks. In the absence of an agreed ban, it will be necessary to continue to deter the Soviet Union from considering the use of its powerful chemical capability against the West. I understand that the United States proposes to modernise present stocks.

My right hon. Friend should push for such a treaty, whether in Vienna or Geneva, in his discussions with the Soviets. The talks aimed at a comprehensive agreement on chemical weapons began in the 1960s in the 18-nation disarmament committee. Initially, there was little pressure for a ban. The draft treaty of 1976, which is still on the table, should be pursued with alacrity by the new Secretary of State. The feeling in the Western world is that we have one of the best chances yet to conclude a treaty. The alernative is almost too horrific to contemplate, with the placing almost certainly in Britain of chemical weapons. If we are to seize the momentum in 1986, the chance is before us.

Diplomacy must succeed to ensure peace. But it will do so only if we have a realistic defence capability. I hope that my right hon. Friend will respond to the two key points that I have highlighted in the defence debate.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Mr. Martin O'Neill.

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Will you please ensure that it is placed on the record that I and several other hon. Members have been unable to contribute to the debate? Indeed, many of my hon. Friends had to curtail their speeches severely. It is important that that is placed on the official record, because in the past it has been used as a slur against Labour Members that they were not interested in defence debates. That is clearly not the case now, but we have not been given the opportunity to participate.

Dr. Hampson: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The Chair rightly operated the 10 minute rule this evening. Could it possibly consider these double-day debates when four Front Bench spokesmen from each side take part? The time taken by the Front Bench so far has been enormous. There have been two 45-minute speeches, plus two of half-an-hour each. Yet there are still two of us who have failed to get in, despite a constituency interest.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I realise the disappointment of the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) and the hon. Member for Leeds, North West (Dr. Hampson) and other hon. Gentlemen, on both sides of the House, who have not been able to get into the debate today. All I can say, which I hope will be of some slight consolation, is that at the beginning of today's debate Mr. Speaker said that he would give some precedence to those who were here for a substantial part of yesterday's debate, and they just managed, in every case, to get called today. However, I apologise to the hon. Gentlemen. I am sure they will realise that the length of speeches from the Front Benches is a matter for the Front Benches and not for the Chair.

9.10 pm

Mr. Martin J. O'Neill (Clackmannan): I think it is also fair to point out that statements were stacked up today, which prevented this debate from starting until way after 5 o'clock.

However, although it has started comparatively late, the debate has gone on for some 12 hours. At times, those of us who have to reply have some difficulty in remembering exactly what we are supposed to be debating. Some of the issues raised concern the past. There is a degree of repetition in debates of this length and I was casting around for a means of trying to pull some of the threads together. I remembered the nonconformist background of my right hon. Friend the Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies), and I was led to the conclusion that I should perhaps seek a text.

I needed to look no further than the remarks of the Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces, who said last night that the message of the White Paper was

"continuity, consolidation and realism".—[*Official Report*, 30 June 1986; Vol 100, c. 793]

I congratulate the Under-Secretary on his appointment and his speech, but I would point out that it is sometimes dangerous to confuse loyalty to one's colleagues and superiors with blindness to the truth.

Our contention is that this White Paper is a break with continuity. We believe that the consolidation in certain defence activities, which we would like to see, has been undermined and that realism is sadly lacking when it comes to the nuclear cloud which has hung over this debate. Throughout the debate we have had a series of speeches from hon. Members expressing constituency interests who have said that they want a particular project to be pursued although they have been extremely cautious

about what they can get out of the Government because of the financial strictures which have been placed upon expenditure.

Page 39 of last year's report from the Select Committee on Defence stated :

"Both the Secretary of State"—

the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine)—

"and the Chief of Defence Staff told us that, if level funding in reals terms is maintained then the programme would be manageable. Our view, which was confirmed by the thrust of the CDS's evidence, is that with the present policy there is bound to be a substantial real cut."

On that occasion there was a degree of difference, because the right hon. Member for Henley stated:

"If you say to me would it do harm to reduce the defence budget by 7 per cent. I would think that it is an unthinkable denial of resources in the defence budget. There are no plans or any discussions or even information that such a thing could come about ".

The remarks of the right hon. Gentleman do not suggest a degree of continuity.

From the early days of this year, with the right hon. Gentleman's rapid departure and the arrival of the new rapid deployment force in the shape of the right hon. Member for Ayr (Mr. Younger), there has been a change of view especially with regard to consolidation.

There is not much hope for consolidation in relation to frigate orders. We have had the figure of 50 reduced to near 50, just about 50 or around 50. I am not sure where that comes in simple arithmetic. My understanding is that if one adds 40 and 10 one gets 50. If one takes 10 away from 50 one does not get Younger, one gets Nott. This will not be the consolidation process which we expected considering the speech of the Under-Secretary last night.

As for realism, frankly, the document is undermined by the need to find money and resources from other budgets to fund the independent strategic nuclear strike force—a strike force which was described elsewhere as an expensive luxury, irrelevant both to the needs of NATO and to Britain's defence. I do not use those words lightly. They were used by a distinguished former soldier, whom I think is known to everyone.

The heart of the debate lies in paragraph 503 on page 40 of the statement on Defence Estimates where it says:

"Although the budget for 1986-87 and the two subsequent years, as published in the recent Public Expenditure White Paper, is planned to rise in cash terms, its value in real terms will decrease by about 6 per cent. over the three-year period."

The use of the word "about" could mean that it might be 5 per cent. or 7 per cent., but certainly we are seeing a massive cut in the defence budget which, according to the statement on the Defence Estimates, will require difficult decisions to be taken.

I want to remind the House that the proposed cuts will probably amount to something in the order of 6·4 per cent. over the years between 1984-85 and 1988-89. As I understand it, that will have the effect of cutting the equipment budget overall by about 10 per cent. up to 1989. The impact will not necessarily be felt on new equipment immediately, but it is certainly true to say that non-Trident new equipment will be cut in real terms by something in the order of 25 per cent.

Those figures were used by the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) and they have some currency as they come from the Defence Information Group — a respectable research group. If, as I go through the figures, there is any possibility that they are wrong, I hope that the Minister will correct my arithmetic when he replies because I know that the academics who have prepared those figures would be interested to see where their findings have gone astray.

It is true that the Labour party has continually expressed the desire to cut defence expenditure. We want to see a shift in our national priorities. In 1979 for every £100 spent on education and science some £79 was spent on defence. Five years later in 1984, for every £100 spent on education and science, £101 was spent on defence.

Meeting our responsibilities within the Western Alliance means that spending levels may well have to be sustained at those almost unacceptable levels because we recognise that the next Government will have to repair the damage to the conventional budget which the figures that we have been discussing this evening will inflict upon that budget.

Where will those cuts be made? We have heard it said that expenditure on Trident will rise from the 1984-85 figure of £163 million to about £900 million in 1988-89. To fund that, conventional spending will have to be cut by about 10·8 per cent. in real terms over the next four years.

It has been made clear, and I think that all hon. Members would agree, that any cuts of that nature should not come out of the spending on personnel. At the moment the personnel budget accounts for about 35 per cent. of the whole budget. It is suggested that there may well be some reductions in personnel — about 2·5 per cent. in the numbers for the armed forces and about 6 to 7 per cent. in the numbers of civilians.

But, frankly, there may well have to be an increase in the figure of 35 per cent. if service wages are to keep up with outside pay and conditions. At the moment the Government are taking consolation from the fact that fewer people are leaving the services now than in the late 1980s, but in their complacency they seem to forget that there are now 3·5 million people out of work, whereas in the 1970s the figure was barely one third of that. At that time Britain's defence industries were looking forward with some optimism to future increases in defence expenditure and were head-hunting for people to fill gaps in their organisations. I realise that account may have to be taken of possible cuts in the Falklands commitment. We are led to believe that the figure will have been reduced to about £165 million in 1988-89 from an outturn figure of about £684 million in the last financial year for which we have figures. Even allowing for that, however, conventional spending excluding the Falklands will still fall by about 8·1 per cent.

As well as the Falklands, there may well be a fall caused by the reduction in oil prices. However, the largest part of the cuts will be found in the 46 per cent. of the budget accounted for by equipment. Between 1978-79 and 1984-85 that budget grew by about 47·5 per cent., or 6·7 per cent. per annum in real terms. Government Members have continually stressed that figure. The increase was split almost evenly between new equipment and spares and maintenance. In sea systems there was a 38 per cent. increase, in land systems a 52 per cent. increase and—largely because of Tornado—there was a 63 per cent. increase in air systems. According to the Estimates, between 1985-86 and 1986-87 there will be a cut of 4·8 per cent. in real terms of which spares, maintenance and repairs will account for just over 13 per cent. Expenditure on land systems—ammunitions, mines and explosives—will fall from £322 million in 1984 to £190 million in 1987.

[Mr. Martin J. O'Neill]

In air systems — aircraft, engine support, instruments and avionics, the edges of technology — expenditure will fall from £1,001 million to £752 million.

I appreciate that some hon. Members may find these figures tedious. However, although they may not read my remarks in *Hansard* for their flow of eloquence, they may well recall them when, during the long recess, they meet the firms in their constituencies that are engaged in the armaments business and begin to find out what is happening on the other side of the counter and what problems are arising about the orders.

In avionics and air systems, there is a drop of £250 million.

Mr. Cecil Franks (Barrow and Furness): During the recess, I shall meet the managing director of Vickers. The hon. Gentleman met him too some time ago. The hon. Gentleman frequently quotes or misquotes the managing director. May I ask him a question that the managing director has put to me? If there is a general election on Thursday and on Friday the Labour Government cancels Trident, what will the lads in the yard do on Monday morning? I hope that the hon. Gentleman will not say, "build more hunter-killer submarines". There are such things as design work and long lead orders. What will my constituents do on Monday morning after a Labour victory?

Mr. O'Neill: I made a mistake in allowing the hon. Member for Barrow and Furness (Mr. Franks) to intervene. Had he been here for most of the debate——

Mr. Best: Answer.

Mr. O'Neill: The hon. Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Best) has attended at least one day of the debate and has heard some of the Labour arguments. As far as I know, the hon. Member for Barrow and Furness entered the Chamber only a few moments ago and appeared briefly yesterday afternoon.

When it was seeking control of the privatised yard the firm stated in its prospectus that it was confident that a Labour Government would find work for the yard. I am sure that the managing director would not mislead the people to the extent that has been suggested. It may be that the hon. Gentleman does not understand the answers that have been given repeatedly, but the position is clear. [HON. MEMBERS: "Answer the question."] I must move on.

At present the RAF has had to forgo the delivery of Tornados because the Tornados which it was to receive have gone to Saudi. That represents a new style of cuts and savings because equipment which was destined for the RAF but which goes to another country, conveniently, does not appear in the accounts for the forthcoming year.

It is anticipated that the cost of the sea systems will increase from about £163 million in 1984-85 to about £500 million in 1986-87. Although there are also to be some changes in shore construction, probably at Rosyth, the net non-Trident cut in sea systems will be about 8 per cent.

This evening, there have already been repeated requests for a clear, explicit statement as soon as possible about what the frigate orders will be. We are anxious that the statement is made before the recess and that it will give the number of ships. This evening we should like to know how many ships will be ordered, and the correct answers to questions 503, 504 and 505 in the Select Committee document. If, as my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) says, the answers given by Mr. Levene to the Committee are untrue, it raises serious problems about the way in which the Chief of Defence Procurement conducts his relations with the Select Committee. One would have thought that those relations are central to parliamentary scrutiny of the procurement side of the budget.

The Minister has already had more than two hours to find an answer to that, and this evening we expect a response from him. Grave allegations have been made and my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas), who pursued Mr. Levene in Committee, is entitled to have the position made clear. He is extremely embarrassed at the way in which the matter has been raised.

The equipment budget, regardless of spares and so on, has been a source of pride to Conservative Members. Indeed, the Government have kept their word about supplying the forces. In 1984-85 the figure stood at £7,961 million, but by 1988-89 it will have decreased to £7,125 million. If expenditure on Trident is excluded there will be a decrease of about 20 per cent. over four years. If the ongoing side of the fares and maintenance is excluded, non-Trident new equipment will fall from about £4,600 million to £3,500 million — a reduction of 25 per cent.

The hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) mentioned that figure in his speech. In many respects his speech was a model of concision, given the difficulties he had in speaking in the debate. I must say that the hon. Gentleman probably said much more in 10 minutes today than the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) said in 50 minutes yesterday. However, in the midst of his remarks about the desirability of a complete test ban, the hon. Gentleman did not say whether the Liberals would have a successor to Polaris and would go along with the right hon. Member for Devonport. If they are to have a successor to Polaris, would it be tested? There must be a new kind of device which does not need testing, one which will work the first time that it is used. *[Interruption.]* In addition to all his other qualities, the hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) assumes to himself the qualities of prescience and omnipresence. The analysis and the criticism were prefectly acceptable, but sadly the conclusions left a great deal to be desired.

Mr. Wallace: Many warheads have already been tested and we know they all go bang. I am not saying that we would have a successor to Polaris, but it would not be an insurmountable problem if at the end of the day we decided that there was a need for it.

Mr. O'Neill: If the report in *The Guardian* yesterday was correct, one can have big bombs or no bombs and if one is a member of the alliance one can have small bombs, because somehow they are acceptable. They are like the Victorian chambermaid's illegitimate child — it is all right if it is a little one. Perhaps the alliance has not yet made up its mind. Perhaps at its conference in Eastbourne the alliance will reach its conclusions.

The nature of the Estimates that the Secretary of State has presented will result in 1988-89 in new equipment spending being no higher than it was in 1979-80. We will

be back to where we started, to the beginning of the so-called fat years. Many things must be done to ensure that our contribution to the NATO Alliance is sustained. We have heard in debates elsewhere that decisions cannot be evaded by using a combination of gimmicks and sleight of hand. It is quite clear that orders will be postponed. Only nine frigates have so far been ordered and that is 12 fewer than we ought to have. A former Chief Sea Lord has said that this is a figure of extraordinary discrepancy.

Savings cannot come from a tail to teeth exercise and they certainly cannot come from the privatisation of the dockyards. The Government will have to face some choices before 1988-89. They will have to decide whether there is to be a reduction in the British Army of the Rhine and whether there will be a reduction from 50 to 40 frigates. They will have to decide whether to sell off any of the Invincible class carriers.

There is an absence of any definite or specific expression of commitment about the role of the amphibious craft mentioned in paragraph 42. Last year the Select Committee said:

"If the UK does not replace its amphibious capability NATO reinforcement plans for the Northern flank will be in jeopardy."

Given that the Government are unlikely to renege on Tornado, a large question must be raised about the orders for 250 of the European fighter aircraft. The role of Britain within NATO must be a non-nuclear one. That is a role in keeping with our economic position and with a need to secure a degree of peace and security within Europe. The Opposition recognise that in other parts of the House there is a lack of enthusiasm for that policy, but we also know that throughout Britain, following the bombing of Libya and the frightening experience for Europe of the Chernobyl disaster, people are clearly aware of the size of Europe and of the dangers of an explosion equivalent to a kilotonne shell that is not even on the surface. Chernobyl was not an air burst. The fear and anxiety surrounding an explosion of that scale has brought to many people's minds the cruel reality of what even a limited nuclear exchange would be like.

In keeping with this country's tradition as a source of peace and security throughout the world, especially in Europe, we must modify our ambitions, in conjunction with countries which are in the NATO Alliance — Canada, Norway, Denmark and Spain—and which have just decided to commit themselves to a non-nuclear policy within NATO. As Lord Carrington said, it is an à la carte NATO. There are many precedents. We recognise that our American allies will not be over-impressed by what we are doing. But it is an alliance. It is a group of partners who should be able to agree and disagree and come together again. We believe that our policies and those embodied in our amendment are sufficient to require the support of the House. I invite my hon. Friends and other hon. Members to join us in the Lobbies to ensure that our policy becomes this country's policy.

9.35 pm

The Minister of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. John Stanley): The fundamental point to which the hon. Member for Clackmannan (Mr. O'Neill) did not address himself was that a non-nuclear policy within NATO is a contradiction. If every member of NATO pursued that policy, there would be nothing left of the NATO Alliance.

Inevitably we have spent a great deal of time talking about defence policies, but just as important are the men and women of the armed forces. Since our debate last year they have been on duty in the United Kingdom and in 64 countries overseas. Many have served in very demanding conditions. They have served at sea, under the sea, in every type of terrain and climate and in all types of flying conditions, ranging from the best to the appalling. They have been engaged in life-saving operations in Ethiopia, Mexico, Colombia, Aden and Jamaica, and in search and rescue throughout the United Kingdom.

Very sadly, a further 11 service men have given their lives, including, I am sorry to say, a UDR soldier who was killed earlier today, in the counter-terrorist operations that are conducted with skill and great determination in Northern Ireland. I know that all hon. Members will applaud the consistent standards of excellence shown by our armed services throughout the world. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."]

The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara), who opened the debate after my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement, referred to the Opposition's policy on chemical weapons. He made an important statement of policy when he said that there would be no deployment of chemical weapons to the United Kingdom under any circumstances. In reality, that means that the Labour party is eliminating the option for all time and in all future circumstances, which cannot possibly be foreseen, of giving the people of this country the defence of a chemical deterrent against the massive chemical capability of the Soviet Union, which can reach any western European country, including our own. I believe that that is an irresponsible position to take.

Mr. Churchill *rose*—

Mr. Stanley: I shall give way to my hon. Friend a little later. I want to make further progress.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Brighton, Pavilion (Mr. Amery) made some pertinent points about the regional aspects of arms control. The right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley), supported by my hon. Friend the Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill) and the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace), gave us his strong views in favour of the repeal of section 10 of the Crown Proceedings Act. It is an extremely difficult issue, with some important implications. There are two sides to it. I doubt that the provision would have lasted 40 years on the statute book under successive Governments if there had not been a strong case for it, although the right hon. Gentleman has advanced arguments against it. I assure the right hon. Gentleman, as we have recently said, that we are trying to complete the review as quickly as possible. It is well advanced.

The right hon. Gentleman raised the issue of Mr. Meredith and asked what guidance is given in relation to section 10 and recruitment. I should like to look further into those points. I shall, of course, be glad to write to him about them.

My hon. Friends the Members for Canterbury (Mr. Crouch) and for Nottingham, South (Mr. Brandon-Bravo) gave us the benefit of their recent visits to the Falklands. I am grateful to them for giving the House their first-hand reactions. I accept their points about the importance of mail in relation to morale, the issue of the

[Mr. Stanley]

Falkland Islands pay rules and possible delays in the receipt of World Cup videos. I assure my hon. Friends that I shall look personally at those matters when I am in the Falklands in a few weeks' time.

The hon. Members for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) and for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas) made a number of detailed points about Mr. Levene's evidence to the Select Committee of Defence. It is not possible within the compass of this debate to produce detailed responses to the hon. Gentlemen's points, but I assure them that they will be considered carefully by the Department.

Mr. Douglas: That is not good enough. Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Stanley: If I may, I should like to continue a little further.

The hon. Member for Dunfermline, West raised the issue of apprenticeships. I assure him that contractors for Rosyth are required to set out in their responses to the invitation to tender proposals for apprenticeships, and they will be carefully considered by the Government.

Mr. Douglas: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Stanley: I shall continue just for the moment. I am going to reply to those hon. Members who have spoken in the debate.

The hon. Member for Eccles (Mr. Carter-Jones) referred to a number of aspects of the equipment programme——

Mr. O'Neill: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. A serious question has been raised in the debate relating to the activities of a civil servant, and there has been adequate time to obtain an answer. The Minister is refusing to provide the House with information that is available to him.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): This must be a matter for the Minister.

Mr. Stanley: The hon. Member for Eccles made——

Mr. Douglas: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way on this point?

Mr. Stanley: —a number of points on various aspects of the defence programme. I very much welcome his support for the European fighter aircraft programme.

Mr. Douglas: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker —[Hon. Members: "Stand up."]—I am standing up. I hesitate to raise a point of order and interrrupt the Minister's speech, but serious points have been raised during the debate concerning the commercial relationships between the Ministry of Defence and large companies. The House and those companies should not have to wait any longer. The Minister has had ample opportunity to consult the civil servant, who is within the precincts, to get this vital information.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: We are at the end of a two-day debate. I hope that the House will give the Minister an opportunity to answer it.

Mr. Stanley: I say to the hon. Member for Dunfermline, West that I have done my best to try to answer the points raised by many other hon. Members apart from him. I am trying to do my best to respond in the limited time available.

My hon. Friend the Member for Aldershot (Mr. Critchley) made a characteristically individualistic and witty contribution. I think that I would agree more with his comments about the Labour party than with his comments on the implications of the Government's defence policy, but we certainly enjoyed his wit.

The hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Dubs) made some important points on racial discrimination. He asked for a clear statement of policy on that issue. I am glad to draw his attention to the answer given by my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces on 12 June, in which he said:

"No form of racial discrimination is tolerated either in recruitment or subsequent employment. Any complaint of racial discrimination brought by a member of the Army concerning his treatment in the service would be fully investigated under the redress of grievances procedures." [*Official Report*, 12 June 1986; Vol. 99, *c*.292.]

My hon. Friend the Member for Elmet (Mr. Batiste) spoke strongly in favour of the early flotation of the royal ordnance factories. He made a strong plea for them not to be broken up and for an early decision on the 7th Challenger Regiment. He addressed his comments to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State who was in his place and who I am sure will have taken careful note of the points made.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has made it clear that budgetary pressures will necessitate some difficult decisions. In his speech yesterday he said that some items are having to be deleted from the equipment programme and others are having to be delayed. However, he also made the point that we are pressing ahead with improvements all the time. We are constantly making judgments on priorities and adjusting the programme accordingly.

Against that background, the House will be glad to know that among the items for which we have made financial provision for the first time are the replacement of our amphibious shipping, Rapier for the United Kingdom-Netherlands force, an area defence missile for the next generation of surface ships, a Sea Harrier attrition buy, a 7th Challenger Regiment, and additional attrition buys of Tornado. I stress that that all represents financial provision rather than firm commitments, but to present a balanced picture the House should be aware that we are engaged in a continuous process of trying to reallocate funds in relation to changing priorities. I believe that the House will welcome those arrangements.

Mr. Best: In the provision for the replacement of our amphibious forces, how much has been provided for, and does that include a new Commando carrier? If so, is it to be a converted merchant vessel, or a properly defended one?

Mr. Stanley: I cannot give that degree of detail to my hon. Friend. As my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement said, those are all details which will have to await the decision which will be taken later this year.

The House has spent a considerable amount of time considering the future of the British deterrent. The first point that must be made is that the decision whether there should be a successor system to Polaris has to be taken now if Britain is to have continuity of a viable deterrent

in the 1990s. That decision cannot be delayed, and I was glad that the right hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) agreed with that view in his speech yesterday.

It is totally unrealistic to think that one can get a viable replacement system researched, developed, manufactured, tested and fully into service inside 10 years, as the alliance seems to think, let alone the European strategic cruise missile system which the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) seems to want Britain to have. That system is not on the drawing board in any European country, and it is wholly unrealistic to think that one can delay that decision.

The second point is that one cannot expect to deter a nuclear threat with conventional forces today any more than the Japanese could in 1945. The only deterrent to nuclear is nuclear. Therefore, the basic argument advanced by the Opposition that we should simply scrap our nuclear capability and replace it with conventional capability does not stand up in defence terms. There is perhaps some doubt whether the Opposition are determined to use the whole of the Trident programme for conventional defence. We heard yesterday from my hon. Friend the Member for Gillingham (Mr. Couchman) that the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) has apparently said that the Trident money would be used in the Health Service.

The Opposition Front-Bench spokesman's commitment that the Labour party would use the Trident money for defence purposes would purchase, in the front line, perhaps three additional armoured divisions. To put that into perspective, the Warsaw pact in peace time on the central front has nearly 60 armoured divisions, and that figure would be increased rapidly to more than 90 by readily available reinforcements. Against that background, it is clear that we would achieve only a relatively marginal increase in conventional capability, even if we used all the money involved for conventional purposes.

My third point—here I agree with the hon. Member for Devonport—is that the British people are entitled to know the views of all political parties on whether Polaris should be replaced. The right hon. Gentleman has been admirably clear on this point, and he has made his apologies for his absence tonight. He has said bluntly that he believes that we should remain a nuclear weapons state. That does not seem to be entirely in accord even with the Members of the SDP. Indeed, the president of the SDP, Mrs. Shirley Williams, with her characteristic decisiveness, said:

"The present policy of the SDP is that the party is willing to replace Polaris under certain circumstances, but is not irrevocably committed to doing so."

That is the present position of the president of the SDP, but I agree with the right hon. Member for Devonport that the matter must be made clear.

The policy of the official Opposition has the merit of being clear. The right hon. Member for Llanelli said that the Polaris force will be scrapped in quick time, "in the first phase," as he described it, of the implementation of Labour's non-nuclear policy. However, we understand that the scrapping of Polaris by the Labour Government—if there is a Labour Government, and we believe that that is improbable with their defence policy—would be accompanied by a little arms control agreement between Britain and the Soviet Union.

We read that during his recent visit to India the Leader of the Opposition said that a Labour Government would take up Mr. Gorbachev's offer to negotiate separate nuclear weapon cuts with Britain. The key point was that Mr. Gorbachev was now prepared to talk in terms of equivalent missile-for-missile reductions. What a brilliant and masterly arms control agreement that would be. It would certainly be brilliant and masterful for the Soviet Union. It would leave the Russians with 880 strategic missiles at sea and 1,398 strategic missiles on land, and Britain with precisely zero. Only the Opposition could have fallen hook, line and sinker for that one.

It would be completely irresponsible to scrap our Polaris deterrent when it has some years of life left in it, and when it has just been modernised with Chevaline, following the wish of the Labour Government. It would be irresponsible to scrap it when it has been confirmed once again at the most recent meeting of the NATO nuclear planning group that our strategic deterrent is fully supported by our NATO partners. The Labour party's commitment to scrap our Polaris force immediately is completely irresponsible in defence and economic terms.

I turn to the position of the so-called alliance on this issue. I do not believe that the Liberal party's position is any different from that of the official Opposition—*[Interruption.]* As the *Daily Mirror* said:

"Labour would have us throw away our gun now. The Liberals would wait until it was useless."

That more or less sums up the situation.

I see that the Leader of the Liberal party has recently been lashing out at the media over their ignorance of defence matters compared with his deep understanding of them. Last month he wrote:

"Some of the more ignorant commentators have portrayed Britain without Polaris as being virtually defenceless. They forget, for instance, that we already have nuclear armed Tornado squadrons."

If the right hon. Gentleman believes that the Tornado aircraft represent any sort of deterrent to the massive Soviet strategic nuclear capability, he should direct his charge of ingnorance, not at the commentators but at himself.

The Liberal party has again and again said that it does not wish to replace Polaris. It is on the side of the one-side disarmers in this debate, and it should have the gumption to say so. The other part of the so-called alliance is hooked on to the right policy of ensuring that our country remains a nuclear capable power, but is hooked on to a wholly incorrect way of implementing it.

Mr. Douglas: Perhaps the Minister will now clarify a point that I asked him to make clear earlier. The questions that I and my right hon. Friend the Member for Dudley, East (Dr. Gilbert) asked in the Select Committee need only yes or no answers. It is extremely important that we should have those answers now. The Minister has had ample time during the debate to find out the answers, especially as the official responsible has been within the precincts of the House.

Mr. Stanley: The hon. Gentleman and the right hon. Member for Dudley, East (Dr. Gilbert) have raised some detailed points in relation to evidence given to the Select Committee. They need to be looked at in far more detail than is possible this evening.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Stanley: Although the SDP is right to have adopted a policy of replacing Polaris, it has chosen the wrong

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means of implementing it. Sea-lauched cruise missiles are not more, but less, cost-effective. The alternative put forward by the SDP is either a deterrent that is below the minimum threshold and thus will not deter, or a deterrent which, if it is to be credible, will cost much more than Trident.

I notice that the leader of the Liberal party, in a recent interview on "Weekend World", was asked how he viewed his relationship with the right hon. Member for Devonport. He replied:

"Divorce never but murder occasionally".

If the right hon. Member for Devonport was here, I would say that if he wants to save his skin and ensure his physical protection, a minor adjustment in his defence policy that takes it a little further in our direction would enable him to do that.

The other major issue to have surfaced in the debate is the future of the American bases in this country. The Labour party's commitment is one of the most damaging and serious defence commitments to be made by any political party in this country. It will have serious consequences in Europe, where it may set in train a process whereby other countries are tempted to follow suit, but the implications for Capitol hill and for Washington itself may be much more significant. Many Americans will say that if Britain or Europe does not want them, they should start to pull out. They will start to pull out. They will pull out not only their nuclear but also their conventional assets. The policy of the official Opposition will undermine NATO and will seriously reduce the defence capability of this country——

Mr. Norman Hogg (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) *rose in his place and claimed to move*, That the Question be now put.

Question, That the Question be now put, *put and agreed to*.

Question put accordingly, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 173, Noes 346.

Division No. 237] **[10 pm**

AYES

Abse, Leo
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnett, Guy
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Anthony
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'rmline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, R. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne N)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell, Ian
Canavan, Dennis
Carter-Jones, Lewis
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clelland, David Gordon
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S)*
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Conlan, Bernard
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Garrett, W. E.
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Gould, Bryan
Gourlay, Harry
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Dr Mark *(Durham)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hume, John
Janner, Hon Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kilroy-Silk, Robert
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McCartney, Hugh
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKelvey, William
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Robert
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Park, George
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, J. W.
Ross, Ernest *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ryman, John
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Short, Mrs R. *(W'hampt'n NE)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Tinn, James
Torney, Tom
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Weetch, Ken
White, James
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Winnick, David
Woodall, Alec
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Allen McKay and
Mr. Chris Smith.

NOES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Alton, David
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Ashdown, Paddy
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Beith, A. J.
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Benyon, William
Best, Keith
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John

Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Bruce, Malcolm
Bruinvels, Peter
Bryan, Sir Paul
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Budgen, Nick
Bulmer, Esmond
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Rt Hon Sir Adam
Butterfill, John
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Carlisle, John *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cartwright, John
Cash, William
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, W. S.
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Clegg, Sir Walter
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Couchman, James
Cranborne, Viscount
Critchley, Julian
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Anthony
Fletcher, Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Freud, Clement
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John S
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hancock, Michael
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayward, Robert
Heath, Rt Hon Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hickmet, Richard
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hirst, Michael
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Howells, Geraint
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irving, Charles
Jackson, Robert
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Jenkins, Rt Hon Roy *(Hillh'd)*
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kennedy, Charles
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lilley, Peter
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
Maclennan, Robert
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New F'st)*
Malins, Humfrey
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Antony
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mills, Sir Peter *(West Devon)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M. *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Normanton, Tom
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Oppenheim, Rt Hon Mrs S.
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abgdn)*
Pattie, Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Penhaligon, David
Pollock, Alexander
Porter, Barry
Portillo, Michael
Powley, John
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Price, Sir David
Prior, Rt Hon James
Proctor, K. Harvey
Pym, Rt Hon Francis
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Rippon, Rt Hon Geoffrey
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
St. John-Stevas, Rt Hon N.
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Shields, Mrs Elizabeth
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Cyril *(Rochdale)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertf'dshire N)*
Stokes, John
Sumberg, David
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Wall, Sir Patrick
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Walters, Dennis
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Whitney, Raymond
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Wrigglesworth, Ian
Yeo, Tim

Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Carol Mather and
Mr. Robert Boscawen.

Question accordingly negatived.
Main Question put:—
The House divided: Ayes 322, Noes 42.

Division No. 238] **[10.15 pm**

AYES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Benyon, William
Best, Keith
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Bruinvels, Peter
Bryan, Sir Paul
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Budgen, Nick
Bulmer, Esmond
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Rt Hon Sir Adam
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, W. S.
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Clegg, Sir Walter
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Couchman, James
Cranborne, Viscount
Critchley, Julian
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Anthony
Fletcher, Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John S
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Harvey, Robert
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayward, Robert
Heath, Rt Hon Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hickmet, Richard
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hirst, Michael
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irving, Charles
Jackson, Robert
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New F'st)*
Malins, Humfrey
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Antony
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mills, Sir Peter *(West Devon)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M. *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Normanton, Tom
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Oppenheim, Rt Hon Mrs S.
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Pattie, Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pollock, Alexander
Porter, Barry
Portillo, Michael
Powley, John
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Price, Sir David
Prior, Rt Hon James
Proctor, K. Harvey
Pym, Rt Hon Francis
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Rippon, Rt Hon Geoffrey
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
St. John-Stevas, Rt Hon N.
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertf'dshire N)*
Stokes, John
Sumberg, David
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
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Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian

van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Wall, Sir Patrick
Waller, Gary
Walters, Dennis
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Whitney, Raymond
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Carol Mather and
Mr. Robert Boscawen.

NOES

Alton, David
Ashdown, Paddy
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Beith, A. J.
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Caborn, Richard
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Cartwright, John
Clay, Robert
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Freud, Clement
Hancock, Michael
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Jenkins, Rt Hon Roy *(Hillh'd)*
Johnston, Sir Russell
Kennedy, Charles
Kirkwood, Archy
Lamond, James
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
McKelvey, William
Maclennan, Robert
Madden, Max
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meadowcroft, Michael
Mikardo, Ian
Nellist, David
Penhaligon, David
Pike, Peter
Ross, Ernest *(Dundee W)*
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Shields, Mrs Elizabeth
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Cyril *(Rochdale)*
Wainwright, R.
Wallace, James
Wrigglesworth, Ian

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Jeremy Corbyn and
Mr. Harry Cohen.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House approves the statement on the Defence Estimates 1986, contained in Cmnd. 9763.

Business of the House

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting, the Motion relating to European Communities (Amendment) Bill (Allocation of Time) may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour. — [*Mr. Garel-Jones.*]

European Communities (Amendment) Bill (Allocation of Time)

10.28 pm

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen): I beg to move,

That the following provisions shall apply to the remaining proceedings on the Bill:

Committee, Report and Third Reading: time allotted for proceedings

1. Paragraph (1) of Standing Order No. 3 (Exempted business) shall apply to the proceedings, but

(a) proceedings in Committee shall be brought to a conclusion two hours after the House next resolves itself into a Committee on the Bill; and

(b) proceedings on consideration and Third Reading of the Bill shall be brought to a conclusion one hour after the conclusion of the proceedings in Committee.

Proceedings on going into Committee

2. When the Order of the day is read for the House to resolve itself into a Committee on the Bill, Mr. Speaker shall leave the Chair without putting any Question, notwithstanding that notice of an Instruction has been given.

Conclusion of proceedings in Committee

3. On the conclusion of the proceedings in Committee the Chairman shall report the Bill to the House without putting any Question.

Order of consideration

4. No Motion shall be made to alter the order in which proceedings in Committee or on consideration of the Bill are taken.

Re-committal

5.—(1) References in this Order to proceedings on consideration or Third Reading include references to proceedings, at those stages respectively, for, on or in consequence of, re-committal.

(2) No debate shall be permitted on any Motion to re-commit the Bill (whether as a whole or otherwise) and Mr. Speaker shall put forthwith any Question necessary to dispose of the Motion, including the Question on any Amendment moved to the Question.

Dilatory Motions

6. No dilatory Motion with respect to, or in the course of, proceedings on the Bill shall be moved except by a member of the Government, and the Question on any such Motion shall be put forthwith.

Exclusion of Business Committee

7. Standing Order No. 45 (Business Committee) shall not apply to this Order.

Conclusion of proceedings

8. For the purpose of bringing any proceedings on the Bill to a conclusion in pursuance of this Order the Chairman or Mr. Speaker shall forthwith put the following Questions (but no others)—

(a) any Question already proposed from the Chair;

(b) any Question necessary to bring to a decision a Question so proposed (including, in the case of a new Clause or new Schedule which has been read a second time, the Question, That the Clause or Schedule be added to the Bill);

(c) the Question on any Amendment or Motion standing on the Order Paper in the name of any Member, if that Amendment or Motion is moved by a member of the Government;

(d) any other Question necessary for the disposal of the business to be concluded.

Supplemental orders

9.—(1) The proceedings on any Motion made in the House by a member of the Government for varying or supplementing the provisions of this Order shall, if not previously concluded, be brought to a conclusion one hour after they have been commenced, and paragraph (1) of Standing Order No. 3 (Exempted business) shall apply to the proceedings.

(2) If on the day on which any proceedings on the Bill are to be brought to a conclusion at a time appointed by this Order the House is adjourned, or the sitting is suspended, before that time no notice shall be required of a Motion made at the next sitting by a member of the Government for varying or supplementing the provisions of this Order.

Saving

10. Nothing in this Order shall prevent any proceedings to which the Order applies from being taken or completed earlier than is required by the Order.

Interpretation

11. In this Order 'the Bill' means the European Communities (Amendment) Bill.

Mr. Speaker: I have selected the following: amendment (a), in (1), leave out paragraphs *(a)* and *(b)* and insert: 'the proceedings shall be brought to a conclusion at such times after the start as are shown in the following Table ("the start" for this purpose being the time when the House next resolves itself into a Committee on the Bill):

TABLE

Proceedings	*Time for conclusion of proceedings*
Amendment No. 7	1 hour
Amendment No. 9	2 hours
Amendments Nos. 11 and 14	3 hours
Amendments Nos. 47 and 22, the remainder of Clause No. 1, Clause No. 2, and Clause No. 3 to the end of subsection (3).	4 hours
Amendment No. 46 and remaining proceedings in Committee and on consideration and Third Reading	5 hours

Amendment *(b)*, in (1), leave out paragraphs *(a)* and *(b)* and insert:

: 'the proceedings shall be brought to a conclusion at such times after the start as are shown in the following Table ("the start" for this purpose being the time when the House next resolves into a Committee on the Bill):

Provided that, in calculating such times, no account shall be taken of time spent on Divisions:

TABLE

Proceedings	*Time for conclusion of proceedings*
Amendment No. 7	2 hours
Amendment No. 9	4 hours
Amendments Nos. 11 and 14	6 hours
Amendments Nos. 47 and 22, the remainder of Clause No. 1, Clause No. 2, and Clause No. 3 to the end of subsection (3).	8 hours
Amendment No. 46 and remaining proceedings in Committee and on consideration and Third Reading	10 hours.'.

Amendment (c), in (1), line 6, leave out 'two' and insert 'fifteen'.

Amendment (e), in (1)*(b)*, leave out from 'shall' to the end of line 9 and insert

: 'not be on the same day as proceedings in Committee, nor brought to a conclusion until after six hours.'.

Mr. Biffen: The motion before us today would provide a timetable for the remaining stages of the European Communities (Amendment) Bill in this House. While our Standing Orders do not formally recognise constitutional Bills as a separate category of legislation, I would not seek to deny the constitutional importance of the Bill. Later, I propose to deal more generally with the nature of the passage of constitutional Bills, and the problems that it can pose. First, however, I shall say a few words about the passage of the Bill so far and about the timing and content of the timetable motion. The main purpose of the Bill is

to incorporate into our law the agreement reached in the Single European Act. That Act was signed by representatives of all member states of the European Community at Luxembourg in February this year. Its roots lie in the European Council's meeting at Fontainebleau in 1984. Perhaps the most important provision of the Single European Act relates to completion of the internal market within the European Community and the greater use of qualified majority voting. The Act also allows for the establishment of a new court of first instance related to the European Court of Justice. Beyond the Single European Act and the court which it creates, the Bill itself gives effect also to the formal change of name of the "European Assembly" to "European Parliament".

They are important matters, both substantively and symbolically. For that reason, we have provided a significant amount of time for the House to debate them. The Second Reading debate of the Bill, which took place on 23 April, lasted a full day, and we have had extensive discussions in Committee. The Bill received its Second Reading with the clear majority of 319 votes to 160. That is an indication that the Government fully have the authority of the House for wishing to ensure that the passage of the Bill can be concluded.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): I am grateful to the Leader of the House for giving way so soon. Has he not forgotten one major feature in the catalogue of major features of the Single European Act? Does not clause 3(4) of the Bill certify that additional powers will be given to the European Assembly or Parliament? Am I right in thinking that the right hon. Gentleman did not mention that during his brief resumé?

Mr. Biffen: Obviously, the resumé was brief because we are operating within a three-hour debate as provided by the Standing Orders. The number of hon. Members present shows that many others wish to speak in the debate besides me.

Progress on the Bill has, however, been slow. Five hours were spent in Committee on the Floor of the House on 16 June, a further eight hours on 26 June, and five hours on 27 June. Yet those 18 hours of debate have concluded our proceedings on only three groups of amendments. We have barely started the fourth. I believe that progress could have been quicker without impairing our consideration of the Bill.

That has been taken into account in the timetable motion in my name which would provide for two hours to complete the Committee stage of the Bill and a further one hour for the Third Reading debate.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): In the proceedings to which the Leader of the House has just referred did the Government at any stage seek to make progress? If they did not, can the right hon. Gentleman recall any precedent of a Government who did not seek progress at any stage, nevertheless tabling a guillotine motion?

Mr. Biffen: Yes, the European Assembly Elections Act 1978. Indeed, the motion was set down for debate in the belief that there was no voluntary agreement which would satisfy those who most strongly seek to resist the passage of the Bill.

At this point, I should deal with the point raised on Friday by the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore), the shadow Leader of the House, who asked for an example of a guillotine motion debated outside prime time. On 21 May 1953, the Labour Government moved and passed a timetable motion on the Finance Bill in a debate which began at 10.27 pm. In April 1970, when the right hon. Gentleman was deputy Leader of the House, a debate on the timetable motion on the Ports Bill began at 10.12 pm. Finally, I remind the right hon. Gentleman that in July 1976 the House had three debates on timetable motions in succession. The last of these began at 10.50 pm and provided timetables for two Bills, the Rent (Agriculture) Bill and the Education Bill.

I would not wish to justify the debate on a timetable motion at this time merely on the grounds of those precedents. I believe that taking this debate now is a way of causing the minimum disturbance to the programme already given to the House since it is the time previously set aside for the Third Reading of the Bill.

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): As my right hon. Friend has said that in allocating two hours for the Committee stage of the Bill he has taken into account the important issues to be discussed, and as he knows that we must discuss the European monetary system, harmonisation of VAT, additional powers to the Commission, the reform of the common agricultural policy and a commitment to European union, how much time in particular does he think should be allocated to each subject within that two hours?

Mr. Biffen: I may be able to provide the most happy answer to my hon. Friend when I deal with the amendment that stands in his name. Earlier I mentioned that there were various problems relating to constitutional Bills. In part that arises from their being taken on the Floor of the House where they must compete with other Bills and other subjects for debate when time is being allotted.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): The rumour going round the House at the moment is that the last substantive business, the Whip business, to be put before the House during this Session will be on 18 July. Does that not mean that there is plenty of time for a proper debate on this subject? My right hon. Friend is suggesting that he will take up my hon. Friend's amendment which offers five hours of debate. That is, five hours for the six important subjects that my hon. Friend has put forward. Is that not scandalous?

Mr. Biffen: In this instance the word scandal is on the lips of the speaker. [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh."] I am sorry, on the lips of the parliamentary oracle. If my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North is talking of the House rising on 18 July, I hope that he will not have to pay for so much optimism.

Constitutional Bills often attract disparate forms of opposition, and the usual understandings to provide an adequate and ordered debate under voluntary arrangements are that much more difficult to conclude. Inevitably, this renders constitutional Bills particularly vulnerable to timetable motions. It has been so on this occasion.

Since 1966, six constitutional Bills have been timetabled. These were the House of Commons (Redistribution of Seats) (No. 2) Bill in 1969, the European Communities Bill in 1972, the Scotland Bill and the Wales Bill in 1979, the European Assembly Elections Bill in 1978, to which I have already referred, and the Northern Ireland Bill 1982. All were taken on the Floor

[Mr. Biffen]

of the House and all save the House of Commons (Redistribution of Seats) (No. 2) Bill were subject to sustained opposition which fell outside the operation of the usual channels.

Sir Russell Johnston (Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber): If indeed there is an intrinsic tendency for constitutional Bills to require timetabling, why did the Leader of the House not act sensibly at the outset and seek through the usual channels to negotiate a timetable which would have led to a proper, ordered debate from beginning to end?

Mr. Biffen: One always travels hopefully in these matters, even if the negotiations are through intrinsically unusual channels.

I turn now to the amendments to the motion which have been selected for debate. Amendments (c) and (e) in the names of the Leader of the Opposition and his colleagues would together provide for a further 15 hours consideration of the Bill, and a six-hour Third Reading debate to be taken on a different day.

It will come as no surprise to the House to hear that I cannot recommend the acceptance of these amendments. Not only would they provide more time than we can afford for concluding the passage of this Bill, but they would do so in a far from constructive way. In particular, the lack of any way of allocating time within the 15 hours proposed for Committee means that, if this amendment were accepted, we might spend all 15 hours in lengthy discussion on one or perhaps two groups of amendments, and at the end of that time we would still not have addressed at all the issues arising from the later amendments.

Amendment (b) in the name of the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) and two other hon. Members would provide a further 10 hours for the remainder of the Committee stage and Third Reading of the Bill. In addition to this would be any time taken by Divisions. The terms of this amendment would at least ensure a structured debate on the remaining amendments to the Bill which have been selected but not yet fully considered. None the less, the amount of time recommended for debate, together with the amount of time that might be taken up by Divisions, would be excessive considering the length of time we have already spent on this Bill—important though it is.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): Why does the Leader of the House keep referring to the amount of time already spent on the Bill as if that justified having insufficient time to deal with the remainder of the Bill? Does he realise that he is busily convincing people who think it reasonable to have a timetable and has not formed any reasonable assessment of how much time the Bill requires?

Mr. Biffen: One always travels in the hope that one can construct a reasonably free arrangement for the passage of a Bill. That has been essayed by my right hon. and hon. Friends and they have not met with success. I have to acknowledge that.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Why was not the Bill taken through Thursday night?

Mr. Biffen: The hon. Gentleman said, "Why was not the Bill taken through Thursday night?" I think that that is an extraordinary form of tribal ritualism—that the House must sit through the night when there is no prospect of constructive progress of the Bill but, none the less, it has to be undertaken to justify the timetable motion.

Mr. Skinner: The events of Thursday might were not as the Leader of the House suggests. The Tory party Whips were running around the House of Commons, including the bar and the terrace, trying to find Tory Members who would go into the Chamber to provide them with 100 Members so the debate could be closed. The truth is that the Leader of the House did not have enough Common Market slaves to do the job, and that is why the guillotine has been introduced.

Mr. Biffen: The thought that the Whips are put around like a bunch of ferrets is always a charming one. I am extremely loth to disabuse the hon. Gentleman of his analogy, but I fear that it does not neatly correspond with the truth.

Finally, I turn to amendment (a) in the name of my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) and others. My hon. Friend has been a doughty opponent of the Bill, but the amendment shows that he is not one who would oppose the will of the majority of the House by undue delaying tactics. Moreover, the timetable which he proposes takes realistic account of the pressure on parliamentary time at this stage of the year. It would provide for five hours — one hour for outstanding amendments divided into five sets, the last hour of which might include any debate on Third Reading. That represents a framework within which all the remaining amendments can be considered, albeit briefly.

Mr. Marlow: In view of the fact that my right hon. Friend anticipates that Members of the Government Front Bench and the Opposition Front Bench will speak on each group of amendments, how many Back-Bench Members does he think will get a chance to speak?

Mr. Biffen: That will depend on the length of Front Bench speeches. Given the high quality of Back Bench contributions throughout the debate so far, there will be a great incentive for my right hon. Friends to be commendably brief.

I recognise the concern that was expressed yesterday about the terms of the motion in my name. Following further discussions through the usual channels, and more widely, I can now say to the House that I am prepared to accept the amendment in the name of my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East.

In conclusion, I would ask the House to reflect that we are now in July. As I said earlier, and as has been said by right hon. and hon. Members throughout our consideration of this measure, these are important matters, but we have many other matters of significance to discuss before we rise for the summer recess. It is not an ignoble consideration to take into account the desire of the House to adjourn for the summer recess no later than early next month. *[Interruption.]* The best is yet to come. That objective has been made more difficult by the proceedings on this Bill. Time already taken cannot be recalled. Within the constraints that that implies, I believe that amendment *(a)* is a constructive and realistic step.

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): *rose*——

Mr. Biffen: I commend to the House the motion in my name as it would be amended by that amendment.

10.43 pm

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): In spite of the levity and good humour with which the right hon. Gentleman the Leader of the House has regaled us, I must express in the stongest terms the deep objections which are felt not only by myself but by many hon. Members at the existence and content of the timetable motion and to the timing of this important debate at 10 o'clock tonight. I shall deal with the precedents for late night debates on guillotines a little later. We shall not be bought off with the sop which the Leader has contemptuously offered the House in the adoption of the five-hour debate which his hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) put down in amendment form.

I agree with the Leader of the House on just one point. the European Communities (Amendment) Bill is not just another Bill relating to our domestic affairs. It is not a Bill which, however objectionable to the Opposition and others and however truncated the debate on it, is still capable of repeal and replacement in a subsequent Parliament when a different party will occupy the Treasury Bench. It is not even what might be described as a domestic constitutional Bill, such as the Bill abolishing the metropolitan counties or the Bill on devolution for Scotland and Wales, for they, too, are capable of restoration or repeal in a subsequent Parliament.

What is special about the Bill is that it gives legislative effect to a treaty concluded with other nations — the member states of the EEC — and upon whose institutions it confers additional legislative powers. Once passed, this measure cannot be repealed by a subsequent Parliament, unless that Parliament is prepared to tear up the underlying treaty itself — a special dimension of difficulty which I do not believe many Conservative Members have even given serious thought to.

Moreover, it is a Bill that directly affects the power of Parliament. That point has been drawn to our attention by the House of Commons Select Committee on the European Communities and, most recently, on 6 May by the House of Lords Select Committee on the European Communities. The House of Lords concludes:

"The powers of the United Kingdom Parliament will be weakened by the Single European Act. The Committee draws this important fact to the special attention of the House."

The powers of the United Kingdom Parliament will be weakened in two principal ways: first, because, as a result of amendments to the Rome treaty, qualified majority voting in the Council of Ministers will be substituted for unanimity voting in five important articles of the Rome treaty and, secondly, because it introduces the new so-called "co-operation" procedure between the European Assembly and the Council of Ministers which will remove the national veto from a wide range of Council decisions and permit the Council to reject amendments by the European Assembly only if the Council itself is unanimous. Whereas previously there has existed a national veto on all the decisions of the Council of Ministers, henceforth the Council can only reject in large parts of the treaty the revised proposals from the European Assembly by unanimity.

The veto power in the Council of Ministers has been the central defence of British national interests. During the referendum campaign in 1975, the then Government, supported by the Conservative Opposition, sought to comfort the sceptical British electorate with this categorical statement — I quote from the document "Britain's New Deal in Europe"—

"no important new policy can be decided in Brussels or anywhere else without the consent of a British Minister answerable to a British Government and British Parliament.

The top decision-making body in the Market is the Council of Ministers which is composed of senior Ministers representing each of the nine member governments . . . it is the Council of Ministers and not the market officials who take important decisions. These decisions can be taken only if all the members of the Council agree. The Minister representing Britain can veto any proposal for a new law or a new tax if he considers it to be against British interest."

How do the Government expect and justify this departure and change? It would be refreshingly honest if they had admitted in the first place that a change was taking place and rested their case on what they clearly believe in — the advantage of removing the veto in many areas of the treaty, especially in all the provisions making for a single European market. But that is not the argument that they deploy.

On 23 April, on Second Reading, the Foreign Secretary brazenly claimed:

"The one thing that is clear is that the Luxembourg compromise as I have described it is in no way affected one way or the other by the Single European Act." — [*Official Report*, 23 April 1986; Vol. 96, c. 321.]

In rebuttal, I content myself with this passage from the House of Lords Select Committee:

"The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has said that the veto under the Luxembourg compromise is still available to be invoked where necessary. It must however be open to question whether it would, or even could, be invoked in circumstances where the Commission, the majority of the European Parliament, and a qualified majority of Member States were united against the United Kingdom."

That judgment by the Select Committee in the House of Lords is repeated in almost identical terms in the report of the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs in this House.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): As a member of the Select Committee on European Legislation, may I draw the right hon. Gentleman's attention to the fact that we made recommendations to withdraw to the House and to Westminster some vital scrutiny improvements which could be made, which would effectively deal with many of the problems to which the right hon. Gentleman has referred and which would not engage us in a re-run of the events of 1972.

Mr. Shore: This is not a matter of scrutiny. We are considering a shift of power, the removal of the power of veto and the precise breach of the undertakings given to honour and maintain the Luxembourg compromise.

Furthermore, as the Foreign Secretary said, the Luxembourg compromise is not a provision of the treaty. It can be — and has been — overridden and it will certainly be overridden when the new co-operation procedure permits it to happen.

The other defences against the charge that both the Council of Ministers has been weakened as a whole and that the national veto within it has been similarly weakened, were deployed by the Minister of State on 26 June. Her defence was twofold: first, that it was unlikely that the European Assembly would be in a position to do much damage since it needed an absolute majority of its members to adopt an amendment to the Council of Ministers common position. There will be many occasions

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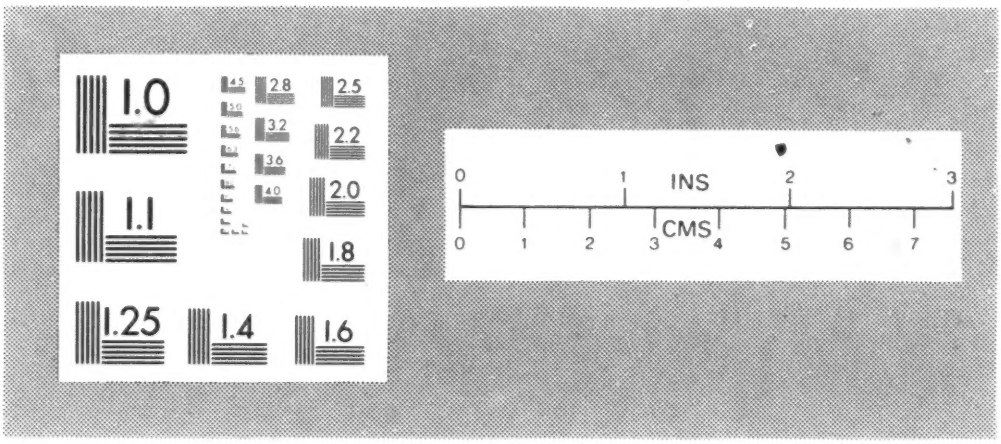

[Mr. Shore]

when it will find its decisions much more interesting in future than they have been in the past. We can confidently expect that there will be far more absolute majority voting decisions in the European Assembly in the future, than there have been in the past.

Secondly

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Shore: I will give way when I have completed my second point.

The Minister of State's second defence was her naive and misleading assertion:

"The power of the Council as the decision-taking body in the Community remains as before. The Council will have the last word on all decisions." [*Official Report*, 26 June 1986; Vol. 100, c. 532.]

However, the hon. Lady omitted the crucial fact that the last word was not in future to be the national veto but the highly improbable unanimous rejection of the Euro-Assembly's amendments by the whole 12 members of the Council of Ministers.

Mr. Rogers: Does my right hon. Friend accept that the European Assembly's standing orders in relation to the acceptance of amendments is laid down by the Assembly itself? The Council of Ministers, in whatever position it operates, cannot lay down the procedure of the Parliament. That is laid down by the bureau to the Parliament and accepted by it. If the Council of Ministers wishes to alter the rules of procedure it can do so.

Mr. Shore: My hon. Friend has direct experience of that Assembly and he has made an additional valid point.

Irrespective of that, I believe that what I have said is right. There will be a greater interest in turning out to vote in the Assembly because the power of the Assembly has been enhanced.

In addition, there is a commitment in the Single European Act to complete the free and frontierless internal market by the end of 1992, including Commission programme reports by the end of 1988 and 1990. If, by the end of 1992, the Commission is not satisfied, it will be able to draw up an inventory of relevant national laws not yet harmonised and submit appropriate proposals.

I have not even mentioned the extension of the Treaty into such areas as high technology, transport, environment and foreign policy. But I have said enough to establish that the content of the Bill and the treaty changes which it embodies are of a kind that merit, at the very least, deep and serious debate and cross-examination in this House.

One might have expected, therefore, that the Government would have responded with equal seriousness and adequate time would have been allotted to the Bill's Committee stage. Instead, the Government have responded first with deception—the pretence that the Bill is a minor, piffling matter—and secondly with an arrogant and sustained attempt to bulldoze it through the House in the minimum time. We have had precisely three days of debate. Since the Government have not seen fit to move a single closure, and since the subject matter of the treaty changes is both complex and important, it is hardly surprising that only the first three groups of amendments have so far been dealt with.

At the end of business last Friday, a further six groups of amendments remained, including such major matters as tax harmonisation, monetary union and foreign policy co-ordination. We were then treated to the astonishing announcement from the Lord Privy Seal, that it was the Government's intention to introduce a timetable motion to limit further debate, and quite remarkably, that it would be taken not in prime time but after 10 pm tonight.

Like the Lord Privy Seal, I have looked at the precedents. While it is true that guillotine motions have occasionally been moved after 10 pm, it is certainly not the case that any constitutional measure or any measure deemed important enough to be taken in Committee on the Floor of the House has ever been treated in this way. Yesterday the Government's insolence and arrogance was taken a long step forward with the announcement that the remaining timetable stage of the Bill would be concluded in just three hours: two hours for the Committee stage, and one hour for Third Reading.

Mr. Budgen: Does the right hon. Gentleman intend to deal with the last argument of my right hon. Friend the Lord Privy Seal? My right hon. Friend would not give way to me, but I noticed that there was some concern in the House. My right hon. Friend said that he was very short of time this session. However, many of us who recollect that the Shops Bill was defeated, and who realise that it would have taken a very long time on the Floor of the House, find that rather difficult to understand. No doubt the right hon. Gentleman has had some discussions with my right hon. Friend the Lord Privy Seal, and I wonder whether he would care to comment on my right hon. Friend's assertions.

Mr. Shore: I simply assumed that the Lord Privy Seal was being untypically vulgar and populist in his appeal to hon. Members' baser instincts to go on holiday at the earliest possible moment.

Like other right hon. and hon. Members, I pointed out yesterday that this derisory timetable would not even allow for votes to be taken on outstanding matters, let alone for any room for debate to be held. I say again, that substantially the same objection must apply to the additional two hours that the amendment of the right hon. Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) requires, and which the Lord Privy Seal has seen fit to accept.

This is not just a party matter, but a matter for the House; conscious that it is dealing here with the rights of the British people. My own instinct and belief is that we should reject the timetable motion all together. But at the very least, I strongly urge hon. Members to support our amendments, which will at least allow minimum debating time for these major and outstanding issues.

11.57 pm

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): I beg to move amendment *(a)*, in (1), leave out paragraphs *(a)* and *(b)* and insert:

'the proceedings shall be brought to a conclusion at such times after the start as are shown in the following Table ("the start" for this purpose being the time when the House next resolves itself into a Committee on the Bill):

TABLE

Proceedings	*Time for conclusion of proceedings*
Amendment No. 7	1 hour
Amendment No. 9	2 hours
Amendments Nos. 11 and 14	3 hours

Proceedings	*Time for conclusion of proceedings*
Amendments Nos. 47 and 22, the remainder of Clause No. 1, Clause No. 2, and Clause No. 3 to the end of subsection (3).	4 hours
Amendment No. 46 and remaining proceedings in Committee and on consideration and Third Reading	5 hours.

I should make it clear that, although the time proposed for these vital issues in my amendments is pathetically inadequate. I strongly feel that it is desperately important that the House should at least have a minimal amount of time in which to discuss these major issues and to vote on them. If we had approved the original motion for two hours on the lot, without any time for votes on those vital issues, it would have come back to haunt us in the years to come.

Whether hon. Members support or oppose the Bill, they all agree that the Bill is very important. It will radically change our constitution. It will mean that a whole flood of regulations is applied in Britain whether or not the Government want those regulations. It will also mean that things will be decided or dropped by the European Assembly, when it previously did not have the power to do that. If we care about democracy at all, we should realise that nothing could undermine it more than the realisation of our constituents that we are powerless to do anything about the issues raised by business men or constitutents, and —more importantly — that we did not even have the time to vote on the original principle. For that reason, if for no other, I am grateful for the fact that the Government have at least given us the opportunity to vote for or against these massive, fundamental constitutional proposals.

The second reason why I am glad that the amendment has been accepted is that this would have been an appalling precedent for any future Government. I do not live in fear of what any of the Opposition parties may do, because I believe that deep down they are still committed to the democratic way of life and that they are sincere about the views that they hold. However, if we had approved a motion relating to a Bill that is of major constitutional importance that did not allow time for votes on major issues, a future extreme Government would have been able to come to the House and throw this legislation in our faces and say, "This is what you did in 1986. We are only doing what you did." For that reason, if for no other, it is important that the Government have made this minor concession, for which I am grateful. This is the first time that a guillotine motion has been amended for 25 years. That, therefore, is something.

There are six vital issues to be considered, upon one of which I hope there will be time to divide the House. It relates to the important issue that many new articles are to be incorporated in the treaty upon which decisions will not be taken by the Council of Ministers. They will be interpreted by the European Court. Some hon. Members believe that it is right that our VAT system should be harmonised with Europe. The Commission's view is that that is vital if the internal market is to be completed. However, other hon. Members think that it would be unfair if we were to harmonise VAT and then to levy VAT on such items as children's shoes, gas and electricity. I do not believe that hon. Members appreciate that decisions on the new articles that are to be incorporated in the treaty will not be taken by the Council of Ministers, or by Parliament. They will be taken by the European Court, on a proposition from the European Commission.

I do not believe, either, that hon. Members fully realise what is involved in the additional powers that are to be given to the Commission. Some hon. Members think that what is wrong with the Common Market is that the Commission is not strong enough, because it does not have the power to overrule the Council of Ministers or member states if it is thought that the treaty is not being applied. Other hon. Members think that the Commission is too powerful and that it is wrong that it should be spending money when it has no legal authority to do so. How wrong it would be if hon. Members did not express a view.

On the veto, hon. Members know that the Luxembourg compromise is a load of nonsense. This country used it only once, on prices for agricultural products, and then it was overturned by a majority vote. The real issue is the veto. Therefore this issue should be examined very carefully. Hon. Members will shortly be receiving letters from their constituents about the flood of harmonisation directives that Lord Cockfield and his friends intend to introduce. Reference has already been made today to the harmonisation of MOT tests, which will result in ore costly and more difficult MOT tests. Very few of our constituents believe that this House does not have the power to decide what kind of MOT test this country should apply and what fee should be charged. However, that will be decided on a majority vote.

Sir Anthony Meyer (Clwyd, North-West): Does my hon. Friend accept that it might be in the national interest if a European directive resulted in the vehicles on our roads being in a more roadworthy condition?

Mr. Taylor: We cannot go into the merits of this matter on a guillotine motion, but surely my hon. Friend accepts that the right of the Commission or the council to impose, by a majority vote, that kind of decision on this House is something to which we should say yes or no. If the original motion stands, vital issues, such as handing over power to the Common Market, will be decided without this House having expressed an opinion upon them.

On European union, if the motion stands in its original form, the House of Commons will not have even the right to vote on whether European union is good or bad. Some hon. Members, including my hon. Friend the Member for Clwyd, North-West (Sir A. Meyer) have consistently and sincerely put forward the view that there should be a federal Europe, or a united states of Europe, and that decision-making powers should be handed over to it. That is a fair point of view, which is held sincerely by certain hon. Members.

Sir John Farr (Harborough): Is my hon. Friend saying that we could be subject to a directive from Europe relating to the content of the programmes put out by the BBC and the ITV?

Mr. Teddy Taylor: Yes, indeed. Hon. Members should realise that this directive exists today. The Government have said that they are opposed to it, the BBC has said that it is opposed to it, and the IBA has said that it thinks it is wrong. It is one of the majority voting directives. There is a whole flood of them. I hope hon. Members will appreciate that what we are deciding is a big thing. It will mean a flood, and such things as MOT test, the content

[Mr. Teddy Taylor]

of television programmes and a whole range of things will be decided by majority vote. Even though our Ministers and Members of Parliament vote against by 630 to nothing, it will not make the slightest difference.

If we are going to make any sense of democracy in the House, it is crucial that we either agree to give this new power to Europe or say that we will not do it.

What are the views of the House on whether we want to give powers to the Commission to bring forward a European union? That is one of the amendments. If the motion stands in its original form, we will not even have a chance to vote yes or no. I have always understood that at the end of guillotines we have votes on all the outstanding amendments, but this motion does not allow that. It says that we will not even have votes on the outstanding amendments.

Then there is the question of the environment and whether polluters should pay, which is a vital issue; and the question of the European monetary system and extra powers for the European assembly. I am surprised that the Government have even suggested this. It would be criminal and an abrogation of our duties as Members of Parliament if we were to agree to a Bill to hand over these powers without even having the right to say whether we support or oppose it.

The main reason why I move the amendment—and I am very glad to have had enormous support from my right hon. Friend the Member for Taunton (Sir E. du Cann), who made strong representations, as did other of my hon. Friends—is that we have an absolute obligation to our constituents for the power given to us. Some of us—it seems the majority—think it is right to hand over a lot of that power to Europe. Many Members take the view that it is right that a major area of decision should be undertaken by majority voting in the Common Market. I feel that it is our duty to go into the division Lobbies and say whether we, as representatives of the people, think that it is a good thing or a bad thing.

There are many issues that divide all of us in the House. The one thing we must never run away from is taking the responsibility to say that we agree or do not agree.

I appeal to those who may think that the amendment is a silly one because it allows for only a pathetically limited debate to understand that, if we pass the amendment, it means that every Member of the House will have to decide whether we want to give more powers to the European assembly, whether we want to surrender the veto in a big way, whether we want to support the European union, whether we believe in the harmonisation of VAT and excise duties and whether we want to give more powers of implementation to the Commission. These are things that we cannot run away from.

While I accept that many people have fought the Bill tooth and nail, and rightly so in their view, I hope that they will accept that at least, if we pass this little amendment, we will have the right to give our approval or our disapproval to what is one of the major constitutional issues of our time, on which I accept that there are differing views in the House.

I hope that, if the guillotine motion does anything at all, it will encourage Members to read the European Communities (Amendment) Bill and the Single European Act. One of the tragedies is that, if what has happened here had happened in the republic of South Africa, I fancy there would have been five "Panorama" programmes and two special "Newsnight" programmes to talk about what was happening to democracy. What is happening is enormous. I hope that Members will think carefully about whether this is something to which they would want to add their names. More important, I hope that they will bear in mind what is in the Bill when, at a later stage, our constituents start complaining that we have thrown away power on issues that they think are important and vital.

For these reasons, I thank the Leader of the House for having accepted the amendment which, although it does not offer the opportunity for proper debate, at least gives Members of the House of Commons the chance to say whether we agree or disagree to a massive constitutional change and a massive handing over of powers to another body in Europe.

11.9 pm

Mr. J. Enoch Powell (South Down): So it has happened again. Fourteen years ago, when it was proposed to this House that it should make a comprehensive resignation of its traditional constitutional powers and transfer them to the institutions of the European Economic Community, the House had to be forced to do it by means of a guillotine motion. Now, in 1986, when it is proposed that that transfer of powers should be further enlarged, as the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) has demonstrated, and that we should accept, by writing into an Act of Parliament, the principle of political union as the objective of our membership of the EEC, the Government come forward to coerce the House of Commons to pass that legislation by means of a guillotine motion.

It is a cruel irony that this act is committed to the hands of the right hon. Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen). The House knows, and the country knows, the right hon. Gentleman's view of British membership of the European Economic Community. Through all his years in office he has preserved his honour on this subject in the sense that by no word or gesture has he conveyed to anyone approval of the decision that was taken in 1972. He has given no one any reason for mistaking where his heart and where his mind lay upon this subject. Yet it falls to him, by cruel chance, to propose that the House of Commons should be guillotined in order to pass this further instalment of abnegation.

The right hon. Gentleman, in a courteous and generous reply to me last Friday, sought to find some differentiation. He said:

"perhaps I have a different recollection of the arithmetic."

That was a different recollection from mine. He continued:

"The size of the majority on the Second Reading of this Bill is in no way related to that on the Second Reading of the European Communities Bill."—[*Official Report*, 27 June 1986; Vol. 100, c. 666.]

Indeed, on the Second Reading of this Bill the majority in favour was far larger than the niggardly eight by which the Second Reading of the European Communities Bill was carried on 17 February 1972, or the even more niggardly figure of four to which the Government majority fell at one point in Committee.

The right hon. Member for Shropshire, North is not unaware of another important numerical consideration. Three days have been allotted so far to the Committee on the Floor of the House on this Bill. The second and third

days were last Thursday and Friday. If the Government had commanded adequate support in the House for the Bill, with the availability of the whole of the sitting on Thursday and the whole of the sitting on Friday, and the use of the powers of curtailing debate that are available under the closure procedure, there would have been no difficulty in making substantial and even decisive progress before the House rose on Friday. We should be almost as near to the termination of proceedings had that been so as we shall be brought to by the passing of this guillotine motion.

The fact is that the Government do not enjoy sufficient support on their own Benches for the Bill to be able to carry it through in Committee in the House of Commons by means of the ordinary resources at their disposal. On the very day, 1 July, on which the United Kingdom assumes the so-called presidency of the European Economic Community, the Government are faced with the fact that they do not enjoy adequate support, in a House in which they have a huge majority, for the passage by ordinary means of this piece of legislation.

I wonder whether the Government and the Foreign Secretary have been candid with what they call their partners in the European Economic Community. I wonder whether they have told that, in the midst of the euphoria for a further move towards political union in Europe, that the mood and mind not only of the public of the United Kingdom remain deeply entrenched against membership, let alone the extension of its implications, but that a Government commanding so imposing a majority in the House of Commons cannot, by ordinary means, pass through Parliament a Bill which would embody in the law of this country the terms of the treaty that has been made.

I hope that that has been made clear to the European Community. I hope that the Government have been candid, for they have a duty to be candid. They have a duty on behalf of the House and the people of this country to declare that, in this respect, there is a deep difference between the attitude and mind of the public of Britain and that of the rest of the Community, without even the exception of Denmark. A deep repugnance is felt in the country and the House to the resignation of our ancestral rights and freedoms. It is something to which there is no parallel in Europe, and that has been demonstrated by the progress of the Bill. It is demonstrated by the motion that is before the House tonight. The Government ought to be candid in the face of Europe about the true situation and mind of the United Kingdom.

The hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), in a speech which delighted the House last Friday, drew attention to a curious anomaly which had engaged his notice, namely, that the Prime Minister was, to all appearances, strongly opposed to the step which we are invited to embody in United Kingdom legislation. The Prime Minister had stated publicly and repeatedly that no such treaty was necessary, and that for the purposes and interests of the United Kingdom in the Common Market no such legislation as this to embody that treaty would be called for. Nevertheless, the hon. Member for Bolsover pointed out, she went along and signed.

The hon. Gentleman did not pursue his reflections into the reasons for that difference, I think that it is a real difference. I do not think that this is just an exhibition of insincerity and contortion. I think that it is a real difference between the instincts and motives of the right hon. Lady and the actions that are extorted from her in the circumstances in which she finds herself, not only in Europe, but specifically and particularly in Europe.

I think that this evening it is right that those differences should be mentioned on the Floor of the House if we are to be forced into passing the means of compulsorily embodying this treaty in the law of the United Kingdom.

Eighteen months ago there was a remarkable review in the *Sunday Telegraph* by Sir Anthony Parsons, who has not been a stranger to the present Administration, of a book by Sir Nicholas Henderson. In that book Sir Nicholas Henderson said:

"a severe strain would be imposed on the code of loyal service to political masters if a future Government were to adopt an extremely radical policy, such as withdrawal from the European Community".

I pause there for a moment because I noted with interest this evening the remarks of the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney who did not quote from the same 1975 referendum document as he quoted other phrases from. He made the remarkable assertion that if the result of the referendum were yes, British membership of the European Community would depend upon the continued consent of Parliament. In other words, it was an assertion that this House retained, and retains, the right, of course by the proper international steps taken in consequence on behalf of this country by a Government, to withdraw, if need be, from the commitments which have been created by our entry into the treaty of Brussels and by our signature to the Single European Act. But this is a digression.

Sir Anthony Parsons continued and concluded:

"I would go further. I think that, if the broad bipartisanship of the past 40 years"

that is 1946 to 1986

"broke down in such a way, many officials in the higher reaches of the Foreign Office would find it impossible conscientiously to implement the new policies and the Government would be obliged to recruit political loyalists in order to carry out its will."

That is a description of the prison which has been constructed and in which the Prime Minister finds that her instincts and her will are "cribb'd, cabin'd and confin'd."

It is under those pressures and under that kind of blackmail and dictation that the House finds itself being compelled, at the gunpoint of a guillotine, to pass the legislation consequent upon the Single European Act. It is blackmail, and it is blackmail from a quarter from which the House ought not to accept blackmail. It is a blackmail imposed by those who are not, as we are, the elected representatives of the people of this country, and it is a blackmail and a pressure to which successive British Governments, during the 40 years of bipartisanship, have been subject. If we are to do so, we bow the neck again to the yoke tonight, it is well that we should understand what we are doing. As for myself, I will have none of it.

11.21 pm

Sir Edward du Cann (Taunton): The right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) is entirely right. The House should not be treated in this way. This is a sad and a wretched occasion. While I very much regret that we shall be taking precious hours tonight to debate the guillotine motion instead of the far-reaching proposals in the Bill, I regret even more its proposal. I agree with the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore), who made an admirable speech. This is a sad, bad and unnecessary measure and it should not be proceeded with.

[Sir Edward du Cann]

Like almost every other right hon. and hon. Member, I have voted over the years in favour of guillotine motions when my party in government has invited me to do so, and like almost every other right hon. and hon. Member I have voted against guillotine motions when my party out of government has invited me to do that.

In the first instance I have always felt uncomfortable, and I dare say that that is a shared feeling too. That is partly because delay is one of few legitimate devices, weapons, courses of conduct, open to the objector. One loyally follows the Whip, of course, because we are all elected here as party men, yet none of us was elected, was he, as a simple sycophant? We were sent here, above all, to use the capacity of judgment. That is our constitutional duty, as the right hon. Member for South Down suggested. A responsible democratic system must always allow a fair time for argument about the proposals of the Government of the day. Patience is the hallmark of wise leadership in a democracy, just as intolerance is the badge of the dictator. When we abandon reason — that is to say, discussion — as the arbiter of issues, we are surely on a slippery slope away from our democratic tradition.

There is another point. This Parliament, so it is said, is the forum of the nation. Through our discussions in this place we interest popular opinion, awaken it and involve our fellow citizens in the decision-making process. That is our duty, and I think many of us would say our pride. But not in respect of this measure.

Why are the Government so keen, I wonder, to curtail discussion on the measure — for a second time in four days. Admittedly the Government may say that they have been provoked by lengthy speeches on occasion, but what a trivial provocation that is, in truth. There are always pressures on the Government's timetable in July, as my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House indicated, but what is one day in the scheme of things — one day of the 250 on which we sit?

Also, we have not even troubled to discuss this far-reaching treaty, which was signed by a junior Minister and was not made available promptly for inspection in the Library of the House. I hope that discussion is not being truncated because some members of the Government are worried that if the measure's full implications were more widely comprehended, they would cause public anxieties which had better lie dormant. If the case for the Bill is so good, let it be argued with conviction in the Chamber of the House. If the arguments are so persuasive, they will prevail. It must be wrong — to use a footballing metaphor — for time to be blown by an umpire who is also a combatant early in the first half of the discussion. We should be ashamed of government by stealth and law-making by fudging.

As the right hon. Member for Stepney and Poplar reminded us, when the great debates of the 1970s took place in Parliament and in the country, before the referendum and the votes in the House of Commons, the advocates of Britain's signature to the treaty of Rome — no doubt sincerely — gave us clear assurances, for example, that there would be no derogation of the United Kingdom's national sovereignty, that Parliament would retain all its powers and that the courts would retain their powers.

What is the reality, a little more than a decade later? European law is increasingly taking primacy over United Kingdom law. Look at the way in which the Government scuttled, a fortnight ago, just one day before a decision on social matters was promulgated in the European Court. Now the right of the Chancellor of the Exchequer and Parliament to decide taxation levels is to be subordinated to the prospect of harmonisation, about which my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) spoke, in a remarkable and important speech.

The zero rate of taxation is already under challenge in the European Court. Most nations already have higher top VAT rates than does the United Kingdom. A vote for this Bill is a vote for higher VAT rates. I remember so well the late Patrick Hutber's law that improvement almost invariably means deterioration. One might argue that harmonisation in tax matters means always increasing tax rates. More money for an administration whose poor housekeeping is a scandal is the prospect in this Bill. Would that we had a European Public Accounts Committee or a departmental Select Committee to expose it.

The Bill provides for us to take further giant strides towards an integrated Europe. As my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East said, how we will achieve that happy objective — if that is what it is — is not disclosed. It reminds me of the time of the south sea bubble, when promoters raised money for an enterprise, the purposes of which were to be secret, but which was such a good enterprise that it must be worth raising the cash for it. If someone tried to do that in the City of London today, he would be sent to prison.

So the Bill means, inevitably, a lesser role for our Parliament. Even the veto to protect our vital national interests is at risk, and power will increasingly rest with the Council of Ministers, where the United Kingdom, with a triviality of votes, can easily be outvoted by any combination of nations. Power will also rest increasingly with the bureaucracy. That is the certain prospect. The comments of the right hon. Member for South Down, deserve emphasis: with all the power that we can command, let it be said that the balance of power is to shift. That is what that Bill means.

Mr. Peter Fry (Wellingborough): Does not the way in which the Community has been enlarged, and may be enlarged in future, move further and further away from our country and Parliament our control over our own affairs? More and more, we shall be subject to peoples who are perhaps not yet members of the Community.

Sir E. du Cann: That is a wise observation. My hon. Friend raises the question whether a constitution that was devised for an old situation is any longer adequate for an entirely new one.

Above all else, the Bill proves that the old assurances upon which our people in the country have relied are now unreliable and false.

Is two hours enough for a sober and careful examination of the most significant issues raised by the Bill — issues with the deepest constitutional implications and prospects? Is five hours, as proposed by my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East enough? I do not know. However, I do know that one cannot timetable free discussion among free men, and that one should not attempt, on such affairs, to do so. These are matters that we should take adequate time to discuss.

Every previous guillotine debate in which I have participated in past years has been wholly different in

character from this. There has always been a lengthy Committee stage. There have always been closures. There has always been what my right hon. Friend, in his opening speech, called a pertinacious Opposition. That has not been so in this case.

All the other guillotine debates have been, basically, about party matters such as nationalisation and denationalisation – the great domestic divides between the two sides of the House. The present matter is wholly different in character, scope, style and implication. The situation with which we are now dealing is unprecedented because, as the right hon. Member for South Down has so clearly shown, the constitutional issues are fundamental.

The House should unite to reject the motion. This affair is above party. It is above the personal convenience of a day's holiday more or less. I do not argue how the matter should be decided, but I argue that our Parliament should discuss it thoroughly and encourage the nation similarly. I do not believe that such a proposal can reasonably be contradicted by any right hon. or hon. Member in any part of the House. I hope that the motion will be triumphantly rejected tonight.

11.33 pm

Mr. Michael Foot (Blaenau Gwent): The Leader of the House referred at the beginning of his speech and later on to some previous guillotine motion debates. I hope that I will not be thought arrogant if I say that I am as great an authority on guillotines as almost any hon. Member in the House. I believe that I have participated in as many guillotine debates as anyone.

I was somewhat disturbed – although I have heard it from the Liberal and other Benches before – to hear the proposition that the right way to deal with these matters is to have timetable motions for all measures before they are introduced. I am bitterly opposed to any such proposition, even though I know that, as the right hon. Member for Taunton (Sir E. du Cann) said, it is quite often the case that some Government supporters support guillotines whereas those who oppose a Government tend to oppose them. However, I am certainly opposed to the idea of introducing regular timetables for all Bills. If anyone is seeking an easy and simple way to kill off what remains of the debating vitality of the House of Commons, I recommend the idea of permanent timetables, which would also injure proper debate in the House as a whole.

Sir Russell Johnston: How much debating vitality does the right hon. Gentleman think would be left for the Bill even with the acceptance of the amendment standing in the name of the hon. Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor)?

Mr. Foot: We have had some vitality up to now, although the Government are trying to kill it off. The Liberal party, on the other hand, would have killed off that vitality from the beginning. The idea of permanent guillotines, permanent timetables or other permanent arrangements for the allocation of time is not a good recommendation for debate. Such an arrangement would play straight into the hands of any Government, and it should be rejected.

I have no doubt that the Leader of the House has referred, in the usual polite way in which he always treats me, to certain occasions when I introduced guillotine motions, and I agree that I introduced quite a large number on a certain occasion. But none of those instances have any relevance to this debate. The five measures in question were all manifesto commitments of the party to which I belonged and the Government whom I supported. If guillotines had not been introduced in those cases, there would not have been the remotest chance of those measures being translated into operation. All had passed through their Second Reading stages and had been the subject of substantial votes.

That cannot be said of the position today. Even had the Leader of the House not introduced this guillotine, he would have had a good chance – even though some of us would have opposed the measure strongly – of getting the Bill through. He cannot claim, therefore, that the situations are the same, and the excuse that he or others may seek to invoke – of comparing this with previous occasions – does not apply, and the right hon. Gentleman should not resort to such a comparison.

The House will agree that there must be different rules, with greater provision for discussion, for constitutional as opposed to other measures. That does not mean that guillotine motions can never be applied to constitutional measures. Indeed, had that been the case, some major constitutional measures of the century would never had been placed on the statute book. In the last resort, therefore, Governments have a right to resort to the guillotine to get through constitutional measures.

But Governments, especially when dealing with questions that come fresh to debate in the House, have an obligation to ensure the fullest possible debate on great constitutional issues. Thus, the first charge against the Government – as most people listening to today's debate will agree – is that they have sought to push through this measure as if it were a minor, trivial one, when every minute of the debate has proved that it is a major constitutional measure. The Leader of the House will agree with that proposition.

Mr. Biffen *indicated assent.*

Mr. Foot: The right hon. Gentleman agrees that it is a great constitutional measure. In that case, there cannot be any excuse for him – and we appreciate that he understands the House of Commons better than any other member of the Treasury Bench – tabling a motion saying in effect, that all debate on this great constitutional measure must be curtailed to a couple of hours, with an hour for Third Reading. Such a motion represents not a provision for debate but a denial of debate.

Mr. Eric Deakins (Walthamstow): My right hon. Friend will agree that the crime is made more heinous by the fact that, unlike the examples to which he referred, the Government have no mandate from the British people for this measure. It was not mentioned in their 1983 manifesto.

Mr. Foot: My hon. Friend is right, and my right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) showed not only that the Government do not have a mandate for it but what happened when various parties sought approval for Britain's continued membership of the Market in 1975. The British people had propositions put before them to win their support for the maintenance of our position in the EEC, some of which propositions are being denied by this Bill, and an attempt is being made to push it through without the British people knowing what is happening to them.

[Mr. Foot]

The case is aggravated not only by the breach of the undertakings given by all parties to the British people at the time of the referendum but by our subsequent experience. The British people, especially the British Parliament, like to say how pragmatic we can be and how we work things out in practice. During all our debates at the time of our entry I remember many pro-marketeers saying, "Let us see how we can work these things out. A proper scrutiny committee among other organisations will examine the legislation. Let us see how that works. It will help to safeguard against the perils that are being described." We have a Scrutiny Committee and nobody would deny that it has done excellent work. If it had not been for my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing), who is Chairman of it, and other hon. Members who have given it huge amounts of their time, the dangers of our entry would have become even more apparent over the years. But if the Scrutiny Committee is asked to advise the House, occasionally one must take note of what it says, particularly when it refers to such a measure as this.

The second great charge against the Leader of the House is that he has brushed aside all the advice that he has received on this measure. The Select Committee on European Legislation said:

"The arrival of the Single European Act demonstrates one inherent weakness of the current system (of scrutiny). The House had no opportunity to examine the Act until it had been agreed by the Member States, and even now can only accept or reject it as a whole through the European Communities (Amendment) Bill. As a scrutiny committee, we were never able to report on the Act, or on the Inter-Governmental Conference held in accordance with the Treaty in autumn 1985 which produced it, because both were outside our terms of reference. A similar situation has occurred from time to time in the budgetary affairs of the Community, when an Inter-Governmental Agreement has been used to supplement Community funds. Here again, the House was suddenly faced with a major development, almost without warning, and the terms of reference of the Committee meant that the document was not subject to scrutiny procedure."

This major constitutional measure, as the right hon. Gentleman has now been forced to acknowledge it, is not only being forced through in insufficient time but in opposition to the warnings given by our Scrutiny Committee.

I am not for a moment claiming that the operations of the Scrutiny Committee are a satisfactory substitute for the protection of the House. I never accepted the view that because the Scrutiny Committee examines this curious form of legislation, which arrives from the Assembly or the Council of Ministers — their methods of legislation are very different from ours, which is why it is so difficult to amalgamate the two methods by which the Assembly and the House work — it can successfully ensure that amalgamation. Despite that, what are we to say when a Scrutiny Committee had been set up to advise on these matters, its advice is brushed aside and a measure is rushed through in this ignominious way?

This will do great damage to the Government. I am sorry that it will also damage the Leader of the House, because he is far and away the best member of the Government. He is the only one who really seeks to understand what is happening in the House and who takes back faithful reports. No doubt that is why he has not been invited to participate in some of these inner sanctums which have been set up in recent weeks. If I could think of any other compliment that would do him some damage I would be happy to pay it. That always comes easily to me.

I am deeply surprised that the right hon. Gentleman is a party to this. The only explanation is that he too has, perhaps, awakened to the fact that these proposals are far-reaching. Of course, if he tries to force through the scandal of a two-hour debate, that will be even worse. Even if, on the basis of accepting the amendment from his hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) he forces that through, it will come back to haunt the Government and the right hon. Gentleman, because all the matters raised by the right hon. Member for Taunton and by all the other speakers, and the matters that will be raised in abbreviated future debates will be laid at the door of the Government.

When people discover that they will have to pay more in VAT because of some decision taken in Europe that this House had decided shall not be referrable to us, the Government's unpopularity will be multiplied manyfold. The wisest course for the Leader of the House is not only to accept the amendment moved by the hon. Member for Southend, East but to get up and recognise the force of this debate. Nobody listening to the debate can doubt that the British House of Commons is asserting its authority. The right hon. Gentleman and all hon. Members ought to pay

11.46 pm

Sir Anthony Meyer (Clwyd, North-West): I shall not add to the discomfiture of my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House by praising him, much as I should like to do so. I know about his underwhelming enthusiasm for the measure that we are debating and speak merely to support him.

These guillotine debates are as weary, stale, flat and unprofitable as most of our debates on the EEC. They are also as entirely predictable, and my own contribution will be entirely predictable. I make it primarily to show that not every speaker, even on the Government side, is so unrepresentative as to be hostile to the European Community.

The right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) made a quite remarkable contribution to our debate when he suggested that there was something terrible about the idea that there exist in the Foreign Office senior civil servants who are so attached to traditional interests and to policies based on those interests that they would find extreme difficulty in serving a Government that abandoned those interests. It seemed to me that what he was rattling as a terrifying spectre in front of us was a totally admirable statement by senior civil servants that there are interests transcending their careers and the kind of blind obedience that the right hon. Gentleman would seek to force upon them that would require them not to serve a Government that went so far away from everything that has traditionally been in the interests of Britain.

As I said, my contribution is totally predictable. I support the guillotine motion. It seems clear from the debate so far and from the lengthy speeches made on both sides, that however much time the Government had allowed for the further consideration of the measure, progress would have remained imperceptible. At whatever stage the Government had decided to impose a timetable motion, there would have been the routine howls of protest.

The complaint was made, especially by Opposition Members, that at no stage did the Government seek to move a closure. To that I retort that on the few occasions when we managed to get as far as a vote, the number of objectors to the measure who took the trouble to turn up in the Division Lobby was ludicrously small. I have no hesitation whatever in following my right hon. Friend into the Division Lobby to try to get a move on with this Bill.

11.50 pm

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): The first part of my speech will not be predictable. I pay tribute to the hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West (Sir A. Meyer) in his dogged determination of the cause of which he often speaks. I pay tribute to his internationalism. We have a happy augury of official representatives of foreign states in this building tomorrow. The point between us is the sound, philosophical and fundamental difference in how we express that internationalism. Some hon. Members express that internationalism by a wish for co-operation, which indicates that operations are parallel, by agreement and by consent. Some hon. Gentlemen believe that international accord can best be achieved by a pooling of legislative and judicial authority. That is what the Single European Act is all about. I do not think that the hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West and I agree on that, but we might at least agree on the differences. I believe that the Single European Act seeks to do that, with serious consequences.

The Bill should consider the Single European Act, which contains 22 pages of small print and more than 50 amendments to the treaty of Rome. It is complex in the extreme, because it is legislation by reference and reference. A double take is necessary. Yet, despite that, the Government have not seen fit to publish a White Paper or guide. Indeed, the explanatory memorandum at the front of the Bill is as derisory as the motion before us tonight.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) has said that the way in which the Government have gone about the Bill illustrates the politics of coercion. That point was made by my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) last week and repeated today by the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell). The Prime Minister has said that she does not want the Bill. I suggest to the hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West that if one pursues the path of pooled legislation, pooled budgetary powers and a pooled judiciary, one ends up with the politics of coercion. That is what hon. Members are faced with. The Bill is not wanted by the Government, and they can only get it through by means of the motion before us.

I shall be a little less provocative perhaps, and turn to my role as Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee to which my right hon. Friend the Member for Blaenau Gwent kindly referred. The Scrutiny Committee can only look and report. It does not have the power to act. If the House gives its power away, it will not have the power to act. There is a difference between an ability to see and an ability to act.

The present terms of reference of the Scrutiny Committee have not permitted it to give a summary of the Single European Act as it stands. The Committee was able to report on the Single European Act only in so far as it affected our duties on scrutiny. That is what we did in House of Commons paper No. 400. We also suggested that, if we were to discharge our duty to the House, we should require slightly enlarged terms of reference. That was a unanimous decision. I am glad to see that it was unanimously endorsed by the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs.

As I am concerned with parliamentary scrutiny, I shall do something which I do not think has been done before in guillotine debates. I shall tell the House in some excruciating detail the groups of amendments which still remain to be debated. I hope to summarise – although not at too much length – the contents of the Single European Act.

The Committee is debating amendment No. 7, moved by the right hon. Member for Taunton (Sir E. du Cann), which relates to article 17 of the Single European Act and new article 99 of the treaty of Rome. The article deals with the harmonisation of legislation concerning turnover taxes, excise duties and VAT, which could be imposed on food, fuel, books and a range of other activities. Many suspect that the unpopular VAT on building repairs, which the Chancellor of the Exchequer introduced some time ago, was the result of letters from the Commission under the sixth VAT directive. If that is not the case, I invite the right hon. Gentleman to write to tell me so.

Under the timetable motion of the hon. Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor), one hour is to be spent on that vast range of fiscal activity. I suggest that the very minimum period would be two hours. If any hon. Member thinks that the time should be less, let him get up and say so.

The next amendment is amendment No. 9, which relates to article 20 of the Single European Act and new article 102A of the treaty. It deals with the vast subject of the obligation on the House to accept European monetary union and the European monetary system and to accept the convergence of policies and it provides for conferences on that subject to be called under article 23 by only one Government. In addition, there is to be a new article 70(1) of the treaty of Rome which says that directives relating to exchange policy shall be achieved by a "qualified majority". I can hardly credit that, 10 years ago, any Chancellor would have agreed, let alone contemplated, such a proposal. As hon. Members know, if there is a qualified majority, we can do nothing about a measure once it is accepted.

I should have thought that those matters required at least a two-hour debate. If any hon. Member thinks that they do not, let him say so. The motion of the hon. Member for Southend, East would give us an hour.

The guillotine motion does not provide for amendments Nos. 23 to 25, which are to do with the solemn declaration at Stuttgart which has 32 paragraphs and is published in full by the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs in House of Commons Paper 442. The measure also concerns European co-operation of a political character. Title III of the European Common Act and new article 30 has 10 paragraphs which set out the treaty form of European political co-operation. This group of amendments would provide the only means of debating that matter, but there is no time allocated to it. There will be six new treaty institutions relating to an obligation to consult on all matters of foreign affairs, at multilateral and bilateral levels. I should have thought that a two-hour debate on both topics would be the least anyone could expect. I should prefer double or treble that time, but I do not think that any Conservative Members could suggest that it be less than two hours.

[Mr. Nigel Spearing]

The next amendment is amendment No. 11 which deals with article 25 of the single European Act and the new articles 130R, 130S and 130T of the treaty of Rome. It concerns the new scope of the treaty in relation to the environment. New article 130S says that if the Council of Ministers decides unanimously that certain things shall be decided by a qualified majority, it shall be so. I calculate that the motion of the hon. Member for Southend, East allows for a half-hour debate but I should have thought that two hours at least were needed to debate the environment, which is a huge topic and one on which the European Community is now claiming vires.

The next amendment is amendment No. 14, which concerns article 10 of the Single European Act and new article 145 of the Rome treaty. It deals with the important topic of providing the Commission with delegated powers. Many hon. Members might think that the Commission already has plenty of delegated powers but I have news — there are new delegated powers under new article 145 of the treaty. The hon. Member for Southend, East allocates half an hour to that matter. I should have thought that one hour at least would have been necessary.

The next group of amendments covers amendment 47 and relates to the Single European Act article 23 and to the Treaty of Rome, new article 130A, 130B, 130C, and 130D. These deal with what is called cohesion in the Community and they require reports on the future of the common agricultural policy, the social fund and the regional fund and their revision. I suggest that one hour on the CAP and half an hour on each of the other subjects is much too little time, but on my calculations we will have only a quarter of an hour on the lot, if we are lucky, under the motion of the hon. Member for Southend, East.

The next group of amendments contains amendment No. 22 which deals with the complete meaning of the preamble of the Treaty. As hon. Members will know, the preamble of the Treaty, while not being part of the Treaty, can be taken into account if there is any dispute as to its meaning. Therefore, the preamble — which I would recommend hon. Members to read if they have not already done so — will be taken into account by the European Court if their is any question as to whether we should be within the jurisdiction of the Treaty or not. If hon. Members read the preamble they will see its extensive terms. Half an hour would be far too short a time for that subject and the hon. Member for Southend, East gives about a quarter of an hour for that in his motion.

The next topic for debate would be clause stand part on clauses 1 and 2. We have debated these clauses already, but we have not entered into discussions on the complex machinery of the powers of the Commission and the Parliament and the expansion of the Court. That was discussed but the Court is being given a blank cheque to produce proposals as to how it can expand — not I hasten to add in powers — but in numbers. I would have thought that two hours on that point would have been reasonable. The Southend motion gives it half an hour.

The last amendment is amendment No. 46 in the name of the right hon. Member for South Down. The amendment covers a very important part of the Bill, clause 3(4), because it relates to the fact that the European Assembly Elections Act 1978 required an Act of Parliament if power was to be transferred to the European Assembly. The mere fact that this is in the Bill shows that the Government acknowledge that power will be transferred.

The Third Reading will receive two hours when it should have three. My grand total is that some 16 hours 30 minutes or 17 hours of debate without Divisions would be needed. That is more than the total of 15 hours put down in the motion of my right hon. Friend the Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock) which was rubbished by the Leader of the House. With Divisions, we would need about 20 hours to carry out the minimum timetable that I have suggested tonight. Instead of that, we are being asked to spend five hours, including Divisions.

Some people want to give powers away from the House. They have every right to say that, and I pay tribute to the hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West for expressing that view. However, have they got the power to prevent us discussing whether we should give powers away? As my right hon. Friend the Member for Islwyn has said, once those powers have gone we will be told that we gave binding international treaties to that effect.

People in South Africa are struggling to obtain some form of democracy. Can it be that today we are giving ours away too lightly? My own charitable interpretation is that I do not think that the Government know what the Bill contains. They do not know the extent or implications of the Single European Act and by moving the guillotine motion tonight they are preventing people and Parliament from finding out what it contains.

12.3 am

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): A full House, late at night. No press present, with the media gone to bed. A shameful time to debate this shameful issue. That is not parliamentary hyperbole. This is the most important constitutional issue to be debated since I became a Member of Parliament. I believe that it is even more important than the European Communities Act. After that Act, we had a veto. Can we be sure that we have a veto now?

Almost every major provision in the Bill is more pregnant with significance than any two items of primary legislation, yet it is to be debated, including Divisions, in five short hours. No wonder that my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House sits hunched in his seat. He is an honest man, and I imagine that he must feel sick at heart. I hope that we shall not have any more little jokes about the Front Bench making short speeches on major issues that merit a proper introduction.

For the past few weeks, the House and the country have been deeply concerned about the important and tragic events of South Africa. We might have some minimum control over those events, but we potentially have a great deal of control over this massive event. Yet we are not being allowed to have a proper debate on the issue.

The media have not taken the issue seriously at all. Is it because it is too complex, and people do not understand it? Or is it because the Government have such a massive majority that people believe that nothing can be done about it? When we had a referendum, it was about a common market and not about a united Europe. But despite that, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Taunton (Sir E. du Cann) said, only last week there were major changes in our social legislation as a result of the

European Court. It was nothing to do with harmonising the internal market, or with the common market that we joined. It had everything to do with moving towards a united Europe.

Two or three short weeks ago, my right hon. and learned Friend the Paymaster General made a statement reducing the burdens on small companies. Immediately afterwards he introduced some European legislation to increase the burdens on small companies. Was that necessary for the internal market? Of course we all want co-operation with Europe and a large, vital trading entity within Europe. But that does not mean that we have to harmonise everything: harmonise the arrangements for family leave, harmonise the health and safety regulations, and so on.

Harmonised and unified as we are, we are moving yet further towards this Single European Act. Of course, at first it was not called that. It was going to be called the Act of European union. But out of deference to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, the title was changed. Many people have said that the Prime Minister is against this measure, because it is unnecessary. I believe that to be her position. We know that those Conservative Members who think about the issue are not in favour of it. On Friday we had an important debate, yet how many Conservative Members were here to vote it through? The answer is a mere 84 and two Tellers which amounts to 86 members out

What about the country? What does the country know about this issue? Does it know how important and significant this matter is? Have the Government shouted from the rooftops what they intend to do, and what the effects of the measure will be? If the country knew about it, it would be, as it should be, against it. About the only person in favour of it is the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office. She has always been in favour of a united Europe. But she does not for one moment represent the views of hon. Members on this matter.

Of course, people will say that this matter has nothing to do with a federal Europe and nothing to do with a united Europe. Really! Have they, or all of my hon. Friends, read the Bill? I apologise to my hon. Friends for saying this, but if they have not done so, they should read it and read it again. They should understand it. They should find out what is in it, and what it will do to the sovereignty of the House. They should find out what the Bill will do to our ability to control the fortunes of our country. This is dynamite, and important dynamite, and it should be read and digested.

The preamble says:

"to transform relations as a whole among their States into a European Union".

The Bill is a vice in the hands of the European Court with which to squeeze the nation states of Europe into a union, which is often against their individual wills.

What about giving more power to the European Assembly? There, as anywhere else, issues will be debated on a political basis. Overriding all that, however, the Assembly will be concerned first and foremost with European unity, and the more power that it has the more European unity there will be.

Mr. John Butterfill (Bournemouth, West): Does my hon. Friend not agree, however, that it would be preferable for a democratically elected body to have the power to propose amendments to Commission proposals, or would he perfer to be governed constantly by the proposals of a non-elected body such as the Commission?

Mr. Marlow: I say with due deference to my hon. Friend, whom I respect a great deal, that I believe that the conjunction of powers between the European Court, the European Assembly and the European Commission, all of which will be committed to a federal and united Europe, will lead to the negation rather than to the enhancement of democracy.

On majority voting, that already takes place on minor issues, but majority voting is to be extended. What effect will its extension have? It will move us towards European unity. We have 10 votes out of 78, or whatever the number is. The population of Denmark, Holland, Belgium, Luxembourg, Greece, Portugal and Ireland — seven small countries — when put together is smaller than ours, but they have 28 votes. Because they have no influence elsewhere, the small countries of Europe want to move towards a united Europe. How can British Ministers agree to those small countries having nearly three times as many votes as we have? And, having given them those votes, how can British Ministers agree that they should be allowed to vote on issues that are of paramount importance to this country? Why does this parliamentary democracy and sovereign state intend to surrender its powers to a bureaucracy? How will that benefit the British people?

My hon. Friend the Minister of State patronised the Prime Minister the other day. She said that the Prime Minister did not like it at first, but she has learnt and that is why she changed her mind. I would not patronise the Prime Minister if I wanted to join the Cabinet and if I were the hot tip as the next lady in the Cabinet. However, I am sure that the Prime Minister is a forgiving lady. If she wants to get back into the Prime Minister's good books, I suggest to my hon. Friend the Minister of State that when she winds up the debate she should tell us what power and strength are still left to us, how committed she is to the veto — the Luxembourg compromise, or whatever we call it — and how we shall be able to sustain interests that are vital to this nation in the Council of Ministers. We have not yet been told, and it is high time that we were.

In our imperfect constitution, made more imperfect by the Bill, there is but one hope, but it is not here. Too many hon. Members are confused by the Bill and know little about it. They have been bullied by the Whips and they are not prepared to stand up on this issue. They are not concerned for the generations and centuries of history of this country and therefore do not feel that they should do what is right about it. But there is still the other place.

This Bill was not a manifesto commitment. It was not contained in the Queen's Speech. It is not about money. First and foremost, it is a constitutional issue. The other place has great power over constitutional issues. If we raise the ceiling tonight and make a noise, if we make people aware tonight of what this issue means, then let them wake up at the other end of the building. Let them stand up for Britain and do what they think is right. Let them throw the wretched thing out.

12.14 am

Sir Russell Johnston (Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber): In no way shall I attempt to follow that. I support the Bill, and in so doing I do not believe that I am betraying anybody. Also, I support the view that in general it is fairer to hon. Members and that it is of advantage, in order to secure a balanced argument, for timetabling to take place from the outset, after discussion between the parties, if a Bill is likely to be controversial. That is well known in

[Sir Russell Johnston]

advance. I also support, where necessary, a limitation on the speaking time that is allotted to hon. Members. In working that out, I believe that Front Benchers should also be prepared to accept some restraint. Hon. Members have already said that some Back Benchers are occasionally garrulous, but many Front Benchers are often garrulous. In the period that I have been in the House, I have heard Front Benchers on both sides propose and oppose timetable motions in almost identical terms, so I cannot get terribly worked up anymore about their speeches.

In general, what has been wrong with timetable motions is that they have never really been, or even succeeded in being considered as, matters for the House of Commons, as the shadow Leader of the House put it. The situation has rather been as the Leader of the House frankly stated when he said that the majority on Second Reading represented "the authority of the House", and hence the right to propose a guillotine—in other words, the power of the majority to steamroller legislation through the House.

I am in no doubt that to allow the Bill to drift on in the way that occurred, only once moving, That the Question be now put—

Mr. Foot: Not once, often.

Sir Russell Johnston: This was close to midnight on 16 June:

"Question put, That the Question be now put". — [*Official Report,* 16 June 1986; Vol. 99, c. 868.]

That motion was moved by the Treasurer of Her Majesty's Household. It was, therefore, moved once after a limited

After that, to come to the House and suggest that all the other amendments be concluded in two hours is really insulting. There is no way in which a proper debate can be conducted in that time. The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, who is not garrulous at all, has already taken up nearly an hour and a half of the Committee's proceedings, and it is now proposed to allocate only two hours for the whole of the remaining amendments. We would merely be spectators of abbreviated exchanges between Front-Bench spokesmen who would not even allow interjections or questions in their speeches. One of the supposedly unique characteristics in the Chamber is that people can interrupt and ask questions rather than having the set piece orations that are the normal characteristic of continental hemicycles. Therefore, that would not be in the tradition of this place.

The timetable proposed by the hon. Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) is, of course, better. When one considers that he spoke for nearly an hour and a quarter on amendment No. 1, it would be interesting to know how he feels time should be allocated within the hour that he has suggested for amendment No. 7. That amendment has already been proposed by the right hon. Member for Taunton (Sir E. du Cann), who was still speaking when the Committee was adjourned on 27 June, having addressed the Committee up until then with his customary fluency for about 40 minutes. The hon. Member for Southend, East agrees that the time is inadequate. One presumes that he proposed the inadequate time only because he had some intuition or information that the Leader of the House would accept his alternative as a means of giving the appearance of generosity.

As I see it, if we have a timetable motion now, it should be so constructed as to make available sufficient time for some reasonable debate. I believe that the proposition made by the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore), the shadow Leader of the House, meets these requirements, and I urge my right hon. and hon. Friends to support it.

12.19 am

Sir John Farr (Harborough): I too want to ask why the Government are in such a hurry. The right hon. Gentleman who used to be the Member for Ebbw Vale, which is now something rather complex and Welsh — Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) — sought to probe my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House about why the Government and my right hon. Friend in particular were so anxious to proceed apace on an important constitutional Bill. The right hon. Gentleman, like many other hon. Gentlemen on both sides, put many questions to my right hon. Friend. I do not think that he answered them properly in his opening remarks. I can see no reason why we should have a truncated debate on this important and critical Bill or why we should have a timetable motion.

Unfortunately, my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House is not here at the moment. He has been in the Chamber continuously until now and has an excellent record of listening to the debate. I should have hoped that by now he had heard enough arguments from both sides to convince him that there is no good reason for a guillotine motion. He might even ask my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, to make the appropriate sounds and withdraw the guillotine motion.

It has already been pointed out that there is no question of a shortage of time—not that time matters on an issue of constitutional importance, as this Bill is. Even if it was not a constitutional matter, there is no question of a shortage of time because of the demise of the Shops Bill. I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House, whose integrity I trust implicitly and whom I have always admired—I am only sorry that he is not present to hear all the nice things I am saying about him—is not intent on deceiving the House.

The messages that my right hon. Friend has got continuously through the usual channels, and in the debate tonight, have contained one theme: that he is making a severe mistake in recommending the timetable motion to the House. I hope that he may come up with the right answer later and will give an appropriate message to my hon. Friend. Unless he does, I shall certainly vote against the timetable motion, for reasons that have been stated clearly earlier in the debate.

I am puzzled because my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House, who is such a capable parliamentarian, has always prided himself on keeping closely in touch with opinion in the country. He cannot say after this debate, after the article in *The Times* some days ago by Mr. Johnson and after the article in the *Daily Telegraph* yesterday by Mr. Utley that he is not aware that this is a significant measure. If he was making an attempt to slide it through on the quiet, that attempt has been rumbled.

My hon. Friends have spoken about the implications. My hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr.

Taylor) referred to the VAT implications, to the other problems that could be associated with harmonising and to the questions that we are likely to be asked at the next general election and future elections about the attitude we took to this measure, which goes many paces beyond the original European Community legislation.

Having been a Member of the House at the time, I can well recall the assurances that were given by my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) that we would never go beyond what was in the original measure. I can recall, and it is in *Hansard*, that one or two hon. Members suggested that it could lead to a form of European union. When some of us raised these matters in private, we were assured that in no way would that take place and that in any event, never would a guillotine motion even be contemplated by a sensible Labour or Conservative Government on such a constitutional matter.

I think that is a big step backwards and the House must think again about this matter. I only hope that the usual channels will have a word with my right hon. Friend, the Leader of the House, so that he can persuade my hon. Friend the Minister, who will reply to the debate, that perhaps there is no great rush to rise before the royal wedding or some other event which may be happening. In any event, a matter of this consitutional importance and gravity cannot be swept under the carpet. All the important amendments which are needed must be debated fully and aired in public.

12.25 am

Mr. Eric Deakins (Walthamstow): I rise for a number of reasons, but I ought to tell the House that of the 50-odd amendments to the Bill, just under half are in my name. Therefore, I have some interest in the remaining proceedings of the Bill. Of the amendments I have tabled a number have been selected in the subsequent debates and some have been linked with those of other hon. Members.

In 1640 and 1641 this House of Commons debated ship money and also the proclaimed right—a divine right—of Charles I to tax the British people without their consent and that of their parliamentary representatives. There was a very important series of constitutional debates in the two years preceeding the civil war. I ask myself and right hon. and hon. Gentlemans of both sides of the House, what would have been the verdict of contemporaries and the subsequent verdict of history, had those in the king's party sought to guillotine the debate on those vital issues. Of course, in those days, the guillotine was not available and this is mere speculation. In view of the importance of the constitutional issues, the verdict would have been one of abhorrence and contempt at the squalid manoeuvring to attempt to stifle the debate on important constitutional issues.

No one can deny from the speeches we have heard tonight that the issues we are debating in the Bill, although not directly in this guillotine motion, are just as important as those which faced the House in 1640, 1641 and also in 1972, as well as on other occasions, when constitutional issues of major importance have been before the nation. Surely there has not been any previous occasion when any Government have sought to stifle discussion on such issues without any mandate from the people of the country for that measure or for trying to stifle the debate.

Mr. Cash: Does the hon. Gentleman recall that things may have improved to a certain extent because in the 1640s Cromwell came in with a bunch of soldiers and removed everybody else.

Mr. Deakins: As an historian—I am not sure whether the hon. Gentleman is an historian—I know we had a civil war first before that happened.

I do not wish to waste the time of the House by developing the constitutional arguments of the importance of the Bill—they have already been outlined by many speakers. I wish to take up one by one—no one else has done so—the Leader of the House's argument in support of this guillotine motion.

The right hon. Gentleman argued that we have had 18 hours of debate and that we have got through just over three groups of amendments. That 18 hours of debate was in fact two and a half days of parliamentary time. We had a half day on a Monday, a day on a Thursday and a day on a Friday.

One of the issues that we were discussing was a subsidiary court of the European Court of Justice and that legitimately raised—it was not out of order—the whole future of the European Court of Justice, the verdicts it has given and what sort of court it is. Surely, in anyone's estimation that was worth half a day of parliamentary time to discuss?

We then had less than a day—half a day—with a debate truncated to suit the convenience of hon. Members on both sides of the House and we eventually had a vote at 8.30 pm. We had a half day in which to debate the new powers to be given to the European Assembly, which is increasingly emerging as a competitor to this Parliament. One would have thought that in normal circumstances, had it not been for the convenience of hon. Members, that debate would have been worthy of a whole day. So no one can argue that that was not an important topic and worthy of the time that was allocated to it.

We then went on to the third debate on the completion of the internal market. On that, the Committee would probably have divided on party lines. Most Government supporters are in favour of the completion of the internal market and most people on the Labour Benches are against that, for purely party political reasons which I do not wish to go into now.

Nevertheless, we all recognise the great importance of that subject from our differing points of view, particularly those of us on the Labour Benches. We felt that that subject was well worth going into in some detail. I did that myself in a speech which ended proceedings on Thursday evening when I gave a great number of details and statistics to show that the case for completing the internal market was not a good one since our experience of the incomplete internal market over the past 13 years has not exactly been a happy one economically. My arguments may not have been right, but that is not the point. However, they were valid arguments. They were all in order. The debate was in order. That important debate was well worthy of a full day's debate in the time of the House of Commons.

When the Lord Privy Seal uses as his first argument for the guillotine that we have been dilatory on our debates so far, we have had 18 hours—two and a half days—on three groups of amendments, he has not bothered to look at what the amendments were, as I have just done. I hope that I have convinced at least those who have an open

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mind on these issues that those debates were not deliberately prolonged, that they were real debates on important issues affecting both sides of the House and the British people. Therefore, no argument can rest on the fact that they should have been disposed of in two or three hours instead of 18.

The second argument used by the right hon. Gentleman was that—I quote his exact words—"time cannot be afforded" for the completion of the Bill. But are we not masters of our own time? Whether we choose to begin our summer recess on 5 August, 1 August, 27 July, 24 July or 18 July is entirely within our control. Of course, the Government naturally control the business of the House, and no one objects to that. We can make choices between any of those dates and the choice really rests on the importance of the business that remains to be done.

Surely it cannot be a valid argument in any circumstances to say that on this supremely important constitutional issue time cannot be afforded for the remaining stages of the Bill, and yet can be afforded for other matters which are of lesser importance, although one understands that they are important in terms of the Government's programme, and one does not object to the Government spending time on them.

The Lord Privy Seal has sought to submit to the House this evening an entirely specious set of arguments in justification of this guillotine motion. He attacked the words of the motion in the name of my right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore), asking for a mere 15 hours, roughly two days of Parliamentary time, to be given to complete the Committee stage of the Bill. He implied, in criticising my right hon. Friend, who had not then spoken but whose motion is on the Order Paper, that such a motion should be rejected, as he did, not merely because it said 15 hours but because it did not lay out the timing of the individual debates. He implied, significantly, that it would not leave enough time for later groups of amendments, and that the House could consider only some groups of amendments in those 15 hours because my right hon. Friend had not divided the time properly. That is an open admission that the House needs substantial time to debate those groups of amendments.

The arguments of the Lord Privy Seal were specious and were intended—I say this sadly—to stifle the debate and to censor the arguments that would otherwise have been put. Had the press been present on Thursday and Friday, they might also have been put to the British people.

The Government have accepted the amendment tabled by the hon. Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor), but they have not accepted the other amendments, which will no doubt be voted upon. However, because of the Government's majority, they will probably be rejected.

Mr. J. Enoch Powell: They may not have a majority.

Mr. Deakins: Perhaps I am being unduly pessimistic. I accept the right hon. Gentleman's point.

Seven groups of amendments remain to be debated, and we shall have three clause stand part debates. No one expects a clause stand part debate on clause 4, but clauses 1, 2 and 3 are important. Therefore, we have the prospect of 10 debates in Committee, including the debate on which we embarked on Friday. Even if the hon. Gentleman's amendment is accepted by the House, that means that we shall have 10 debates in four hours. If there were no votes, it would mean 24 minutes for each debate.

However, the House would be justified in assuming that some of the issues are so vital that the House would wish to vote on them, and I mention only four. Hon. Members may disagree with my choice. I expect that hon. Members would wish to record an opinion on tax harmonisation, economic, monetary and political union, the common agricultural policy and the entire preamble. The amendment tabled by the right hon. Member for South Down, to which I have attached my name, would remove the preamble from the Bill. If we shall need one hour for voting, that would leave only three hours for debate. Therefore, the average time for debate would be 18 minutes on each of the seven groups of amendments and three clause stand part debates.

One point that the Lord Privy Seal did not make in his speech, although he tried to explain it in reply to me at Business Questions on Thursday of last week, was that between the Second Reading of the Bill on 23 April and the first Committee stage day in the House, there was a gap of six weeks. I asked the Lord Privy Seal for an explanation. He hummed and hawed and said, "We had to have informal and formal consultations." I reject that entirely. It would have been possible for the Government to introduce the Committee stage after two weeks, which would have provided ample time for consultation with Conservative Back-Bench Members, Labour Back-Bench Members, the usual channels, Uncle Tom Cobbleigh and all.

The Government chose not to so so. I do not query why they chose not to do so. It is the Government's prerogative to decide when to bring a Bill to its Committee stage. But if, as in the normal course of events, they had chosen to start the Committee stage within two weeks of the Second Reading, we could have had one day a week in Committee and we would probably have disposed of the Bill without the need for guillotines or closures.

Some may say that that is wishful thinking, but all the issues could have been explored in that time. I await a proper explanation of this from the Lord Privy Seal. Perhaps the Patronage Secretary was responsible for it. Whoever is responsible has not yet so far given the House an explanation. It is the failure to bring the Bill back to Committee stage that is responsible for the mess that the Government are in now. The Government themselves have wasted five weeks of parliamentary time when they could have brought the Bill before the House.

The Government confidently thought that the Bill could be disposed of in Committee stage, in its entirety, in one parliamentary day. When they made that assumption, there were already 40 amendments on the Amendment Paper. The Chairman of Ways and Means had not yet made his selection, but the Government could have formed some inkling from the authorities of the House of how many groupings there might be. They must have known that there would be a number of serious and controversial debates. How could the Government have imagined that it would be possible to dispose of all those debates in seven or eight hours? They must have been out of their tiny mind. I said to the Lord Privy Seal at Business Questions last week that he had been treating the House with arrogance and contempt. I was thinking not just of

the Lord Privy Seal – he happened to be answering Business Questions – but of the Government as a whole and the other Ministers responsible.

Whatever one thinks about the Bill, how could the Government have imagined that such a major constitutional Bill could have been disposed of in its Committee stage in one day of parliamentary time? I do not understand the mentality. Perhaps the Minister who is to reply will be able to tell us.

Furthermore, the Lord Privy Seal and those who advise him, by determining that the Bill should really have been disposed of in one day – and the Lord Privy Seal tells us that two and a half days would be far too long – are making a serious if implied criticism of the Chairman of Ways and Means. In effect, they are saying "We did not expect that, on this Bill which we do not regard as important and which should only have one day of parliamentary time, you would choose nine groups of amendments with the possibility of three clause stand part debates. We had assumed that there would be so little choice in the groups of amendments that we could have disposed of the Bill in one day." It is an implied criticism of the Chairman of Ways and Means that the Government are now saying that much less time should have been given to the Bill than has already been given to it in Committee.

In the form and content of the guillotine motion, the Leader of the House has set a very dangerous precedent. This place works, by and large, on the basis of give and take. Governments know that they will not be Governments for ever. By and large, Oppositions know that they will not be Oppositions for ever. One cannot say that there will not be revolutionary changes in the next decade, but one has every right to assume that that situation will remain as it is.

After the next Election there will be many more Labour Members in the House, and I hope that they will be sitting on the Government Benches. That parliamentary Labour party will be different in temperament and character from the present parliamentary Labour party. That Labour Government will have a contentious and heavy programme of controversial legislation to get through as quickly as possible, and the members of that parliamentary Labour party will seize on this precedent – not the precedent of a guillotine, but the precedent of disposing of an important constitutional Bill under a guillotine at the rate of 16 minutes for each group of amendments. The Government and the Conservative party will live to regret this day. Before it is too late, let them think seriously about what they are doing.

12.45 am

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): It is with some reluctance that I shall support the Government tonight. My view, having been here only since 1983, is that the Government have brought many of their difficulties on themselves.

Since my arrival here, I have watched the archaic procedures of Parliament snarling up the business that the public would like to see transacted in a more efficient manner. We do not need to be lectured by senior Members of the House who have allowed the whole of their parliamentary careers to pass without paying attention to the way in which we transact our business. They have no right to say, in the twilight of their careers, that it is disgraceful for the Government to move guillotine motions or make the House sit late at night.

Mr. Budgen: My hon. Friend seems to be condemning all the accumulated wisdom of this place, giving the impression that he is in favour of turning it into a well-oiled law-making machine. Does he approve of any of the procedures of the House?

Mr. Rowe: That was an ingenious attempt to distort my argument. I recall, for example, an attempt that was made to alter, at any rate for an experimental period, some of the procedures of the House. On that occasion the Government wheeled out the payroll vote to defeat any modification.

We must examine the whole way in which Parliament conducts its business. When people say that the Government or Members of Parliament are out of touch with public opinion, the clearest demonstration that they may be right is for us to continue to transact our business late at night, placing an enormous premium on length rather than on lucidity. For hon. Members to argue at length why there should not be a timetable seems to many people outside to be not only incomprehensible but inefficient.

Mr. Budgen: Is my hon. Friend aware that it is an extraordinary tradition of the House that hon. Members are often allowed to speak the most appalling rubbish while their colleagues sit listening almost without a word of disagreement?

Mr. Rowe: The fact that my hon. Friend has interrupted my remarks twice leads me to believe that he does not consider that I have been talking rubbish.

We must improve our procedures. Hon. Members who have spoken at length in this debate have themselves shown the need for the guillotine. After all, had they spoken briefly and to the point, they would have attracted more support for their views.

Mr. Douglas Hogg (Grantham): Is not the problem that if hon. Members seek to put a view in opposition to the majority view in their party, they must do so by repetition and opposition because the Whipped vote will always outvote them?

Mr. Rowe: That is a long-standing tradition. It is believed that the only weapon a minority has is time and the interminable repetition of points that are fairly easily grasped first time if they are made well. It is a procedure which seems worthy of re-examination. I entirely accept that the discipline of the Whips has become absurdly over-extended. The combination of the two reinforces my view.

This Chamber is supposedly the place where Governments are made and unmade, and where Governments can and should be controlled. The fact that they are not is substantially due to two factors. First, because nobody has ever looked hard enough at the number of matters that we are asked to consider, the size of the Executive has been allowed to grow to the point where there is no controlling it. Secondly, we should not have to debate so much administrative and executive detail. The result is that large constitutional issues are not properly addressed.

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth): Is not one of the problems of this honourable House perhaps that many hon. Members speak at great length and say absolutely nothing?

Mr. Rowe: Far be it from me to level any such charge. I believe strongly that we must take the way we do our

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business seriously, instead of nearly all the time concentrating on specialist subjects, not coming into the Chamber when our subjects are not being discussed and then complaining when business is slipped passed us by the use of the Whipped vote.

It all becomes some hon. Members who have already contributed to the debate to complain that what Euro Members do is incomprehensible and not explained sufficiently well to the House, when some of them took part in decisions which excluded the possibility of Euro Members having any space in this building, where they could explain what they were doing. We shall make the EC work by taking pains to understand its extraordinary achievements, whereby free democracies have come together in a form of alliance which has no precedent and which holds the seeds of the future. That is why, reluctantly, I shall support the Government.

12.54 am

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): If the Bill goes through, and I hope it does not, the hon. Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe) will be more irrelevant in future than he has been tonight.

We are discussing the future of this Parliament and that has not been brought out in the speeches of many hon. Members. I am an internationalist, but political union should not be brought about by stealth and that is what is happening in the Bill. We are being manoeuvred into a situation and one day we will wake up and discover that the importance of the House has been lost to us. That is the issue and we should wake up to it now and do something about it.

I remember the debates on Europe that we had when I was on the Front Bench. We raised the question of the veto and were given plenty of assurances. We were told that there was no need to worry, that the Conservative Government would protect the rights of the Parliament and the people by way of the veto. Because some of us did not believe that, we were told there was no question of the European Assembly becoming a real Parliament and having advanced powers.

Many of us said over the years that, once the European Parliament was in operation, it would automatically insist on getting greater powers. That is what is happening, and stage by stage we can see the political union developing. That is taking place, without a proper debate in the country and without the people really understanding what is happening. That is the issue, and everything else is flapdoodle.

If the hon. Member for Mid-Kent wants to talk about the procedures of the House, he should do so in an appropriate debate and in this debate should not depart from the issues that we are considering. The Leader of the House agreed with my right hon. Friend the Member of Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) that this legislation is of greater constitutional importance.

We must understand what has happened in the past on constitutional matters. There was a great deal of opposition to devolution when we debated it, but in the main most people felt that the measure would go through without any difficulty. Then the issues began to be understood in the country and as the debate went on and people in all parts of the British Isles understood it, there was growing opposition among hon. Members who at first were quite indifferent to devolution. If we had the time properly to discuss these issues, there would be growing opposition to the Bill before the House.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Heffer: I have sat here the whole evening and I shall speak for five minutes. If the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) does not mind, I shall not give way.

It is vital that the House does not agree with this guillotine motion. A number of hon. Members have outlined, and my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) spoke in detail about, the sort of issues that have still to be discussed.

The hon. Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) pointed out the long list of issues which should be discussed but which will not be discussed properly. I believe that that is absolutely wrong. I ask all hon. Members to vote against the guillotine motion. I do not know whether the Government have been able to get Conservative Members into the Chamber. They have not been able to get them in up until now so that they could close the debate. If they are in the House tonight, I hope that they will put the interests our people first and not allow us to get into a political union by stealth, as is happening now.

Mr. Bill Walker: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I seek your guidance. We are debating the Government's motion and, I understand, the amendment proposed by my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor). Does the Chair take note of the names of hon. Members on the amendment? Can you give some guidance, Mr. Speaker, to hon. Members? When an examination is made of those hon. Members who are called, it will be found that only

Mr. Speaker: Order. I stop the hon. Member because I think that he is challenging the selection of the Chair.

Mr. Walker: I am seeking guidance, Mr. Speaker. No criticism is intended. Hon. Members seek guidance on the fact that a Member who proposes a motion and many other hon. Members are called, but those who support the motion are not called.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member knows — it is at the discretion of the Chair — that in such a debate a balance must be struck. In that it is true that some hon. Members who support the various motions that I have selected on the Order Paper have been called tonight, as have some hon. Members who are against the amendments in their entirety.

1.1 am

Mr. George Robertson (Hamilton): This guillotine motion

"is no ordinary guillotine. The House faces a major constitutional innovation with far-reaching ramifications that are hard to predict, and that may take years, and even decades, to develop. Therefore it behoves us to proceed with more care and caution and to take more time before reaching a final conclusion." — [*Official Report*, 22 February 1977; Vol. 926, c. 1253.]

Those are not my words. They are the words of the then Leader of the House, the right hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East (Mr. Pym), speaking in the debate on the allocation of time for the Scotland and Wales Bill (Allocation of Time) Order on 22 February

1977. It is one of the standard traditions of guillotine debates for hon. and right hon. Members to find that their words are thrown back in their teeth all the time.

This has been an amazing debate. It commenced by an amazing contribution by the Leader of the House. The House looks forward to the right hon. Gentleman's contributions. We hear them increasingly as the Prime Minister tours the world and the right hon. Gentleman stands in at Prime Minister's Question Time. We have come to anticipate with great pleasure the dry humour that he brings to such occasions. Indeed, one might think of him as the "thinking man's Les Dawson". However, the right hon. Gentleman stooped to a fairly low level of humour tonight when he tried to threaten the House with the pain of postponing its summer holidays in order to consider, day after day, the European Communities (Amendment) Bill.

The Leader of the House supervised a delay of six weeks from the Second Reading of the Bill on 23 April to when the Committee stage commenced. The Leader of the House proposed only one closure on all the hours of debate that he catalogued this evening. He was able to muster only 84 Conservative Members at the end of the debate on Friday afternoon. What is being put forward by the right hon. Gentleman is incompetence on a massive scale. It is thinly disguised as a compassion for right hon. and hon. Gentlemen and Ladies, and for the staff of the House. I should like to ask the Leader of the House whether in his heart there really was a feeling of compassion for the staff of the House, whose inconvenience must be considerable as we drone on into the night discussing these and other matters, and why he kept the staff and the rest of us hanging on the end of a string until 2.30 on Friday afternoon before he decided that the debate had reached the stage at which the guillotine had to be invoked.

The Government have mismanaged the Bill. They have mismanaged their timetable and have lost their supporters. They have found themselves in such trouble that on this major constitutional issue we were to be allocated only three hours for the remaining stages.

But of course out of the dark night comes a white charger to rescue the Government. Here comes the hon. Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) with the great compromise. I knew the hon. Gentleman when he was just plain Teddy Taylor, shadow Secretary of State for Scotland, the man who, if it were not for the whim of the electorate in Glasgow, Cathcart, would have found himself in the Scottish Office amid the splendours of Bute house, and the right hon. and learned Member for Edinburgh, Pentlands (Mr. Rifkind) would be planked here defending the indefensible, as he did for so many long months before he was promoted to Cabinet.

I distinctly heard some Labour Members saying, in words that will not be recorded in *Hansard*, that this was a dirty deal, a shabby compromise, a sort of sell-out, but I know the hon. Member for Southend, East much better that that. I know that it was simply a pay-off and that somehow, somewhere a deal was done and, undoubtedly, his rewards will be great. Who knows, he might yet be a Government Member, standing at the Dispatch Box defending the next intergovernmental agreement, the next European budget supplement or even the 1·6 per cent. VAT limit after the next meeting of the European Council!

I should like to pay one further tribute to absent friends, among whom I count the whole of the Social Democratic party. We are told that the members of the SDP left the Labour party with one major reason being the fact that they disagreed with our disenchantment with the European Community. They said that it was not good enough for them to be tied in to a party that was so equivocal on Europe. I am glad that the equivocation of the Labour party to which they referred has been so richly repaid by the support that they have given during the passage of the Bill.

Throughout all our hours of deliberation on the Bill we have not seen a single Social Democratic Member, with the sole exception of the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Jenkins), who made an all too fleeting visit to the debate and did not stay long enough to get his own Adjournment debate! I know that the right hon. Gentleman is not sufficiently experienced in the ways of the House to recognise that one gets one's Adjournment debate when the main debate has ended and that sometimes it is a matter of caution to stay until the end of that debate to make sure of one's own debate.

The sole voice of the huge multi-party alliance present during the debates – I pay single tribute to him for his bravery in the face of much opposition – has been the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston). At last, we now discover why they gave him, and only him a knighthood.

The real crunch in the debate is the fact that it was not even necessary. The Bill and the Single European Act were not necessary. It is not I who contend that. On 22 July 1985, the Prime Minister returned from Milan and said:

"I saw nothing before us that would require an amendment to the treaty." [*Official Report*, 22 July 1985; Vol. 82, c. 189.]

But now we are told by the Leader of the House, no less, that so necessary are the treaty amendments and the Bill that we are going to truncate the debate on a massive and major constitutional Bill on the Floor of the House and telescope it into a tiny fragement of parliamentary time during which it could not possibly be given any scrutiny, let alone the scrutiny that it deserves.

Let us return to the happy days in February 1977 and the allocation of time on the Scotland and Wales Bill which I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) will remember only too well.

Mr. Skinner: As my hon. Friend is dealing with the Leader of the House and the fact that the Leader of the House has brought in the guillotine motion, is my hon. Friend aware that for some strange reason – and we know that the Leader of the House has an anti-Common Market past – his name is not on the Bill that is before us? *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Robertson: That is an illustration in words which cannot be recorded in the *Official Report*, that the crafty master of procedure who may have made a few mistakes along this road, has not made all the mistakes that he could have made.

The right hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East, whose words I used to open my speech, may now have been tipped out into the rubbish can of Prime Ministerial history, but the hon. Member who wound up the debate on the allocation of time for the Scotland and Wales Bill is still in the Cabinet. The right hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Edwards), the Secretary of State for Wales, is a fairly shadowy character. None the less, he said:

[Mr. Robertson]

"This brings us to the central point of our discussions. The sole practical and moral justification for the timetable motion is that it ensures that all aspects of the Bill are adequately debated and all clauses discussed. That was the principal justification for the timetable motion on the European Communities Bill." [*Official Report*, 22 February 1977, Vol. 926, c. 1346.]

That Bill was held up as the great example during that debate. I remind the Leader of the House and I do not need to remind my right hon. Friend the Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) that that debate which caused such outraged comments from the Conservative Benches and which led to these distinguished Members making such dreadful comments, was carried out on the basis of an offer of 20 parliamentary days to debate the matter. Yet 20 parliamentary days were not adequate or sufficient for a measure that was going to strike at the heart of the British constitution. However, we are told this evening that even after the great compromise from the depths of Southend, five hours are sufficient to consider the incredible constitutional significance of the Single European Act and the European Communities (Amendment) Bill today.

Mr. Bill Walker: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Robertson: No, I will not give way. For a brief moment, I thought that when the right hon. Member for Taunton (Sir E. du Cann) was talking about the bad, sad Bill, he had in mind the hon. Member for Tayside, North.

The constitutional importance of the Bill has already been outlined and the need for discussion has already been adequately explored. Right hon. and hon. Members have stated those points with great clarity and they have used a Select Committee report from the House of Lords and one from the House of Commons. Both had Conservative majorities and both were prayed in aid to show the important constitutional implications of the Bill.

I repeat what my right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) said from the Front Bench, and the House of Lords Select Committee report sums it up in one sentence:

"The powers of the United Kingdom Parliament will be weakened by the Single European Act."

The United Kingdom Parliament will not even have enough time to consider the implications of that incredible statement. There is more than a whiff of humbug from the Government on this motion, bearing in mind all that they have said in the past on the matter. This is simply a facade and a display of complete parliamentary incompetence. In this debate we can detect little conviction or support for the timetable, let alone for the Bill. If the Government had any sense of shame or any consistency, they would withdraw their motion. If, as we expect, they have disregarded their essential sense of honesty, I can only invite the House to vote overwhelming against the motion tonight.

1.14 am

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mrs. Lynda Chalker): Many right hon. and hon. Members have sought to fight again the accession battles of 1972 — [HON. MEMBERS: "Rubbish".] I do not underestimate the significance of the treaty change that in turn involves a change to legislation. If there were no changes there would be no need for legislation, but this is only a limited change to the treaties, particularly by comparison with the changes to our law which were required when we entered the Community 13 years ago.

There is, too, the practical advantage of these changes. I remind the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) and the House that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said, in relation to the meeting of the European Council on 2 and 3 December 1985, that those changes marked

"an important step towards enabling this country to realise more fully the benefits of our membership of the European Community." [*Official Report*, 5 December 1985; Vol. 88, c. 430.]

In the last 18 or so hours of debate so far on the Committee stage of the Bill we have covered three groups of amendments and have just begun a fourth group. On two of the issues — the court of the first instance and the internal market — the arguments put in Committee have been less about the significance of the changes that are now to be made than about the powers set out in the original Community treaties to which this nation acceded 14 years ago.

The way in which some hon. Members have spoken tonight makes it hard to believe that those hours were spent in Committee, and that the Committee stage had been preceded by a total of 10 hours of discussion in debates in the House on 5 March and during Second Reading on 23 April. My hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) said in the course of his speech on the Single European Act on 16 June that there were few "excessive Europeans" in the House. Most hon. Members would agree with him.

Mr. Budgen: My hon. Friend the Minister is one.

Mrs. Chalker: I do not for one moment suggest that the few anti-Europeans are obsessive either, but I dispute whether over the past few weeks we have not heard from some hon. Members frequently, and at considerable length — sometimes rather repetitively.

The hon. Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Deakins) was clearly embarrassed by the poor attendance the other night on the Opposition Benches. He decided to make good the default by making all the speeches of his colleagues for them. He spoke for an hour and a half on the subject of the internal market——

Mrs. Chalker: I apologise if I missed the odd minute and added it up wrongly, but the hon. Gentleman did not stay to vote for his amendment. Indeed, not one Labour vote was cast in favour of the amendment for which Labour Members had spoken for several hours in relation to the internal market. I hardly think that those hon. Members who have, between them, occupied nearly half of the 17 or so hours of debate in Committee can complain if the remaining amendments are taken somewhat more briskly.

Mr. Skinner: Is the Minister aware that two Labour Members, including me, acted as Tellers in order to cause that Division? We did so, not to see how many hon. Members voted, but to prove to everyone something that has been demonstrated again tonight — that the Government had only 84 hon. Members there, which was not enough to force the closure. That is why my hon. Friends did not go into the Lobby, but I and one of my hon. Friends were there as Tellers.

Mrs. Chalker: I fully admit that the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) was there as a Teller, but I was talking about the voters. There was not a single opposition vote in favour of the amendment that was debated so lengthily that night.

Mr. Spearing: The selection list shows that the Question was put on amendment No. 5, which was something of a derogation. Most of the debate was on amendment No. 15, which has yet to be voted on. It would therefore have been inappropriate for hon. Members to vote effectively against a derogation.

Mrs. Chalker: The hon. Gentleman knows the principle that I have in mind. After a very long and detailed debate, only two Labour Members were left.

The right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore), rightly in his view, said that the guillotine was wrong, but he also believed that the Government should have moved closure motions. I have heard many hon. Members say that, but it came as no surprise to right hon. and hon. Members that the Government sought to give a second and third day of debate to the Bill last Thursday and Friday so that the groups of amendments on which debate began on 16 June could be discussed.

There are many occasions on which the House uses the usual channels successfully. Sometimes, even more unusual channels are used. The Government proceed on the basis of all the information that is available to them, and that is what the Government sought to do on this Bill. They felt that it was right to try to meet the wishes that had been expressed. I recognise the wish of my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East that there should be a sensibly timed debate, but it was clear that progress was not being made. One only has to look at the statistics to see what progress had been made.

Mr. Marlow: I do not know how long my hon. Friend has been speaking, but she has been looking backwards all the time. Perhaps she could dignify the House by looking forward. Under my hon. Friend's amendment, there will be a total of five hours of debate. Assuming that every issue is voted upon, and assuming also that the Front Benches take 15 minutes between them on each debate, how long will that leave for Back Benchers?

Mrs. Chalker: If my hon. Friend intervenes a litte less frequently than he did in some of our previous debates, I shall do my very best to ensure that he is allotted the maximum amount of time.

There were over four hours of debate on the first amendment, which related to the limited issue of the court of first instance. On that occasion the Government majority was 83. There were over two and a half hours of debate on the second amendment, which related to co-operation between the Council of Ministers and the name of the European Parliament. On that occasion the Government majority was 70. We spent over eight hours on the amendment that related to the internal market. The hon. Member for Walthamstow took up over one and a quarter hours of that debate, while the hon. Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton) took up about 35 minutes, the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) over 40 minutes, the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) about 30 minutes and the hon. Member for Bolsover about 30 minutes. There were also other speakers. The majority for the Government after that debate was 80. The only votes against the Government were, as the hon. Member for Bolsover said, those of four Conservative Members. It is interesting to note how many hon. Members were in the House to vote for issues about which they have argued so loudly tonight.

The right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney referred to the veto and the Luxembourg compromise. I hope that he will hold neither me nor this Government responsible for what was said to the people of this country by the Government of which he was a member. He said today that the Luxembourg compromise has always been applicable to articles where majority voting applies. Its role is in no way changed by the Single European Act. In any case, it is not the Luxembourg compromise on which we have relied to safeguard our interests. Where we need to retain unanimity we have done so, and where we need national safeguards we have secured them, too.

The right hon. Gentleman also implied that the role of the Council is to be changed by the new co-operation procedure with the European Parliament. The hon. Member for Newham, South agreed with him, yet it was the Committee that was chaired by the hon. Member for Newham, South that reported to the House:

"At the end of the day the European Parliament still has no power to insist and the last word remains with the

Mr. Shore: Why does the hon. Lady set her judgment about the effect of these changes in the Bill on the veto against the considered judgment of the Select Committee of this House and the Select Committee of the other place? Why does she think that she is right and they are wrong?

Mrs. Chalker: I have never said that I am right and that they are wrong. I have quoted words that are contained in a report of a Select Committee that was chaired by the hon. Member for Newham, South, and I have done no more than agree with its findings.

During the Committee proceedings last week several hon. Members referred to the public hanging on to every word because they wanted to know whether they could go peacefully to bed or whether they should man the barricades. All I can say is that the public have had to hang on for a very long time. I believe firmly that the people of this country want Britain to make a success of its membership of the Community. The Community is valued and the role that we are playing in the Community in reinforcing peace, stability and democracy is a vital one. The people of this country value the role that the Community can play as a bridge between East and West. They want the Community to make a difference to prosperity and jobs.

The Bill is not about a diminution of the powers of this Parliament. It is about getting more from our membership of the Community. I repeat the words that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister used in December 1985. She said that the changes were

"an important step towards enabling this country to realise more fully the benefits of our membership of the European Community."—[*Official Report*, 5 December 1985; Vol. 88, c. 430.]

That is exactly what we shall achieve from the improved voting on the internal market and from the initiatives that we are taking. The public are not impressed when we sit here night after night raking through the tepid embers of past battles. They want Parliament to get on with the job. That is exactly what we seek to do.

Perhaps it is the only time that I may say this on this Bill, but on this occasion may I urge the House to support

[Mrs. Chalker]

the amendment of my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East, which provides a sensible way forward at this stage of the Bill.

Question put, That the amendment be made:

The House divided: Ayes 286, Noes 150.

Division No. 239] **[1.25 am**

AYES

Alexander, Richard
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Benyon, William
Best, Keith
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brooke, Hon Peter
Browne, John
Bryan, Sir Paul
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Budgen, Nick
Bulmer, Esmond
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Rt Hon Sir Adam
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Cash, William
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, W. S.
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Couchman, James
Cranborne, Viscount
Critchley, Julian
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Anthony
Fletcher, Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Grist, Ian
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John S.
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Harvey, Robert
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hayes, J.
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Hickmet, Richard
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hirst, Michael
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jackson, Robert
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New F'st)*
Malins, Humfrey
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Mates, Michael
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abgdn)*
Pattie, Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pollock, Alexander
Porter, Barry
Portillo, Michael
Powley, John
Price, Sir David
Pym, Rt Hon Francis
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Rippon, Rt Hon Geoffrey
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
St. John-Stevas, Rt Hon N.
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speed, Keith
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertf'dshire N)*
Sumberg, David
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Wall, Sir Patrick
Waller, Gary
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Teddy Taylor and
Mr. Jonathan Aitken.

NOES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Alton, David
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Barnett, Guy
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Anthony
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell, Ian
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Carter-Jones, Lewis
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clelland, David Gordon
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S)*
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Garrett, W. E.
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Gould, Bryan
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Janner, Hon Greville
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McCartney, Hugh
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
McTaggart, Robert
Madden, Max
*Marek, Dr John
Marlow, Antony
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Park, George
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Powell, Rt Hon J. E.
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rogers, Allan
Rowlands, Ted
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Short, Mrs R. *(W'hampt'n NE)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Smith, Cyril *(Rochdale)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'ds E)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Tinn, James
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
White, James
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Winnick, David
Woodall, Alec
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. John McWilliam and
Mr. Derek Fatchett.

Question accordingly agreed to.
Main Question, as amended, put.
The House divided: Ayes 270, Noes 153.

Division No. 240] **[1.40 am**

AYES

Alexander, Richard
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Best, Keith
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brooke, Hon Peter
Bryan, Sir Paul
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Bulmer, Esmond
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Rt Hon Sir Adam
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Cash, William
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Couchman, James
Cranborne, Viscount
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Anthony
Fletcher, Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Grist, Ian
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John S.
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Harvey, Robert
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hayes, J.
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Hickmet, Richard
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hirst, Michael
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jackson, Robert
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*

Lord, Michael
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New F'st)*
Malins, Humfrey
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Mates, Michael
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abgdn)*
Pattie, Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pollock, Alexander
Porter, Barry
Portillo, Michael
Powley, John
Price, Sir David
Pym, Rt Hon Francis
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Rippon, Rt Hon Geoffrey
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speed, Keith
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertf'dshire N)*
Sumberg, David
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Wall, Sir Patrick
Waller, Gary
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Michael Neubert and
Mr. Tim Sainsbury.

NOES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Alton, David
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Barnett, Guy
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Anthony
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell, Ian
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Carter-Jones, Lewis
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clelland, David Gordon
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S)*
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Dubs, Alfred
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Farr, Sir John
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Fry, Peter
Garrett, W. E.
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Gould, Bryan
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Janner, Hon Greville
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McCartney, Hugh
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
McTaggart, Robert
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marlow, Antony
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Park, George
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Powell, Rt Hon J. E.
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rogers, Allan
Rowlands, Ted
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Smith, Cyril *(Rochdale)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'ds E.)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Tinn, James
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
White, James
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Winnick, David
Woodall, Alec
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Don Dixon and
Mr. John McWilliam.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That the following provisions shall apply to the remaining proceedings on the Bill:—

Committee, Report and Third Reading: time allotted for proceedings

1. Paragraph (1) of Standing Order No. 3 (Exempted business) shall apply to the proceedings, but the proceedings shall be brought to a conclusion at such times after the start as are shown in the following Table ("the start" for this purpose being the time when the House next resolves itself into a Committee on the Bill):

TABLE

Proceedings	*Time for conclusion of proceedings*
Amendment No. 7	1 hour
Amendment No. 9	2 hours
Amendments Nos. 11 and 14	3 hours
Amendments Nos. 47 and 22, the remainder of Clause No. 1, Clause No. 2, and Clause No. 3 to the end of subsection (3).	4 hours
Amendment No. 46 and remaining proceedings in Committee and on consideration and Third Reading	5 hours

Proceedings on going into Committee

2. When the Order of the day is read for the House to resolve itself into a Committee on the Bill, Mr. Speaker shall leave the Chair without putting any Question, notwithstanding that notice of an Instruction has been given.

Conclusion of proceedings in Committee

3. On the conclusion of the proceedings in Committee the Chairman shall report the Bill to the House without putting any Question.

Order of consideration

4. No Motion shall be made to alter the order in which proceedings in Committee or on consideration of the Bill are taken.

Re-committal

5. (1) References in this Order to proceedings on consideration or Third Reading include references to proceedings, at those stages respectively, for, on or in consequence of, re-committal.

(2) No debate shall be permitted on any Motion to re-commit the Bill (whether as a whole or otherwise) and Mr. Speaker shall put forthwith any Question necessary to dispose of the Motion, including the Question on any Amendment moved to the Question.

Dilatory Motions

6. No dilatory Motion with respect to, or in the course of, proceedings on the Bill shall be moved except by a member of the Government, and the Question on any such Motion shall be put forthwith.

Exclusion of Business Committee

7. Standing Order No. 45 (Business Committee) shall not apply to this Order.

Conclusion of proceedings

8. For the purpose of bringing any proceedings on the Bill to a conclusion in pursuance of this Order the Chairman or Mr. Speaker shall forthwith put the following Questions (but no others)

(*a*) any Question already proposed from the Chair;

(*b*) any Question necessary to bring to a decision a Question so proposed (including, in the case of a new Clause or new Schedule which has been read a second time, the Question, That the Clause or Schedule be added to the Bill);

(*c*) the Question on any Amendment or Motion standing on the Order Paper in the name of any Member, if that Amendment or Motion is moved by a member of the Government;

(*d*) any other Question necessary for the disposal of the business to be concluded.

Supplemental orders

9. (1) The proceedings on any Motion made in the House by a member of the Government for varying or supplementing the provisions of this Order shall, if not previously concluded, be brought to a conclusion one hour after they have been commenced, and paragraph (1) of Standing Order No. 3 (Exempted business) shall apply to the proceedings.

(2) If on the day on which any proceedings on the Bill are to be brought to a conclusion at a time appointed by this Order the House is adjourned, or the sitting is suspended, before that time no notice shall be required of a Motion made at the next sitting by a member of the Government for varying or supplementing the provisions of this Order.

Saving

10. Nothing in this Order shall prevent any proceedings to which the Order applies from being taken or completed earlier than is required by the Order.

Interpretation

11. In this Order 'the Bill' means the European Communities (Amendment) Bill.

PETITION

British Leyland

1.49 am

Mr. Robert Atkins (South Ribble): I beg to ask leave to present a petition on behalf of some 5,000 residents in the Leyland area and workers at the Leyland factories to express their concern about the future of their company. The petition has some 5,000 signatures, and covers a variety of areas in and around my constituency and other areas such as Wigan, Burnley, Preston, Chorley, west Lancashire and St. Helens, to name but a few. The petitioners are concerned about the sale of Leyland Bus and Multipart and the continuing discussions about the future of Leyland Trucks.

The petition reads:

"Wherefore your petitioners pray that your honourable House will recognise that in order to best secure the future of our company, it is essential to ensure that Leyland Vehicles, Bus, Trucks and Parts remain intact as one Company, preferably British and in public ownership . . . And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray, et cetera."

To lie upon the Table.

National Health Service (East Anglia)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Garel-Jones.]*

1.50 am

Mr. Richard Ryder (Mid-Norfolk): I am very grateful to my hon. Friend for being here at this late hour to respond to this debate. I know what a close interest he takes in the National Health Service in East Anglia and elsewhere.

However much money is spent on the NHS in East Anglia or anywhere else, it is unlikely to meet all the demands made upon it or to satisfy all the expectations. That is partly because the astonishing success of medical science over the past 30 years has meant, at one end, that scores of previously untreatable diseases have become treatable and, at the other end, that hips and knees can now be replaced as a matter of course. Yet it should never be forgotten that the amount of money available to the NHS largely depends upon our economic growth rate, which, under the present Government, is one of the highest in western Europe. That is a reason why the NHS now employs about 1 million people. In Europe, only the red army employs more. That is a reason why the Government have been able to increase spending on the NHS by 24 per cent. in real terms to about £17 billion, the equivalent of £850 a year for every household in Britain.

As we know, however, increased spending is not the answer to every need. How has all this affected East Anglia? The recently announced second district hospital to cater for many people living in my constituency, which is to be built in Norwich, providing a further 800 beds, will be the fifth district general hospital to be completed in East Anglia since the Government came to office in 1979, the others being the Queen Elizabeth hospital in King's Lynn, the James Paget hospital in Great Yarmouth, the Hinchingbrooke hospital in Huntingdon and the second district hospital in Peterborough. These vital new buildings, in addition to improvements to several existing ones underline the Government's firm commitment to the region. The regional health authority has plans to spend over £230 million on its capital programme over the next eight years. Indeed, it is appropriate to illustrate the Government's commitment by pointing out that by 1990 no less than 90 per cent. of the old stock of buildings in the west Norfolk and Wisbech district health area, which covers part of my constituency, will have been replaced with something better by this Government.

The Government's capital programme is sizeable and continuous. Currently, 22 building projects are under contract throughout East Anglia at a total cost of £26 million. If some claim with shaky logic that extra spending equals net cuts, they are clearly permitting prejudice to interfere with the facts, a practice that may suit their political ends but one that does nothing to enhance their credibility.

Not only have the Government increased spending in East Anglia—although, it should be stressed, from a low base—but they have also, with the co-operation of the regional health authority and the districts, made the NHS more efficient, and I pay tribute and offer thanks to all those working in the service.

Patient waiting times and hospital waiting lists are continuing to fall. Last year they fell by 5 per cent. There are, however, specialties such as orthopaedics where the

waiting time remains excessive. To be fair, this is a national problem. But in all specialties, more patients are being treated from a more elderly population than ever before. The age of the East Anglian population as well as its fast growth is significant, and I urge the Minister not to overlook that when allocating resources in future.

The vast majority of acute beds are occupied by people over 65, and, across the region as a whole, the 75-plus age group is projected to shoot up by 12 per cent. in the next eight years and by 18 per cent. in the Great Yarmouth and Waveney district area. This will stretch the capacity of existing facilities.

I draw the Minister's attention to another special feature of the Great Yarmouth and Waveney area. The seasonal burdens can be immense when the population is trebled by holidaymakers in the summer months, yet no additional funding is provided for such tourist centres, despite the seasonal burdens placed on the NHS locally.

It is also crucial to emphasise that the problems of rural areas can be just as severe as those encountered in the inner cities. Indeed, the problems of rural areas can often be more expensive to deal with properly. This applies particularly to ambulance service funding, where the results of the policy were not, I am sure, part of the original intention. I know that the Minister is giving close attention to this issue, and rightly so.

The greater efficiency of the NHS in East Anglia can be gauged in several ways, although we must guard against complacency as a result of progress achieved recently. There is still plenty of scope for improvement, as many doctors and nurses will testify.

Modern line management techniques have been injected into the system and business methods have become the norm. The principle of value for money is now taken more fully into account, which means that more resources can be spent where it matters most—on direct patient care. The RAWP exercise has been of benefit to East Anglia. Growth in revenue allocations from 1978-79 to 1986-87 is 20 per cent. against a national average of 11 per cent.

But it is important for the Minister to consider whether a new incentive mechanism can be built into RAWP by which hospitals and departments which perform well can be adequately rewarded. Commercial firms have better ways of rewarding their successful departments. All managements respond to stimuli and incentives; and in this respect the NHS can learn even more from the private sector.

We in East Anglia are lucky to have Sir Arthur South as chairman of the regional health authority and, as his chief executive, Mr. M. W. King, who has years of experience of how the private sector operates and who is working effectively and harmoniously with the districts. A new computer system costing £38 million will start in 18 months and this should further help to make the East Anglian NHS more efficient.

So far, the NHS in East Anglia has received careful attention from the Government, and I thank them for that. But the overriding purpose of this debate has been to bring home to the Government some of the region's special problems and to highlight the need to maintain our efforts to secure an even better health service for East Anglia in the 1990s.

1.59 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mr. Ray Whitney): I am happy to have this opportunity to respond to my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Norfolk (Mr. Ryder), who has certainly performed another invaluable service both to his constituents and the region of East Anglia, and to our general appreciation of what is happening in the NHS as a whole.

As my hon. Friend said, the story is there to be told and it is a good one. We must set it against the economic imperatives, which we both recognise, and the Government's achievements. Given our record on increasing prosperity, maintaining a firm control on public spending, as is shown in the successful fight against inflation, and on increasing resources for the NHS, we should be proud. As my hon. Friend said, whatever resources we can devote and however successfully we can manage our economy, the demand for increasing health care is well-nigh insatiable, especially for the aging population. I strongly endorse that. Each week I visit two or three hospitals and everywhere I see the elderly occupying acute beds. That is largely to be welcomed in that it is a testimony to our health care. My hon. Friend also referred to the pressures of medical advance and the rightly increasing expectations and aspirations of our people.

Although there is considerable anxiety, we should recognise that a great deal of it is not justified. The final test of the state of the NHS is the quality of the service delivered to patients. Recently, the National Association of Health Authorities conducted a test of opinion and found that of the substantial sample who were asked about their overall opinion of the NHS, 75 per cent. said that it was fairly good, very good or extremely good. That is a reasonable score. When those with experience of treatment in the previous two years were asked for their opinion of that treatment, the poll recorded that 87 per cent. were fairly or very satisfied with their hospital treatment and 88 per cent. with their family doctor. Therefore, the general level of public opinion does not do sufficient justice to the excellence of the service as it is perceived by those who become its patients.

Sadly, much of the blame for that must rest with the media, which all too frequently look for bad news and, in some instances, invent it. One example of that relates to Addenbrooke's hospital in East Anglia. On 14 May, the *Daily Mirror* under the headline "Yet Another Health Scandal" carried the story that a life support machine had broken down in the middle of an operation on a child. The article alleged that hospital staff had to borrow a spare ventilator from the intensive care unit to carry on the operation. It went on to say that the only suitable machine available in the hospital was eight years old and held together by sticky tape. The newspaper claimed that this was another example of the effect of the Government's cash cuts.

The story was completely untrue. The hospital has no record of a machine breaking down during an operation, or of staff having urgently to borrow one from elsewhere in the middle of an operation. As that was only one of several inaccurate stories about the NHS carried by the newspaper in May, we wrote and asked it to set the record straight, but, sadly, that has not happened. The consultant who was misquoted in the article has written to the

[Mr. Ray Whitney]

newspaper to protest about the story. He felt it would cause unnecessary anxiety to parents of children using the hospital. He pointed out that there were 27 ventilators at the hospital suitable for use on small children, and not one as the article reported.

The article of 14 May accused the Government of ignoring the facts about the Health Service but hon. Members will agree that it was *The Mirror* that ignored the facts. However, it is not only *The Mirror* that does that, and not only in this case. There are problems but, happily, the patients themselves understand what is being achieved.

My hon. Friend reminded us of the 24 per cent. increase in real terms that we have recorded. The general success of our economic policies, to which my hon. Friend also referred, is helping because the low inflation that we now enjoy means that we can provide more services in the National Health Service for the amount of money available. In East Anglia, that has meant progress. For example, the revenue allocation to the region increased by 28 per cent. between 1979 and 1986-87.

For the future, if the national growth of 0·5 per cent. is achieved, East Anglia can expect to achieve 1·6 per cent. annual growth in the period to 1993-94. For the next two years, the planning guidelines issued to health authorities show in East Anglia the biggest growth of any region in England — some 2·2 per cent. in 1987-88 and 2·1 per cent. in 1988-89. Those are the tangible benefits of the policy that has been followed.

My hon. Friend spoke about capital. The position there is the same. At national level, something over £900 million will be spent this year to replace and improve hospital stock, and to provide new hospitals and community care facilities. Some 159 new hospitals worth over £2 million each are at present being planned, designed or built in England alone.

We are all aware of the comparison that can be drawn with the dismal Labour record. The Labour Government made cuts in capital expenditure because such cuts were forced on them after they had to go to the International Monetary Fund. That is in eloquent and stark contrast to the record that we can show, and that record is demonstrated in East Anglia.

My hon. Friend spoke about the four new district hospitals planned for Norwich, which will cost over £45 million. This second district general hospital for the city has been approved by the regional health authority and will shortly be submitted to my Department for approval. Of course I cannot prejudge the decision that will be taken, but I can assure my hon. Friend that if the need is clearly demonstrated and the right option is identified, the project will have the full support of the Department.

Our record on staffing is also good and East Anglia matches the national position. For example, over the last six years there has been an increase of 3,140 nurses and midwives, an increase of 26 per cent., and there are now 280 more hospital doctors, a 22 per cent. increase, in the region. All those figures point to an improvement in resources, but the best indicators are the number of people treated and cared for and the quality of treatment. At national level, those figures are good.

The annual number of in-patient cases rose by 15 per cent. to some 800,000 and the annual number of day cases rose by 61 per cent. The annual number of out-patients rose by 3 million, an increase of 9 per cent. Those are considerable increases. Similar increases can be shown in East Anglia, but I will not go into the percentages.

The Government are committed to a policy of community care based upon the needs of individuals. That is aimed at helping them to live as normal a life as they can and to enjoy the ordinary, everyday pursuits, activities and social life that we all take for granted. In that area too, progress has been made. For many people that means the support needed to enable them to live in their own homes, or in the homes of relatives, with dignity and respect, and without placing an intolerable burden on those caring for them. That represents a formidable challenge. It requires close working partnerships between all the agencies — the health authorities, the family practitioner committees, personal social services, housing, education, employment, social security and the voluntary sector.

There is another good story to tell in East Anglia. I warmly endorse the praise that my hon. Friend directed towards the chairman of the regional health authority and his general manager, Mr. King. I have had the privilege of meeting both of them on a number of occasions. I am deeply impressed by them. I believe that East Anglia is well served by them. Everything that I have seen in East Anglia and everything that my hon. Friend has said endorse that view.

As I said in opening, I believe that my hon. Friend has done a great service to East Anglia in this debate. It is important continually to recognise the good things that are achieved. The constant carping and attack, much of which is done for political gain and advantage, is in danger of doing serious harm to the morale of the many people —my hon. Friend mentioned a figure of 1 million — who work in the National Health Service. The vast majority of those people work well. They are making an impressive contribution to the level of health care in this country. It is vital to recognise that service and to understand and appreciate their contribution. It is understood and appreciated by the Government and by Ministers.

It is important that the country recognises that the steady real increase in resources is devoted to health care. East Anglia is getting its appropriate share of those resources. I take note of the special points which my hon. Friend made. I shall examine them in detail when I read his speech. It is important that we recognise what is achieved. There are challenges to be met. I submit that the Government are meeting those challenges.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twelve minutes past Two o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 2 July 1986

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

HARROGATE BOROUGH COUNCIL BILL *[Lords]*
Read the Third time, and passed, with amendments.

BLYTH HARBOUR BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*
Order for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time tomorrow.

Oral Answers to Questions

SCOTLAND

New Towns (Housing)

1. **Mr. Lambie** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received on the case for more general needs housing in the new towns of Scotland.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Allan Stewart): Representations have been received from each of the new town development corporations and from the forum of Scottish local authorities with new towns.

Mr. Lambie: I thank the Minister for his reply and for recognising the need for consultation with the new town development corporations. Is he aware that for the first time in the history of the Scottish new towns we are experiencing a serious housing shortage as second generation families start to apply for new rented houses? Will the Minister consider giving special consideration to Irvine new town? It was the last of the new towns and has an ever-increasing housing list. Will he give the development corporation the permission and the resources to start building immediately new houses for these second generation families?

Mr. Stewart: I have asked the development corporations, including the one for Irvine, to provide detailed information which will enable me to make a thorough assessment of housing needs in the Scottish new towns. Irvine has £2·3 million gross to spend on housing in the current year. It is fair to say that home ownership in Irving, at 25 per cent., is low.

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton: Is the Minister aware that 80 per cent. of the cases that come to my surgery in Glenrothes relate to housing problems? Flats for single persons have been empty for months in Glenrothes yet large numbers of single people are homeless and cannot occupy those flats because the Government insist that they must be sold, even though they were built to be rented. Is he prepared to have another look at the senseless housing policies inflicted on the people of Glenrothes and elsewhere by the Government?

Mr. Stewart: The Government's housing policies are based on a proper and balanced mix of housing. I reject the hon. Member's general allegation. I reassure him about Glenrothes, because I shall consider carefully the detailed case made recently by the development corporation on housing matters.

Mr. Norman Hogg: Does the Minister not understand that the current policy of sales linked to a lack of new building is producing an imbalance in the provision of housing which gives young married couples no hope? Will he agree to meet the development corporations and the district councils that have new towns to discuss this as a matter of urgency so that we can get the construction of houses under way as quickly as possible?

Mr. Stewart: The construction of special needs housing is going ahead in the new towns, which have been building at a rate of 130 specially adapted and amenity units per annum. Of course I shall consider the representations from Cumbernauld, and after I have had an opportunity to assess the evidence recently put to me I shall be able to undertake consultations and the meeting with the local authorities that has been requested.

Mr. Hugh Brown: May I widen this debate, because we are in danger of dealing with the matter as if it were a problem only of new town development corporations? The Minister has said that he will consult chairmen in assessing the need. Will he also take into account the need to have discussions with his colleague the Secretary of State, who does not have a housing policy for Scotland? Many constituents in local authority housing will never get to a new town, either because they are on benefit or because they have small incomes.

Mr. Stewart: My right hon. and learned Friend has an excellent housing policy for Scotland, and we have been discussing new towns because the question is about new towns. Obviously I have been in correspondence with the hon. Gentleman about dependent relatives, and the needs of that particular group will be taken into account in the current review.

Rating Reform

2. **Mr. Hirst** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received on the Government's proposals for rating reform; and if he will make a statement.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Michael Ancram): Over 300 representations have now been received from individuals and a wide range of organisations.

Mr. Hirst: Does my hon. Friend agree that there has been a broad welcome from the business community, which sees the reforms as helping to redress the appalling imbalance in business rates north and south of the border? Is he aware that the business community also warmly welcomes the protection which will be given to it during the transitional period of rating reform? Will he contrast

the worth of the Government's proposals with the fact that the Labour party will do nothing to reform the rates, and with the rather loopy idea which is circulating in alliance circles that rates should somehow be linked to the profits of a business?

Mr. Ancram: I am pleased to confirm that we have had a broad welcome for our proposals on non-domestic rates from a wide sector of commerce and industry. In particular, they have welcomed the proposal that, following the legislation which we intend to introduce in the next Session, non-domestic rates will be controlled within the rate of inflation by my right hon. and learned Friend. This will enable them in their cost projections to take account of the rate settlement, and will give them a stability which has not been possible in the past.

Mr. Wallace: As I understand the Government's proposals, students attending Scottish colleges and universities will be liable to a community charge at their place of residence. Do the Scottish Office, the Scottish Education Department and, indeed, English local authorities which have students attending Scottish universities and colleges intend to make appropriate provision in the university grant to meet the community charge which may be levelled?

Mr. Ancram: As the hon. Gentleman knows, at present the Green Paper is out for consultation, and obviously no firm decisions will be taken on its details until after that consultation period is completed.

Mr. Douglas: The smack of firm government.

Mr. Ancram: The hon. Member for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas) talks about the smack of firm government, but he would be the first to criticise us if we were to take firm decisions before we had finished the proper consultations that we are at present carrying out. Obviously my right hon. and learned Friend will carefully consider the position of students in Scotland who become liable to pay the community charge and will do so against the background of progress with the comprehensive review of all aspects of financial support for students which was announced on 18 June.

Mr. Henderson: Is my hon. Friend aware that there will be a warm welcome, especially among less well-off ratepayers, for his reiteration of the Government's commitment to introduce legislation next Session? Does he agree that students are already paying substantially for local government in that through the rents for their residences they are paying rates?

Mr. Ancram: I can confirm my hon. Friend's last point. As students benefit from local government services I am sure that most of them would accept the fairness of making a contribution towards them, together with every other adult in the Scottish community. These proposals have been warmly welcomed by those who, in the past, have suffered under the inequitable and wholly discredited rating system which at present operates and which appears still to be Labour party policy.

Mr. Dewar: With so many important points still subject to consultation, will the Minister give an undertaking that before legislation is introduced he will produce a firm account of how the scheme will work, so that we know exactly what the implications will be? Why does the Secretary of State insist on pressing ahead with a scheme against all the advice from the very bodies whose advice he sought specifically on its practicality? Is it not true that COSLA has described the poll tax as sheer folly? If, in the Minister's view, it is a suspect organisation, will he dwell on the fact that the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives, which is in a position to know, has urged a final rethink because it believes that the scheme is unworkable? Surely the Secretary of State should retreat from forcing this measure through and consider whether it would not be wiser to desist from introducing a tax which is not related to the ability to pay and which will inevitably result in individual injustices for very many people in Scotland.

Mr. Ancram: Once again the hon. Gentleman has failed to come forward with any alternative to the existing rating system. From what he has said today and on previous occasions, I think we can take it that he stands by the present rating system and that he will be prepared to land on the domestic ratepayers of Scotland further revaluations of the sort that we saw last year. I hope that the domestic ratepayers of Scotland are aware of that.

The hon. Member asked about the ability to discuss this in detail. I assure him that before this becomes law there will be plenty of occasions to discuss the full details. He also mentioned two bodies which he said were against these proposals, the first of which was COSLA. As I have said before, it would be a great surprise if COSLA were to recommend getting rid of a system that suits high-spending Labour authorities in Scotland, to the disadvantage of their ratepayers. As for SOLACE, my understanding of its criticisms is that it says that the present rating system is simple, straightforward and easy to manage. The same argument could have been made about a window tax in the past, but that would have been no justification for keeping it.

Rural Development Fund

3. **Sir Hector Monro** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will reconsider his decision not to establish a rural development fund outwith the Highlands and Islands Board Development area.

The Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Malcolm Rifkind): I am not convinced that such a fund is necessary, bearing in mind the very extensive measures of assistance already available to rural areas.

Sir Hector Monro: Bearing in mind the urgency of revitalising the rural economy, does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the SDA has insufficient funds and that the Select Committee reported unanimously in favour of a rural development fund? Will he give a very high priority to providing more jobs in the rural areas of Scotland?

Mr. Rifkind: If it were to be established, the rural fund would simply utilise existing funds that go to the rural areas from other sources of public expenditure. This year the total sum spent in the rural areas of Scotland on agriculture, fishing, forestry and related matters will be £316 million. That indicates a very high level of investment to ensure the viability of the rural areas, to which the Government attach very great importance.

Mr. Ron Brown: Does the Secretary of State accept that a rural fund may be necessary for the Lothian region—which is largely a rural area — bearing in mind the

decision rushed through by his Tory councillor colleagues who insisted that the Edinburgh relief road should be built and that its cancellation would cost a tremendous amount in compensation from the public purse to contractors? Will he think about that deeply and, indeed, agree — surely he must — that his collegues who were responsible for the decisions to build it should be surcharged were for their reckless behaviour, knowing full well that what they did immediately before a local election would be overturned afterwards, and rightly so?

Mr. Rifkind: I am not certain under which aspect of a rural fund the road would be considered eligible, but it was the hon. Gentleman's party colleagues on Lothian regional council who decided to destroy the prospect of a substantial number of jobs in Lothian region by cancelling that project.

Mr. Pollock: Will my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that the existing levels of aid to the rural areas are already substantial, even without a rural development fund? He mentioned the figure of £330 million or thereabouts. Will he confirm that on average that works out at a sum from central Government of about £15,000 a year assistance to every full-time partner in a Scottish farming enterprise?

Mr. Rifkind: My hon. Friend is absolutely correct to say that under the existing proposals there are many ways in which the rural areas of Scotland benefit substantially. More than 25 per cent. of the SDA's funds go to the rural areas of Scotland, as do similar resources from other organisations. The figures that I mentioned do not take into account rate support grant or other provisions relating to the local authorities.

Mr. Home Robertson: It seems that the 12 Tory Members from the rural south and east of Scotland cannot get even a bag of sweeties out of the Government. Is the Secretary of State aware that the Labour party accepts the need for new initiatives to deal with the special problems of rural communities throughout Scotland, and that it intends to take action to divert resources from the discredited common agricultural policy to achieve an effective programme of support for all of Scotland's rural areas?

Mr. Rifkind: That is a proud statement. We must presumably add it to the many billions of pounds of additional expenditure to which the Labour party is happily committing itself in every area of public concern. It is easy for an Opposition who know that they will never be in government to make such promises.

Mr. Kirkwood: Does the Secretary of State accept that there are legitimate legal constraints on what the SDA can do? I support what was said by the hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro), because the Borders and Dumfries areas are having trouble providing the infrastructure necessary in the form of roads to exploit their forestry. If the SDA had some money it could do that, but it has no access to European funds.

Mr. Rifkind: As for the provision of roads relating to forestry requirements, I remind the hon. Gentleman that when Borders regional council or other local authorities seek capital allocations for road works, they could draw to the attention of the Scottish Development Department the needs of their local forestry industry. That would be a relevant factor to draw to the attention of the Scottish Office, and it could be taken into account when capital allocations were determined.

Housing Improvement Grants

4. **Mr. Fletcher** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he is satisfied with the progress being made to eliminate the backlog of housing improvement grants built up since October 1983; and when he expects this to be completed.

Mr. Ancram: I am not satisfied and I am particularly concerned that, in Edinburgh, unless the council changes its priorities, it may take several years to clear the backlog.

Mr. Fletcher: Is my hon. Friend aware that the delay in eliminating this backlog is causing great distress and disappointment to many of my constituents, who have waited years to discover when their grants will be awarded and when the work will be completed? They are fed up with hearing the district council blaming the Government for that state of affairs. When will all the outstanding grants be settled, assuming that my hon. Friend can persuade the district council to give the matter top priority?

Mr. Ancram: I share my hon. Friend's anxiety. When I met representatives of Edinburgh district council on 9 June, it was a matter of some disappointment to me that when I asked it to state its priorities within the non-HRA block it could not do that. It seemed to be confused about those priorities. That will have an effect on the length of time needed to settle the backlog. The Government have recognised the size of the problem. This year we have increased the non-HRA block by 26 per cent. over the March 1985 figures. We shall examine closely the representations made to us when considering future allocations.

Mrs. McCurley: Has my hon. Friend any plans for reintroducing the level of housing improvement grant which existed before the cut-off period, which gave much encouragement to home improvement and especially encouraged the construction industry and employment in Scotland?

Mr. Ancram: We welcome the amount of work that was done as a result of the Government's two-year programme in which those boosted grants were available. The results are clearly evident in some of the most deprived areas of Scotland, and they must be welcomed. But the Government recognise that under the previous scheme there was a failure of targeting. The money was not necessarily going to those who most needed it. That is why we issued a consultation paper, and we are considering the representations made to us as a result.

Mr. Maxton: Is the Minister aware that the thousands of people in Glasgow who are waiting for housing improvement grants will be astonished to hear that he is blaming local authorities for failing to provide them? The Government's failure to provide sufficient funds to remove the backlog is the problem. Is he further aware that there is widespread opposition to his consultative paper? Will he make it clear, as his colleagues in the Department of the Environment have made it clear, that he has no intention of introducing such a silly scheme?

Mr. Ancram: We shall respond to the results of the consultations in due course, and I shall not pre-empt the

statements that we shall make on it. In the current year, Glasgow, which has 11 per cent. of the private housing stock in Scotland, receives 33·5 per cent. of the total non-HRA block. I do not understand how the hon. Gentleman can claim that Glasgow is underfunded. I remind the hon. Gentleman, who makes so much of this, that during the lifetime of the Labour Government only £55 million was provided for repair grants, as against £550 million by this Government — 10 times as much. We can see the benefits that have been enjoyed under this Government.

Manufacturing and Service Jobs

5. **Mr. Bill Walker** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will provide details of the number of manufacturing jobs in Scotland which are directly involved in Government projects; and if he will also give details of any service jobs which are directly involved in Government projects.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Government support for industrial projects in Scotland takes many forms. Information on employment associated with Government contracts is not available but, for example, offers of new regional development grant in the year to end May were associated with 16,980 manufacturing jobs and 2,440 service jobs in Scotland.

Mr. Walker: I thank my hon. Friend for that reply. Does he agree that many thousands of jobs in Scotland depend on defence programmes such as Trident and Polaris at Coulparts — for instance, at Babcock Power, Ferranti, Rolls-Royce and British Aerospace, all of which depend on continuing Government orders, and that that is what we must protect?

Mr. Stewart: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. As my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement pointed out in the defence debate, 1·2 million jobs depend directly or indirectly on defence work. In Scotland we have a record of real success. My hon. Friend has mentioned a number of the companies involved. We have strength in electronics, shipbuilding, explosives and similar industries which are heavily dependent on defence work and highly successful in obtaining it.

Mr. Buchan: Does the Minister accept that 250,000 full-time jobs in Scotland have been lost since the Government came to power and that just over 30 per cent. of manufacturing jobs have been lost in that time? Did he read the report of the Scottish economic summit yesterday which said that Scotland urgently needs major public investment? Will he assure the House now that he and the Secretary of State will meet members of the Scottish economic summit to discuss its proposals?

Mr. Stewart: Manufacturing output is up by 10 per cent. on 1983.—[HON. MEMBERS:] "What about jobs?"— The total number of jobs in Scotland is not falling, but rising, and is up 50,000 on mid-1983.

Mr. Craigen: The Minister says that information is not available, but surely he has details of the amount of Government procurement, whether in the manufacturing or the service sectors. Does he think that Scotland is getting a fair proportion of Government purchasing power in the United Kingdom?

Mr. Stewart: Yes. Detailed information is not available in the form requested by my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) but he referred to a number of companies which have been highly successful in obtaining defence work, which is a very important area for the Scottish economy as a whole.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Does my hon. Friend recall the article on employment in manufacturing industry by the hon. Member for Paisley, South (Mr. Buchan) in the *Glasgow Herald* in 1978 predicting that more than 3 million people would be unemployed under any Government and said that to blame this on any Government would not get us far because it was entirely due to the increasing number of people coming on to the labour market? Does my hon. Friend agree that the Government have done remarkably well in creating extra jobs in manufacturing and in service industries to mitigate the disaster predicted by hon. Gentleman?

Mr. Stewart: I assure my hon. Friend that the passage that he cited also has pride of place in my library.

Mr. Ewing: As always, the Minister is highly selective in the statistics that he gives. He referred to 50,000 extra manufacturing jobs since 1983. Why does he not tell the House how many jobs have been lost since 1979 and confess that fewer people are working in manufacturing industry in Scotland now than when the Tory Government came to power in 1979? Is the Minister proud of the fact that 100 of the 16,000 jobs that the Government claim to have created are in the manufacture of Skoal Bandits, which will be responsible for killing people rather than creating jobs? When the Secretary of State is involved in his favourite pastime of totting up the cost of the next Labour Government's programme, will the Minister bear in mind that part of that cost will be getting people back to work, because the next Labour Government will invest in public expenditure to get hundreds of thousands of people back to work and to create good services?

Mr. Stewart: The hon. Gentleman's reference to Skoal Bandits was irresponsible. As he knows, the Government have supported the Bill that was introduced by the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) on that subject. More generally, it is astonishing to hear from the hon. Gentleman these forecasts of what would happen under a Labour Government, because he was a member of a Labour Government under whom 10,000 manufacturing jobs on average were lost every month.

Sir Hector Monro: Will the Government take credit for the excellent road building programme in Scotland, both in the interests of jobs and of the environment? Is he aware that the people of Dumfries and Galloway are very pleased with the proposed start of the Annan to Gretna bypass in the autumn, and with the further improvements this year, and that they look forward with interest to the start of the Dumfries bypass as soon as possible?

Mr. Stewart: I am grateful for the comments of my hon. Friend. As the House knows, he has been assiduous in ensuring that the road needs of his constituents are fully considered by the Scottish Office.

Mr. Kennedy: Given the historic difficulties of siting manufacturing industry capacity in the Highlands, when does the Minister think that his economic policies will be sufficiently successful to replace, either in a direct manufacturing capacity or in a subsequent service capacity, the horrendous loss of jobs in the Highlands through the closure of the pulp mill in the constituency of

my hon. Friend the Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston), and through the closure of the smelter at Invergordon in my constituency?

Mr. Stewart: The hon. Gentleman will know of the very substantial support that is given to the Highlands and Islands Development Board. As I have emphasised, the total number of jobs in Scotland has been rising and the prospects now for the Highlands, as for the rest of the country, are for the best combination of growth and reflation for a generation.

Mr. Henderson: Does my hon. Friend recall that on several visits to north-east Fife recently, and perhaps particularly on his visit to Auchtermuchty, he met manufacturers who had made a substantial contribution to the increase in employment in Scotland through being very effective, despite having no regional development assistance? In addition to those successful manufactures, which include hosiery, ties and things like that, will my hon. Friend bear in mind that the greatest amount of employment in a constituency such as mine is in the service industries, and that the largest single employer is the Ministry of Defence?

Mr. Stewart: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I recall with pleasure my visit to Auchtermuchty and to his constituency where there is, as he pointed out, a large number of relatively small firms which are showing enterprise by creating wealth and new jobs. My hon. Friend is also right to point to the importance of service industries. Almost two Scots in three are now employed in service industries. That pattern is common to the whole industrialised world.

Electricity Generation

6. **Mr. Douglas** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the proportion of electricity which it is expected will be generated from coal-fired power stations in Scotland in the years 1986 to 1990.

Mr. Rifkind: I am advised by the South of Scotland Electricity Board that, following negotiations, an agreement has now been concluded with the National Coal Board for coal supplies in 1986-87 and that the approach adopted in these negotiations should allow a stable coal requirement in Scotland through to the mid-1990s.

Mr. Douglas: I have heard many replies from the Secretary of State, but will he concede that that reply was an exercise in obfuscation? The question asked what proportion of electricity supplies would be related to coal burn. Will he reply to that question? Is it not true that he is disclosing a reduction in coal burn and a threat to mining jobs throughout the whole community and particularly in my constituency? Will he concede that the Coal Board is being forced to bring down prices because of oil prices? Will he meet both boards, through the Secretary of State for Energy, to get a rational view of coal burn in the next few years, with particular regard to refurbishing existing stations such as Kincardine?

Mr. Rifkind: I understand that both British Coal and the SSEB are content with the agreement that has been reached. The hon. Gentleman must be aware that the at the SSEB has a statutory responsibility to try to ensure that electricity tariffs for its consumers are as cheap as possible. Given the substantial fall in oil prices, both the CEGB in England and Wales and the SSEB have had successful negotiations, which will lead to a continuing substantial use of coal and ensure that coal tariffs – not just for domestic consumers but for Scottish industry – will be at a level compatible with their needs.

If the hon. Gentleman wants electricity boards to use more coal than they need, he is doing a disservice to Scottish industry, which must bear greater energy costs than is the case elsewhere in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Will my right hon. and learned Friend take every opportunity to remind the elderly and those on supplementary benefit in Scotland that, if the Opposition had their way on energy policy, they would get rid of nuclear power and substitute more expensive coal generation? As a result, heating costs would go up by 30 per cent. Does that not show the sheer hypocrisy of their campaign last year when they said that they were concerned about heating costs?

Mr. Rifkind: My hon. Friend says no more than the truth. The Opposition must come to terms with the fact that, if they wish to discontinue the use of civil nuclear power in Scotland, they are saying to their constituents and to Scottish industry that electricity costs will go up by between 25 and 30 per cent. *[Interruption.]* No. My hon. Friend said that the figure was 30 per cent. I am saying that it is between 25 and 30 per cent. If the hon. Gentleman cannot hear properly, that is his problem, not mine.

Mr. Strang: Will the Secretary of State take this opportunity categorically to deny the report in today's *Daily Record* that the Government and the Coal Board are contemplating the closure of Monkton Hall and a major cutback in Bilston Glen collieries? Does the Secretary of State recognise that anything remotely like that would be an act of industrial sabotage against Scotland and would be a criminal attack on employment prospects in Lothian? Will the Secretary of State give a clear assurance that, as long as he is Secretary of State, both those major collieries outside Edinburgh will continue to contribute to our economy and to employment in Lothian?

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well that I am not responsible for the coal industry. I shall give no such assurance, because it does not come within my area of responsibility. I understand that British Coal has had discussions with the mining unions and has considered areas of concern affecting the coal industry. I understand that no decisions have yet been reached. As a consequence, we must await developments.

Mr. Bill Walker: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that it would be irresponsible, in the nation's interests, not to have a balanced programme on energy, involving hydro-power, oil and coal, as well as nuclear? It is by that balance that the nation is best served. Anyone who suggests that any single area should have priority over others, because of short-term advantages to that area, is not taking the nation's best needs into long-term consideration.

Mr. Rifkind: My hon. Friend is correct. I suggest to hon. Gentlemen that they read the excellent speech by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy, in which he pointed out that failure to use the opportunities offered by civil nuclear power would be disastrous, not only to the United Kingdom and Europe, but to Third world countries, in the years to come.

Mr. Wilson: Is the Secretary of State aware that the export level of electricity to England from Scotland is one third of what it was during the miners' strike last year? In view of the huge over-capacity that exists, and which will be magnified on the commissioning of Torness, what does he intend to do? Will action taken be at the expense of the coal industry, as has been suggested?

Mr. Rifkind: The SSEB has a continuing interest in a healthy coal industry in Scotland. Indeed, it expects to see itself using a substantial amount of coal in the years to come. Clearly its primary responsibility, under statute determined by the Parliament, is to meet the needs of its consumers. It is encouraging that the SSEB sees coal as playing an important part of helping it to meet its obligations.

Mr. Dewar: The right hon. and learned Gentleman may not be responsible for the coal industry, but he does have an interest in employment in Scotland. He must be more forthcoming. Is it true, as has been reported to me, that, under the agreement, the SSEB coal burn will be 3·6 million tonnes per annum? If so, does that not represent a considerable drop in current levels, which are around 5 million tonnes per annum? Would not a decrease of 1·4 million tonnes per annum have a significant impact on employment in the coal industry? Does that not underline the fears about pits such as Monkton Hall and Bilston Glen, which have always been seen as having a secure future? Can the right hon. and learned Gentleman say what estimate his Department has made of the impact of such a cut? If he cannot give those figures today, will he find out what they are and report back to the House at the first possible opportunity?

Mr. Rifkind: I have not yet seen the detailed figures arising from an agreement between the SSEB and British Coal because that agreement has only been concluded in the recent past. The SSEB has made it abundantly clear that it wishes to continue using significant and substantial amounts of coal. It is likely that its demand for coal will be less than it was, because of this agreement. That would follow the pattern of agreements reached elsewhere in the United Kingdom with the Central Electricity Generating Board. The hon. Gentleman must appreciate that it is the board's duty to meet the interests of the Scottish public and Scottish industry. If it had failed to meet that duty, I believe that the hon. Gentleman would have been the first to complain on behalf of Scottish consumers.

Mr. Douglas: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. In view of the inadequacy of the reply, I give notice that I shall seek to raise the matter on the Adjournment at the earliest opportunity.

Fisheries (Net Mesh Sizes)

7. **Mr. Kirkwood** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he plans to meet the Scottish Fisherman's Federation to discuss the impact of European Economic Community proposals to increase net mesh sizes on the Scottish east coast fishery.

Mr. John MacKay: My right hon. and noble Friend the Minister of State met a delegation from the federation to discuss this matter on 6 May.

Mr. Kirkwood: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman and his right hon. and noble Friend would have been made aware at that meeting of the vital importance of the retention of the 80 mm net regime to the continuation of inshore fisheries out of ports such as Eyemouth in my constituency. If a 90 mm net is introduced, it will effectively eliminate the whiting fishery for inshore ports such as Eyemouth. I offer the hon. Gentleman an invitation. I shall give him a Bank of Scotland new pound note for every whiting he can catch with a 90 mm net off the coast of Eyemouth.

Mr. MacKay: I know the problem that exists. Recently, when I visited the constituency of my right hon. and learned Friend the Solicitor-General, I met fishermen at Arbroath who explained the problem. There is a difficult balance between conservation and the number of whiting that the fleet can catch and the number of under-sized fish that are discarded. We are continuing to discuss these matters at Brussels. We must try to strike a sensible balance in the industry's long-term interests.

Sir Hector Monro: Does my hon. Friend agree that the best way to help the east coast fishery would be to agree with the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to phase out the north-east of England drift nets, which have such a damaging effect on salmon and sea trout stocks coming to Scotland?

Mr. MacKay: I have heard what my hon. Friend has said about this matter, but I do not think that it comes within the scope of the argument on 80 mm and 90 mm nets.

Mr. Donald Stewart: As the EEC has been able to agree a derogation to 80 mm for whiting in the Kattegat and Skagerrak, why is the Scottish Office not able to do something along the same lines to protect the Scottish whiting industry?

Mr. MacKay: I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman will recall that we recently had considerable difficulties in Europe with the pout fishery in regard to the by-catch and discard of undersized white fish. This is a much more difficult question than the right hon. Gentleman seems to appreciate. We are considering with the European Commission officials whether it is possible to derogate for whiting only. I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman realises that that is not easy, because unfortunately the fish do not realise that they must swim only into certain types of nets.

Scottish Development Agency

8. **Mr. Pollock** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will increase the resources available to the Scottish Development Agency to tackle environmental needs, including land renewal projects.

Mr. Allan Stewart: In the agency's estimates for the present financial year, which are subject to parliamentary approval, the amount allocated to environmental improvement and land renewal is £38·6 million. This is £4·2 million greater than the corresponding provision made last year.

Mr. Pollock: I thank my hon. Friend for that reply. I urge him to press the Scottish Development Agency to recognise the full value of land renewal projects, such as the Kingston village project in my constituency, and to encourage the SDA to work as closely as possible with other national agencies such as the Forestry Commission

and the Countryside Commission to co-operate on joint projects that can enhance the locality for the benefit of residents and visitors alike.

Mr. Stewart: I appreciate the point made by my hon. Friend, who has corresponded with me about the project in his constituency. I know that the SDA is always anxious to work in co-operation with other agencies, but I will ensure that it takes of board the point made by by hon. Friend.

Mr. McKelvey: Will the Minister reflect on the response that he gave to me last week on a question about the SDA? Having seen the table detailing the way in which the SDA spends its money throughout Scotland, will he give serious consideration to the fact that there are massive disparities and that the SDA is feeding its pet projects year after year, to the detriment of other areas such as Kilmarnock? Therefore, will he initiate anánquiry at the highest possible level into how the SDA budgets are managed?

Mr. Stewart: The SDA must take account of the economic returns on projects which are put to it. I can tell the hon. Gentleman that the SDA has responded to public concern over the priority given to environmental schemes and in future it will assess such schemes in accordance with environmental priorities as well as the economic impact of particular projects.

Mr. Hirst: Does my hon. Friend agree that the Scottish Development Agency has done outstanding work over the past few years on land renewal projects? Is he aware of the letter which the chairman of the Scottish Development Agency recently sent to COSLA confirming that the support of the agency for the Glasgow garden festival in no way compromised the ability of the agency to continue to fund and support land renewal projects?

Mr. Stewart: I am aware of that letter. In the current year, which is the peak for expenditure on the garden festival, it will account for only about one third of the agency's total land renewal budget. It is also worth emphasising that the garden festival is important not only to Glasgow but to the whole of Scotland.

Sir Russell Johnston: Can the Minister confirm that he will give his fullest support to the approach to the Treasury which will be necessary to enable the SDA to spend money on the Aonach Mor ski development on Ben Nevis, which combines environmental protection with extremely exciting and necessary economic potential for Lochaber?

Mr. Stewart: That project is under consideration in general terms in my Department, but the Highland and Islands Development Board, which is also involved, and the Scottish Development Agency have not yet put forward a detailed submission seeking the formal approval of Ministers. Of course we shall consider that as soon as it is submitted.

Mr. Ewing: Will the Minister accept that the Opposition are grateful to him and his colleagues for the support given to the SDA against the background of their having voted against its establishment by the Labour Government? May I have an assurance from the Minister that the increase in the land renewal budget of the SDA will not come from another part of the agency's programme?

Mr. Stewart: The Scottish Development Agency is a wholly different institution in the way that it operates under this Government compared to the way it operated under the Labour Government, in a number of important respects. I must emphasise that there has been a steady increase in both real and cash terms in the resources available to the Scottish Development Agency, and this year it will have over £136 million to spend on all its programmes.

Legal Aid

9. **Mr. Fairbairn** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many appeals against refusal of legal aid were successful in the last three years for which figures are available.

Mr. Rifkind: No appeal may be made against the refusal of legal aid in criminal cases. In civil cases, 135 appeals were successful in 1981-82, 237 in 1982-83 and 224 in 1983-84.

Mr. Fairbairn: I thank and congratulate my right hon. and learned Friend and the Government on the sensitive response that they made to the criticism from both sides of the House on the scheme proposed under the Legal Aid (Scotland) Bill. May I say that the reforms announced improve not only on the Bill but on the present situation? If my right hon. and learned Friend deals with the same matters, which are still in contention, on Report he will earn the lasting gratitude of the people of Scotland, who are either accused by the state or find themselves in conflict with other citizens, including the state.

Mr. Rifkind: I have found my hon. and learned Friend to be appealing for many years, and I am happy that on this occasion his appeals have borne fruit. I accept that there was some convincing and persuasive argument that the system should be introduced at present. Of course, in due course the Government will bring forward detailed proposals that meet that requirement.

Mentally Handicapped People

11. **Mr. Canavan** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he is satisfied with the standards of care for mentally handicapped people in hospitals and in the community.

Mr. John MacKay: The Government have made it clear to health boards, which have the primary responsibility for services for the mentally handicapped, that those services should be given greater priority. There have recently been significant improvements, but much still remains to be done, and we are monitoring developments.

Mr. Canavan: Does the Minister agree that the vast majority of staff at hospitals such as the Royal Scottish National hospital in my constituency are very dedicated to their patients, but the main problem is that there are not enough staff? In view of the problems arising from staff shortages, as highlighted in the recent television coverage and also in the Mental Welfare Commission for Scotland report, will the Minister give a commitment that he will give enough resources to the Forth Valley health board area to employ the 600 extra nurses required to bring the RSNH up to the Telford standard, and also the £12 million necessary to implement the health board's long-term strategy of moving towards maximum community care, while at the same time improving hospital provision for patients who, unfortunately, will require hospital care probably for the rest of their lives?

Mr. McKay: I am happy to associate myself with the first part of the hon. Gentleman's remarks about the dedicated work of the staff who work in hospitals such as the RSNH. Over the past four years we have managed to increase the number of nursing staff in that hospital by about 200. At the same time, we have managed to reduce the number of patients, so we are making progress. On 10 June officials in my Department met the board and discussed the future plans for the hospital, which, as I am sure the hon. Gentleman knows, involve scaling down the size of the hospital so that it becomes a much more manageable institution, and, I believe, a better one.

SOLICITOR-GENERAL FOR SCOTLAND

Legal Services (Costs)

34. **Mr. Fairbairn** To ask the Solicitor-General for Scotland if he will estimate the cost of time, travel and inconvenience occasioned by the separation of the Crown Office from Parliament House and the separation of the procurator fiscal's offices from the sheriff courts.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland (Mr. Peter Fraser): It is not practicable to attempt to estimate generally the costs involved. However, with regard to the Crown Office, savings would be likely to be made if it were situated closer to or connected with Parliament House, and it would certainly be more convenient.

Mr. Fairbairn: Does my hon. and learned Friend appreciate that those of us who understand the workings of the courts find the separation of those who have to work in the courts, whether it is in the fiscal's office or the Crown Office, to be inconvenient and expensive, and an unnecessary burden on public expenditure? Will the Government do all that they can to redeem that unnecessary cost so that the service can be provided more frugally, sensibly and efficiently?

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: I shall attempt to give an undertaking. As I said in my orginal answer, it is our desire to get the Crown Office located where it will be possible for Crown Office staff to have more access to the High Court. As my hon. and learned Friend rightly says, there is the other side of the question. It would be much more convenient for those on the defence side who want to make contact with the Crown. I hope that as a consequence of that there might be greater agreement before we go into court in future.

Mr. Wallace: I know that many people who are involved in the legal system in Scotland will be pleased to hear the Solicitor-General showing some flexibility and saying that the Crown Office might be closer to the courts once again. Does he not agree that there could be a double benefit? If the Crown Office were to move out of the old Royal High, it could once again be used for the purpose for which it was primarily intended — a Scottish parliament?

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: One of our proposals would be to relocate the Crown Office in Chambers street. That would be useful for the first purpose that the hon. Gentleman mentioned. With regard to the second part of his question, I am surprised that, after Monday, he thinks that it is an appropriate building. Given the attendance of Opposition Members, clearly it is far too large.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Does my hon. and learned Friend agree that after the performance on Monday, when there were bits falling off the ceiling, the time has come to dispose of that building and to return it to the use for which it was intended, as a school?

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: I do not know whether it would be appropriate to use the building as a school, but I shall rely on the ingenuity of my hon. Friend to produce a scheme that will be of benefit to the public purse.

Mr. Ron Brown: Despite our present problems, lawyers do very well out of the system. They get rich, fat fees do they not? Is not the real difficulty that it is the general public who suffer? I think immediately of the many innocent miners who were unfairly dismissed and who have no chance of receiving justice or even assistance. They want to know whether justice still exists in this country. Will the Solicitor-General intervene to help them?

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: I shall not intervene, as I am not sure how I possibly could. If the miners wish to seek legal remedies they can use industrial tribunals. But if they feel that they should have access to the court, there is, as the hon. Gentleman will appreciate, a very generous system of legal aid, which has been significantly upgraded under this Government.

Mr. Dewar: Will the Solicitor-General note that we strongly feel that using the Royal High school as a meeting place for the Scottish Grand Committee is totally justified? The widespread coverage of, and public interest in, the lively debate on Monday makes that point. This is a matter of considerable interest in Scotland, so will the hon. and learned Gentleman say whether the Government are thinking of disposing of that building on the commercial open market? If so, what is the time scale? If that is a positive plan, we would want to know about it at the first possible opportunity.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: The hon. Gentleman will recall that it was my motion that allowed for the Scottish Grand Committee to move from the House to Edinburgh. He is being far too sensitive about an alternative use for the Royal High school building. As I said in my original answer, there are distinct advantages in moving the Crown Office back to a location that is closer to Parliament House. It will be convenient not only for the prosecution but for the defence. Beyond that, the hon. Gentleman is speculating too wildly on any future use of the building.

Procurator Fiscal, Kilmarnock

35. **Mr. Lambie** asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland if he is now in a position to pay a visit to the procurator fiscal's office in Kilmarnock.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: I intend to visit the procurator fiscal at Kilmarnock over the summer.

Mr. Lambie: Is the Solicitor-General aware that when I drew the Lord Advocate's attention to the case of Mr. Chris Walker, who had been sacked by Irvine development corporation, he suggested that the case was more suitable for consideration by an industrial tribunal. That was in April 1985. Is the Solicitor-General futher aware that in April 1986 an industrial tribunal in Glasgow found that Mr. Walker had been unfairly dismissed? In view of the

serious issues involved in the evidence and submissions to that tribunal, is the procurator fiscal or the Lord Advocate now prepared to look at all the issues involved, including private work, the placing of contracts, and the part played by individuals and companies in the affairs of Irvine development corporation?

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: As the hon. Gentleman will appreciate, my noble and learned Friend the Lord Advocate wrote to him about the matter last year and indicated at that time, ex acie, that the matters appeared to reveal no criminality on the part of any individual. However, if, following the appeal to the industrial tribunal, the hon. Gentleman or anyone else feels that there are matters of criminality that require further investigation, I should be grateful if he would let me know. I will undertake to see that they are looked into.

Mr. Bill Walker: When my hon. and learned Friend visits the procurator fiscal at Kilmarnock, will he advise him of the Crown Office's determination to ensure that the procurator fiscal service is staffed by men and women of the highest calibre, and inform him that the Crown Office is confident of their future integrity?

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that question. I should be glad to pass on that point. However, I should have thought that there was still considerable confidence among hon. Members on both sides of the House in the independence of the procurator fiscal system in Scotland.

Mr. Malcolm Kelly

36. **Mr. Foulkes** asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland what action he has taken regarding representations about possible illegality in proceedings surrounding the dismissal of Malcolm Kelly by the Northern Lighthouse Board; what precautions he took to ensure that final consideration and decommission on the matter was carried out by someone who is not a Commissioner of Northern Lights; and if he will make a statement.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: As my noble and learned Friend the Lord Advocate explained in a recent letter to the hon. Gentleman, Crown counsel have instructed that the police investigate certain allegations. Neither the Lord Advocate nor I will have any involvement in the matter.

Mr. Foulkes: Will the Solicitor-General for Scotland —I note that, appropriately, that he is wearing his tie as a Commissioner of Northern Lights — give a clear assurance that if the police inquiry shows any irregularity or illegality there will be a review set up either by the Lord Advocate or the Secretary of State for Scotland to consider overturning the decision of the industrial tribunal on the sacking of Malcolm Kelly and what compensation might properly be made available to him?

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: As I have already said, Crown counsel have been instructed to carry out an investigation. It remains to be seen what will emerge from the investigation. It is not for me to pre-empt any consideration of it. As a commissioner, I would not have any personal involvement — the same applies to my noble and learned Friend the Lord Advocate—as I am aware that certain of the allegations are against me.

Dogs

37. **Mr. Kirkwood** asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland how many prosecutions were taken against individuals for offences relating to control of dogs for the last five years for which figures are available.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: The total numbers of persons prosecuted for such offences, including the failure to pay dog licences are: 1981, 660; 1982, 701; 1983, 597; 1984, 553; 1985, 484.

I will, with permission, Mr. Speaker, circulate a breakdown of these figures in the *Official Report*.

Mr. Kirkwood: That answer is very helpful. Is the Solicitor-General aware that there is concern that perhaps more could be done to try to control and limit the number of dog control offences that are being committed? Will he give us an assurance that he will consult his colleagues south of the border to ensure that the imminent Government proposal to abolish the dog licence will be considered carefully to ascertain what authority and powers local authorities will have to control dogs in future?

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: It is not for me to consider whether dog licences should be retained or abolished. The hon. Gentleman will appreciate that there is a wide range of offences already in Scotland relating to the regulation of dogs. In the Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982, further provision was made to avoid what can be the unpleasant nuisance that is caused by those who are irresponsible in their ownership of dogs, and not so much by the dogs themselves.

Following are the figures:

Offence	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*
Cruelty to dogs	31	25	38	29	21
Failure to pay dog licence	255	251	203	147	145
Protection of livestock from dogs	136	163	157	130	131
Guard Dogs Act 1975	20	21	17	13	11
Other offences involving dogs	218	241	182	234	176

3.33 pm

Sporting Events (Wagers)

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday you made a ruling on Members' dress. You showed a most enlightened attitude in some respects, although I do not necessarily agree with it. As I am sure you are aware, Mr. Speaker, a most important sporting event is to take place on Wednesday 16 July. It would seem not inappropriate that we should be able to have the odd wager on who might win or lose. I find, Mr. Speaker, that only games of chess can be the subject of the odd wager in the House. Would it not be appropriate, in line with your modern thinking of yesterday, that we should have a bookmaking facility to raise funds for your charity next Wednesday?

Mr. Speaker: That is very ingenious. I believe that there are certain Members who make a speciality of that sort of thing. If the hon. Gentleman will come to see me privately, I shall tell him who they are.

Education and Training

3.34 pm

Mr. Speaker: Mr. Kenneth Clarke.

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Cathcart): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, I understand that a significant statement is about to be made — I have not seen the text — on vocational education and training. May I inquire through you, Mr. Speaker, whether the Minister who is to make the statement will deal with questions about Scotland? I ask this because on the Order Paper there is a written question in the name of the hon. Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde (Mrs. McCurley) — No. 140 — which asks the Secretary of State for Scotland to make

"a statement on vocational education and training in Scotland."

A statement is something of a misnomer, as the response will be a written answer.

If the Paymaster General is not to deal with the Scottish aspects of vocational education and training, Scottish Members will not be able to raise any parallel or Scottish difference points and will not have rights that will be available to Members from other parts of the United Kingdom. I want to be clear on whether Scottish Members can ask questions of that sort and whether something can be done to protect their interests.

Mr. Speaker: I am unable to answer that question because I have not heard the statement yet. But perhaps the Paymaster General will be able to enlighten us in his opening words.

Mr. Gordon Wilson (Dundee, East): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Is it the same point of order?

Mr. Wilson: It is in connection with this matter.

By arrangement with the House, Members of the Scottish National party receive advance copies of statements on Scottish business. I have checked and apparently we do not have a statement on this. If the statement is to refer to Scottish business, we shall be at a disadvantage.

The Paymaster General and Minister for Employment (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): The position in Scotland will, I trust, become clear in the course of the statement and the subsequent exchange of questions. My responsibility for the Manpower Services Commission extends to Scotland and I am making this statement because it appertains to the work of the MSC. It also has implications for Scotland and I shall be in a position to answer questions on that.

But, with permission, Mr. Speaker, perhaps I should first make the statement, which is about major Government decisions on vocational education and training announced in the White Paper published this afternoon. They are about the national extension of the technical and vocational education initiative and the reform of vocational qualifications.

The technical and vocational education initiative was launched on a pilot basis by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister in November 1982. In chosen schools since then the Government have, through the Manpower Services Commission, made additional funds available to local education authorities to develop new ways of increasing the vocational content of the curriculum and offering pupils of all abilities between the ages of 14 and 18 more work-related learning.

By the end of this year there are likely to be almost 100 education authorities in England, Wales and Scotland taking advantage of the initiative; which will be covering over 600 schools and colleges and helping nearly 50,000 pupils.

As the pilots have developed, so too has appreciation of the way in which TVEI has been able to enrich the curriculum. It has opened up new opportunities for more young people of all abilities to see how school can be made more relevant to adult and working life.

We want to keep up the momentum and to extend the benefit to many more pupils. We have decided that the MSC should be asked to administer the extension of TVEI from a pilot to a national scheme beginning in the autumn of 1987.

The Government are making a substantial financial commitment to this improvement in our schools. We are setting aside sums which build up from £12 million in 1987-88 to £41 million in 1988-89 and to £84 million in 1989-90. The average annual expenditure over the next 10 years or so will be about £90 million. These amounts will be found from the provision we have planned for young people within the MSC's budget.

Each authority's TVEI proposals must be consistent with our overall policy of improving the school curriculum. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science, who is in his place today, is publishing separately today a statement of the curicular criteria which extension proposals must meet.

The extension of the technical and vocational education initiative to a national scheme is a major advance. But reforming and developing the curriculum in schools is not enough. We also need to improve the vocational qualifications system to encourage more people, young and old, to improve their skills when they have left school. For that reason we are also announcing a new system of qualifications for skilled work at all levels in England and Wales.

Last year we set up a working group under the Chairmanship of Mr. Oscar de Ville to review the pattern of vocational qualifications in England and Wales. The group's report was published in May.

The group concluded that the present system was complex and incomplete, and recommended that a new system of qualifications should be set up within a framework to be called the national vocational qualification. It urged that a National Council for Vocational Qualifications should also be established to work with the existing bodies to set up that framework. The Government accept those recommendations.

The council will be set up in the autumn of this year and will be asked to have the new system of qualifications in England and Wales and Northern Ireland in place by 1991. I am glad to say that Mr. de Ville has accepted our invitation to act as chairman of the council during its all-important formative period.

We shall provide pump-priming funding, but the aim will be that after three years the council will become self-sufficient, from income received from bodies whose qualifications it accredits.

The recommendations of the report have been generally welcomed and we believe that they will lead to a much better system of vocational qualifications, which will be

widely understood and respected by individuals and by employers. We hope that they will be encouraged to invest more time and money in training.

It is vitally important that for young people moving from school to adult working life we have a good system of vocational education and training. All young people must be given the opportunity to leave full-time education or training with relevant qualifications and to build on them throughout their working life. The extension of the technical and vocational education initiative and the setting up of the new framework of national vocational qualifications are major advances towards that objective.

Mr. Barry Sheerman (Huddersfield): Regardless of the promises to us about other statements, this statement was made in another place at 3 o'clock. One would have thought that, on the auspicious day of the Paymaster General's birthday, the noble Lord the Secretary of State would have allowed him to go first for a change. If the statement on the extension of technical and vocational education means that technical, academic and practical education will be available to all our students, we broadly welcome it.

From reading the statement, we suspect that the amount of cash will not be enough. Will the Paymaster General tell us how much will be available per school for implementing technical and vocational education and how that compares with the pilot financing? Will he assure us that it is not a case of robbing Peter to pay Paul? Reading between the lines of the statement, it seems that the money for this expansion of the technical and vocational education initiative will come away from the youth training scheme. The YTS is already under-financed and under pressure and the quality of its training is inadequate. If money to fund the TVEI is taken from the YTS, that will lead to a further deterioration in training standards, and we are extremely worried about that.

The Paymaster General spoke about a review of educational and vocational qualifications. Will he think again about the way in which the new council will be set up? Many Opposition Members have great misgivings about the decision of the Government not to take the opportunity to review all qualifications at the same time. There is to be a review of vocational qualifications, but academic qualifications have been left alone.

We are fearful that we will see from the Government an attempt via the back door to introduce a 14-plus or a 16- plus examination to take the place of the 11-plus selection that we all know damaged children's opportunities and perspectives. Will the Paymaster General assure us that he is aware of the dangers of polarisation that arise because of technical education for some children and another more expensive and exclusive type of education for other children.

We have had many statements over the last few years and all of them introduced minor changes, some of which were welcome. Those statements were made against the background of a collapse in our training and technical training. As the National Institute of Economic and Social Research said just last week, there has been a 40 per cent. drop in training since 1982. This statement is small beer compared to the collapse of our training system.

Mr. Clarke: The extent to which statements are first made in one House or in another depends on the procedure of both Houses. This statement was delayed in this House by the vital matter of Scottish questions. I was able to sit on the throne—*[Laughter.]*—on the steps of the throne in another place and there I listened to the noble Lord Stoddart of Swindon welcome the statement. He did so with a considerably lesser show of reluctance than the hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman) has shown, but in the end he welcomed it.

The cash that is being made available for the extension of technical and vocational education is substantial—an average of £90 million a year over a 10-year period. During that period, it will steadily increase as the applications come in and the benefits of the initiative are spread throughout our school system. It will be up to individual local authorities to determine exactly how that money is to be distributed within the schools put forward, but on average it should work out at about £30 extra per school *[Interruption.]*—at about £30,000 extra per school in each authority which applies. That is a significant addition to the budget of each school, enabling it to broaden the curriculum and improve the relevance of its education to pupils.

I was delighted to hear the hon. Gentleman defending the youth training scheme, and I think there is a growing realisation among Opposition Members about its value. I am happy to be able to assure him that these arrangements do not in any way jeopardise the YTS or the financing of it. The money is coming from the provision we have made for young people generally. The exact spending will depend on the number of local authorities that take up the opportunity presented by this initiative, and the number of pupils between 14 and 18 years who choose to remain in school, taking part in this curriculum, compared with the number who leave and engage in YTS. Obviously, the total number of young people will not increase in the 10-year period. Indeed, it will fall markedly. For that reason we can make this generous financial provision to schools for extending the curriculum without jeopardising other provision for young people, particularly YTS.

The review of vocational qualifications has also received a general welcome. I believe that that was the implication of what the hon. Gentleman said. The particular qualifications that we have had reviewed and which we shall now have further reviewed by this new national council are the maze of technical qualifications, which are difficult to understand for parents, would-be trainees and employers looking for qualifications of the right type. The new arrangements will be of benefit to all of them, and will enable a clearer system to emerge and people to know exactly what qualifications of what standard they should aspire to for any particular occupation.

I note what the hon. Gentleman describes as a collapse in training. We know that we have a serious problem and that more resources and effort need to be invested, particularly by employers, into the training and preparation for work, especially of our young people. I do not accept his description, especially when it is applied to the Government's efforts. He knows that as a result of our changes in training arrangements we have virtually doubled the number of adults whom we are assisting in training through Government programmes.

Sir William van Straubenzee (Wokingham): May I ask my right hon. and learned Friend two questions arising from this most welcome statement? First, regarding the new council or otherwise, does the White Paper contain

[Sir William van Straubenzee]

any mechanisms for monitoring the effects of these new initiatives on academic achievements in schools, for example through the number of pupils taking A-level courses, bearing in mind the evidence published yesterday by the Education Select Committee which seemed to establish a linkage between YTS and the fall in the number of those taking A-levels? Is any monitoring envisaged?

Secondly, although I make it perfectly clear that I intend no personal reference, is this statement not one further proof that the time is past when training as a subject, however ably administered at present, should be brought within the ambit of the Department of Education and Science?

Mr. Clarke: On his first point, I can assure my hon. Friend that we shall monitor the position closely. We are carrying out a number of surveys to see what happens to the post-16 age group. We are hoping to produce a system which will allow for a well-informed choice to be made by more pupils. They will decide whether they wish to remain in school and then pursue an academic course in further and higher education, to leave and join YTS, or to take advantage of this sort of curriculum in a school which has taken advantage of this initiative. We shall certainly study the Select Committee's report.

It is difficult to analyse what has happened to the figures, but it is probably in the interests of some pupils, for example, to contemplate the possibility of a YTS scheme rather than staying on in the sixth form to retake one or two O-levels or going through to a full A-level course. We are carefully monitoring what is happening, and the main thing is to ensure that people take well-informed choices in the genuine interests of the individuals seeking to make the transition from school to work.

Obviously I cannot comment on the proposals that my hon. Friend makes about the structure of government, but on the issue that lies behind it, I hope that when he looks at the White Paper he will see it as a considerable breakthrough in narrowing the gap between the world of education and the world of work. It brings together the objectives of good education and good training policy very considerably. The two Departments are working closely together. The beginning of the White Paper contains a statement of the objectives of my Department, and it concludes with a statement of the objectives of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science. Between the pages is a considerable improvement in the system that will bring the two closer together and make the transition from school to work much better.

Mr. Richard Wainwright (Colne Valley): Does the Minister agree that the careers preparation scheme for those between the ages of 14 and 18 has in recent years been confused and frustrating for such people? Therefore, the thrust of his statement is welcome. Can he also assure the House that in the new TVEI—as distinct from a regrettable lack in the pilot TVEIs—there will be ample bridges and ladders for young people who in midstream find themselves on the wrong course so that they can change direction and be assisted to a new level of learning if they prove able to take such courses?

As for the admirable de Ville recommendations, which the Government are so wisely accepting, what precisely will the Government do to enable the 35 per cent. of our adult work force with no qualifications to obtain them, or are they merely erecting new and rather impressive goal posts without assisting people to shoot for goal?

Mr. Clarke: I totally agree with the hon. Gentleman's extremely clear analysis of the problems that people are facing in moving to their careers from the ages of 14 to 18, and I hope that this statement helps to bridge that gap.

I shall certainly draw the hon. Gentleman's remarks to the attention of those responsible for looking at the applications submitted by education authorities. I am sure that the education authorities will seek to build in the necessary ladders to enable people to correct choices that they might make mistakenly during this vital period of their educational lives.

The criteria for the curriculum that we are setting down are today being published by my right hon. Friend, and it is important that these schemes are set up in the right way.

I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for welcoming the new system for national vocational arrangements. It is indeed important that a higher proportion of our population get training and qualifications of good quality before and during their working lives. The Government have already doubled the number of people that they are assisting to obtain that training, but it requires a greater effort on the part of society as a whole and British employers to increase the amount of training in our economy.

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): I welcome the extension of TVEI, which has been a great success in two schools in my constituency. Is my right hon. and learned Friend satisfied that employers will be able to play their part by providing sufficient work experience places for people on these courses?

Mr. Clarke: I am delighted to hear that the pilot schemes have gone so well in Bolton. I believe that employers will readily provide the number of places required to give work experience to pupils. Such places are of enormous benefit to pupils, because they enable them to have an insight into what it will be like when they take up a career while they are still taking advantage of their

Mr. Jim Craigen (Glasgow, Maryhill): The Paymaster General referred to his MSC responsibilities in Scotland. How much of the £90 million coming from the MSC budget is earmarked for Scotland, and how will the new Scottish Vocational Education Council dovetail with the arrangements that are being proposed for England and Wales?

Mr. Clarke: In answer to the hon. Gentleman's first point, Scotland has taken considerable advantage of the pilot schemes. As Strathclyde is such a large authority, it has several pilots within its territory. I believe that it is the only authority which has several pilot schemes. The announcement that I made today on TVEI applies fully to Scotland, which will receive at least its fair share of the available resources if experience is anything to go by.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland has decided that he wishes to make progress with the changes already in hand in Scotland under his 16-plus policy. However, the Scottish Office will have observer status in the national council and will keep in touch with developments on the National Council for Vocational Qualifications which will apply directly to England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Sir Kenneth Lewis (Stamford and Spalding): I welcome the statement which my right hon. and learned Friend has been able to make on his birthday, which will help many young people to become better qualified through their education. However, has he had any discussions with the trade unions to enable them to become more up to date? Has he consulted the trade unions with the aim of encouraging them to provide apprenticeships and so help young people when they leave school and enter a place of work? The trade unions are still old-fashioned in that area and it is time that they came to terms with the 1980s and 1990s.

Mr. Clarke: I was proposing to spend my birthday at Wimbledon at one stage. However, I was absolutely delighted to find myself spending my birthday in the Chamber delivering my statement instead, as it is of great value to the young people involved.

Oscar de Ville's working party contained people from the world of education, employers and trade unionists. It was a remarkable achievement that these bodies reached unanimity. They all agreed on the analysis of the problem and the Government have accepted their proposals. One of the most important facets of the new national council's work is that it will accredit qualifications which are based on measuring the standards of performance and ability of someone who has been trained for that qualification. It will rely to a much lesser extent than was previously the case, on time-served or academic qualification before admission can be obtained. That is an important step as it brings everyone concerned into the 20th century and into line with the modern economy that is likely to exist.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): Will the Paymaster General confirm what some of us thought that he said, that the money that he has announced this afternoon represents £30,000 per school? Can he say when he will be ready to receive applications? Will he give an assurance that those local education authorities such as Bradford which have co-operated in the pilot study, will be given sympathy if applications are submitted for the national scheme, bearing in mind that Bradford has been starved of education resources and is unique amongst local education authorities in facing a considerable increase in school rolls?

Mr. Clarke: I will not say that I was leaving a few noughts off my figures, but the figure that I finally gave of £30,000 per school was the correct figure. That would be an average figure. It does not mean that there will be precisely £30,000 for each school. In each case, the local authority will determine exactly how it distributes the money between its various schools. The new national extension will come into effect from September 1987. Obviously, applications will come in and be considered between now and then.

There are a few local authorities which, for one reason or another, have not felt able to participate in the pilots. We will expect these authorities to have a three-year pilot scheme before that is extended. It is important to build up the initiative in such a way that people build on their experience of TVEI. If, as I believe, Bradford has been participating, it should be well placed to submit an application and to take advantage of the scheme on a much wider scale.

Dr. Keith Hampson (Leeds, North-West): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that his presence here today supports the view of my hon. Friend the Member for Wokingham (Sir W. van Straubenzee) about the fact that this is a Department of Employment statement rather than a DES statement? Does he agree that it is odd that some local education authorities are not participating? If it is so important, and the previous Labour Government started this debate in 1977, to have a more practical thrust in British education, the authorities should be required to ensure that all pupils of that age group take part in TVEI.

Will my right hon. and learned Friend comment on the fact that a long time scale is involved under the national vocational qualification — to 1991 — and there is a pressing need to quicken the process up? It is not a good precedent to consider the Engineering Council and the Finniston report and the amount of time that has been taken to get more direction through that body?

Mr. Clarke: On the first point, the present constitutional position is such that this is essentially a voluntary arrangement. It is up to each local authority to decide whether it wishes to participate and whether it wishes to apply for funds. There has, however, been a rapid increase in the number of authorities taking part in the initiative. I very much hope and believe that the remaining 18 will rapidly take advantage of the opportunity again being presented to them to come into the scheme, acquire additional funds and broaden the curriculum available to their pupils.

On the second point, there is a great deal of work to be done by the national council in beginning to pull together the present mish-mash of qualifications. Although 1991 seems some way away, the council has a formidable undertaking to take on in collaboration with all the certifying bodies and all the examination bodies.

Mr. Hugh Brown (Glasgow, Provan): Will the White Paper proposals be flexible enough to cater for the special needs of schools in socially deprived areas, where the big problem is in getting 16-year-old low achievers to stay on at school to take advantage of TVEI? If the proposals do not specifically include that, will he and his colleagues look sympathetically at such representations as may be made?

Mr. Clarke: Each local authority will obviously look at the particular problems of its schools when putting in an application and deciding how it wishes to distribute the available funds among the various schools. I very much hope that broadening the curriculum in this way will make staying on at school more attractive to many young people, particularly those living in districts of the kind described by the hon. Gentleman who probably have the most advantage to derive from it. An average amount of £30,000 per school per year can make a significant difference in what a school is able to offer.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): May I congratulate my right hon. and learned Friend on widening the scheme? Does he agree that the success of TVEI has been due partly to the value of the course content and thus the pupils' interest in what they are doing and partly to the fact that the scheme has always been well staffed? As the staff required will have to come out of a teacher shortage area, will there be any problems in staffing the widened scheme? Will he also consider giving parity of esteem to pupils involved in A-levels, YTS and

[Mr. Harry Greenway]

TVEI? Does he agree that if one group is advantaged compared with another, pupils may not always make the right choice for their needs?

Mr. Clarke: I note my hon. Friend's comments about the courses being well staffed. The money available will certainly extend to an additional member of staff—not necessarily always a member of the teaching staff, but perhaps a technician—in each of the schools involved, with other expenditure on equipment, and so on. That is what authorities find best. The extent to which this might increase demand for teachers in shortage subjects is outside my responsibility and outside the scope of my statement today, but it is no doubt being addressed, among other things, by all concerned in the discussions about teachers' remuneration and career structures currently taking place under the auspices of ACAS.

With regard to parity of esteem among the various qualifications, I agree with my hon. Friend. It is important that pupils of all abilities have a clear and intelligible choice before them and that they make the right decision for their own case in terms of what suits their temperament and career wishes. The various paths through A-levels, YTS and TVEI, possibly followed by A-levels or some other qualification, are now coming together to present a much better and clearer way forward for the average 14 to 16-year-old contemplating the possibilities available.

Mr. Derek Fatchett (Leeds, Central): Does the Minister agree that to get the best value at 14 additional resources are needed for education before the age of 14 and that to differentiate between today's training statement and a possible education statement is dangerous and false in that respect? Is he aware that the recent report by Her Majesty's inspectors shows that the scarcity of resources for books and school buildings is having a damaging effect on education at all ages? Does he accept that until we put education right at an earlier age we shall not obtain the value of the money announced today to do the things that the right hon. and learned Gentleman has mentioned?

Mr. Clarke: On this occasion, we are talking about new resources for local education authorities in a particular part of their education system. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science will clearly not diminish his interest in problems in the rest of the education system, including the need for more expenditure on books and repairs. I believe that recent reports on the education system show that more money alone is not necessarily the answer. The Audit Commission, Her Majesty's inspectors and others have suggested that improved management of resources also has a part to play.

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): I welcome today's statement, but has my right hon. and learned Friend considered taking the process further by discussing with our right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science the setting up of technical and vocational schools on continental lines, particularly on the lines of the West German hauptschule which I suppose might be loosely translated as "secondary modern"? Do I take it that we are now rejecting the Socialist concept that there is something inferior about technical training and that all children should be force fed with academic training with the result that large numbers of children leave school without any qualifications at all and totally alienated from the education system?

Mr. Clarke: Like my hon. Friend, I hope that we are rejecting any distinction in status between academic and technical education. The boundary is often artificial and impossible to draw. All these qualifications should be available to pupils of all abilities so that they may choose one route or another. Questions on the structure of our schools should continue to be addressed to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science.

Mr. Wilson: As the Paymaster General purported to speak as a United Kingdom Minister, why did his statement not explain the impact of the new scheme on Scotland? In view of the disgraceful lack of information provided in response to the question put to him by the hon. Member for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mr. Craigen), will the Paymaster General now tell the House how the scheme will affect Scotland as we have had no information so far?

Mr. Clarke: I made the statement because of my responsibilities for the Manpower Services Commission, which operates in England, Wales and Scotland. I have responsibilities for the MSC in all three countries but not for education in any of those places. I have made it clear that the part of my statement concerned with technical and vocational education applies to Scotland as much as to England and Wales and that we expect full Scottish participation in that initiative. On the review of vocational qualifications, the Scots are pursuing a separate path, having already embarked on their own policy, but they will retain observer status in what we are doing. Both Departments agree that we must have qualifications accepted throughout the United Kingdom. We are keeping closely in line on these matters, but my statement about the new national council does not apply directly to Scotland.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: I will do my best to call those hon. Members who have been seeking to catch my eye.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): I welcome my right hon. and learned Friend's statement, but I am sorry that his Civil Service advisers did not read the whole of my maiden speech, including the part concerning qualifications, in which I suggested that the City and Guilds might be expanded. Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that that institution, of well over 100 years' standing, enjoys international as well as national repute, that it has all the qualifications modules on base and that employers accept City and Guilds qualifications beyond all others? I hope that it will not be stifled.

Mr. Clarke: A large number of bodies give qualifications of one kind or another, but the field is dominated by a few. Bodies such as the City and Guilds, the Royal Society of Arts and the Business and Technician Education Council all provide very well known and well recognised qualifications and they will continue to do so. The new national council will not supplant them in any way by giving qualifications of its own but will set up a framework into which all the qualifications from the various certifying bodies can be fitted so that they can be accredited by the council and people can understand exactly how one relates to another. People seeking qualifications and employers seeking qualified people will

then have a better understanding of the relationship between one qualification and another. The City and Guilds will continue its very distinguished work, but its qualifications will now fit into a far more intelligible framework governing the qualifications of all the certifying bodies.

Mr. Alan Howarth (Stratford-on-Avon): I welcome the statement made by my right hon. and learned Friend. Does he agree that the important progress that the Government have made in the provision of opportunities for technical and vocational education needs to be complemented by a vigorous continuation of the programme of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education to make the content of education more appropriate for less academic children from the primary stage? Does not my right hon. and learned Friend agree that we have to devote too many resources of time and money to remedial education in basic numeracy and literacy in the 14 to 18-year-old age group?

Mr. Clarke: I believe that this policy fits in with the Government's whole policy of examining the content of education in schools to ensure its relevance and to maintain good quality academic standards. Certainly I am told repeatedly that in many YTS schemes a great deal of time has to be spent in the first place on essentially remedial education to make up for deficiencies in the basic skills that my hon. Friend has described.

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge): In the event that a local education authority asks for this money and is granted it, can my right hon. and learned Friend assure the House that it will be possible to ensure that that money is used on that project and not generally? For instance, would my right hon. and learned Friend be content to give that money to the alliance-controlled Devon county council which, while constantly criticising the Government for lack of funding for training and educational matters, has just approved £25,000 expenditure on a car for the chairman?

Mr. Clarke: Education authorities can make application to the Manpower Services Commission for the appropriate sum of money. That money will be granted once a deal has been struck between the MSC and the education authority on what the money is to be spent on and what changes are to be made in the curriculum and content of the school's programme. One reason why some local education authorities are not participating at the moment is that they put in applications that were rejected because they would not bring themselves into line with the objectives of the technical and vocational education initiative. That is how we shall ensure that the money being allocated to TVEI goes on worthwhile TVEI objectives. Other than that, I do not want to get drawn into what I hope will be fruitful negotiation between the MSC and Devon county council if it chooses to apply.

Mr. Roger Gale (Thanet, North): In congratulating my right hon. and learned Friend on his most welcome statement, may I suggest that the success of the National Council for Vocational Qualifications is likely to rest largely on the calibre of the people invited to serve on it? Can he shed any further light on the criteria that will be used to select people to serve on that body? Can he assure the House that the qualifications that are approved by that body will bear a relationship to the actual rather than the theoretical needs of industry in general and of the service industries in particular?

Mr. Clarke: As I have announced, during the early formative stages of the council the chairman will be Mr. Oscar de Ville. I am not in a position to announce the full membership. Our objective will be to have people with practical experience of the world of work and of education, who will represent a broad range of interests and experience required to make the system relevant both for trainees and for the needs of industry and the world of work outside. I accept my hon. Friend's introduction, that the success of the council will depend to a large degree on the quality of the people who are appointed and who agree to serve on the council.

Mr. Nicholas Lyell (Mid-Bedfordshire): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that the pilot schemes under TVEI in Bedfordshire have been enormously successful, both in the full schools and in the linked schools? Is he aware that almost every upper school will be looking hungrily at the £30,000 that might be available to it? How much, overall, can Bedfordshire expect to get in money terms out of the £90 million?

Mr. Clarke: I am delighted to hear again that the pilot has been so successful in Bedforshire. I am sure that I shall find somewhere an example of a pilot that has not gone down so well, but I have not yet. The reaction of everyone concerned over the country has been pretty well as my hon. and learned Friend has described. Therefore, I suspect that there will be no lack of applications. I regret that off the cuff I cannot put a figure on the likely sum that might go to his county, but if anyone can make an estimate I shall put it in a letter to my hon. and learned Friend.

Mr. Malcolm Thornton (Crosby): May I assure my right hon. and learned Friend that Crosby and other parts of Merseyside where skill shortages and a general lack of vocational training have been identified as problems, his statement will be greatly welcomed? Can he assure us that in the reform and development of the curriculum there will be adequate monitoring of the input that will be essential from employers and industry if the scheme is to succeed? As my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale) has already said, it is important to ensure that people of the right calibre are on the council and that they have an input into the reform of the curriculum. That has long been identified as one of the deficiencies in developing vocational training in schools. Can my right hon. and learned Friend assure us that there will be adequate monitoring of that factor?

Mr. Clarke: There will indeed be monitoring of the technical and vocational education initiative as it goes forward. Changes in the curriculum will be determined by agreement between the Manpower Services Commission and the individual local authority. My hon. Friend will be able to see in a written answer by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science the kind of criteria that we shall expect local authorities to fulfil when they make applications for funds under the initiative. I believe that one of the advantages of the change will be to bring industry and local employers into close contact with the schools, because it is in everybody's interests that schools turn out people who are prepared to meet the needs of local industry to help revive the economy in such a depressed area as Merseyside.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels (Leicester, East): I welcome my right hon. and learned Friend's statement and his continuing commitment in supporting technical and vocational training in schools. Does he not agree that one of the major problems is that careers guidance in schools has failed dismally and that the Government have to pick up the tab and give genuine advice? Does he not also agree that the successes of the YTS — *[Interruption]* — particularly in Leicester where 80 per cent. of those on the scheme now have genuine jobs, shows that the Government are totally committed to giving a real opportunity to the young, something that the Labour party always seems to be negative about. This Government provides real help, genuine qualifications and an opportunity for young people.

Mr. Clarke: It is my impression that the quality of careers guidance available varies considerably from place to place. The criteria we are laying down for TVEI put emphasis on the need for good careers guidance within the schools that participate. I agree about its importance. I am grateful for what my hon. Friend said about the efforts that we are making to help young people. Of course, we still have a desperately difficult unemployment position and we still have far too many unemployed young people. I am glad that the rate of unemployment amongst those under 20 is dropping sharply—by 10 per cent. for that age range. Obviously we have to make sure that that continues. It will continue, partly as a result of the announcement today.

Mr. Sheerman: Can the Secretary of State clear up a mystery that seems to have developed during his answers to his colleagues? The figure of £30,000 per school does not add up to the right amount if he is talking about a national scheme. How soon will this be a truly national scheme covering all schools that want to take part and all pupils? When will he give consideration to the strong point made by the hon. Member for Wokingham (Sir W. van Straubenzee) that, to give real choice and real co-ordination of that choice at 16, we need educational maintenance allowances? His answer was not good enough. The extent of take-up in staying on at school in this country is appalling compared to our competitors.

Mr. Clarke: The purpose of answering questions is to solve mysteries rather than create them. I shall check on the consequences of my arithmetic for a national scheme. The figures that I gave in the body of the statement show how we expect expenditure to build up over the first two or three years. We expect average expenditure over the next 10 years of £90 million each year on this initiative. Where we go will depend to a large extent on the way in which local authorities react to the initiative, how quickly they come forward with applications and on their decisions about the extent to which they intend to take advantage of the initiative. It will also in part depend on the way in which young people react and on the effect on the number who choose to stay at school and on the number who choose to go outside to YTS and so on.

In regard to the suggestion about educational maintenance grants to encourage young people to continue studying after 16, I know of no evidence to support the beliefs of some people that the lack of a maintenance allowance reduces significantly the number who stay on after 16. It would be extremely expensive to introduce such a scheme. One has only to consider student grants to realise the difficulties that arise in trying to get the right priority between expenditure on meeting the living costs of the pupils and expenditure on the educational system itself. The expenditure proposed on positive improvements in the quality of education that is available to young people is the first priority for our money.

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. While my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East, (Mr. Bruinvels) was asking his question, I distinctly heard the hon. Member for Islington, North, (Mr. Corbyn) say that my hon. Friend had been raised in a circus. Judging by the dress of the hon. Member for Islington, North, if anyone has been raised in a circus, it is him. But did not the hon. Gentleman make an unparliamentary remark about my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East, especially as we were both educated at the same convent?

Mr. Speaker: I am lost for words. Fortunately, my microphones do not pick up everything that is said in the Chamber.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Just to clarify the matter, I said that I thought that the hon. Member for Leicester, East, (Mr. Bruinvels) had started his career in a circus, and ended up in a pantomime.

Mr. Speaker: I am glad that I did not hear.

Customs Consolidation (Amendment)

4.23 pm

Mr. Chris Smith (Islington, South and Finsbury): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to update the law affecting the importation of obscene articles and to increase the penalties therefor and to amend the Obscene Publications Act 1959 and the Customs Consolidation Act 1876.

The present law is completely anomalous. Any book or article imported into the United Kingdom is subject to the Customs Consolidation Act 1876. That Act leaves interpretation wide open to individual Customs officers, and sometimes gives rise to highly peculiar decisions about the seizure, impounding or prosecution of particular items. However, any book or article that is home produced and published within the country is subject to the Obscene Publications Act 1959, which carries with it the important test of a tendency to deprave and corrupt, along with the potential defence of literary merit.

For all its faults, the Obscene Publications Act is much better, and much more tightly drawn than the Customs Consolidation Act. It leaves less scope for the operation of arbitrary censorship. Sometimes, the same book can be treated differently under each of the two Acts. For example, a few weeks ago we learnt with sadness of the death of Jean Genet, the French author. Upon his death, the press rightly lavished much praise upon him. His book "Querelle" has been widely available, quite legally, and is approved under the Obscene Publications Act.

However, two years ago that book was impounded by Customs when it was being imported into Britain, and was made the subject of a prosecution under the Customs Consolidation Act. It is surely nonsense that precisely the same material should be legally available under one Act because it is produced in this country, but should be open to prosecution under another Act, because it is being imported. There is an obvious need to clear up that anomaly and to bring all material, whether home-produced or imported, under precisely the same definition. That is what my Bill seeks to do: to bring all such material within the scope of the Obscene Publications Act 1959.

The law is not only anomalous but has, in recent months, been thrown into confusion. The European Court recently ruled in the Conegate case that any material that was imported from the EEC should be subject to the same provisions as material produced here, thus creating a difference between material imported from the EEC and material imported from non-EEC countries.

Further confusion has arisen following the Customs and Excise decision of last Friday to drop all its charges against the Gay"s the Word bookshop in Marchmont street, London. It was right that it should take that decision. The outdated law—the Customs Consolidation Act—was being operated in a discriminatory way. I am delighted that that will no longer happen, but the decision of Customs and Excise leaves a legal uncertainty that requires clarification.

This Bill is the best way of clarifying the situation. Not only is the law anomalous and uncertain, but the existing state of the law inappropriately diverts resources which could be much better employed in the real protection of this country. With a flood of hard drugs coming into Britain from abroad, and with reductions in the staffing of the Customs and Excise service, Customs officers must have better things to do than to act as censors of what the British public can or cannot read or buy.

The Bill is a simple measure which carries within it a simple point. It is supported by the Booksellers Association, the Publishers Association, the Society of Authors, the National Council for Civil Liberties and the Society of Civil and Public Servants, which organises staff within the Customs and Excise service. The Bill will help to make sense of an anomalous, absurd and out-dated bit of law that has been, and can be, used in a profoundly discriminatory fashion.

I commend the Bill to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Chris Smith, Mr. Andrew F. Bennett, Mr. Alex Carlile, Mrs. Ann Clwyd, Mr. Jeremy Corbyn, Mr. Alfred Dubs, Miss Janet Fookes, Ms. Harriet Harman, Mr. Michael Meadowcroft, Mr. Peter Pike, Ms. Jo Richardson and Mr. Clive Soley.

CUSTOMS CONSOLIDATION (AMENDMENT)

Mr. Chris Smith accordingly presented a Bill to update the law affecting the importation of obscene articles and to increase the penalties therefor and to amend the Obscene Publications Act 1959 and the Customs Consolidation Act 1876: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 4 July and to be printed. [Bill 195.]

Supplementary Benefit

4.26 pm

The Minister for Social Security (Mr. Tony Newton): I beg to move,

That the draft Supplementary Benefit (Requirements and Resources) Miscellaneous Amendment Regulations 1986, which were laid before this House on 18th June, be approved.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): With this, I understand that it will be convenient to discuss the following:

That the draft Supplementary Benefit (Requirements and Resources) Amendment Regulations 1986, which were laid before this House on 26th June, be approved.

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that the Social Security (Unemployment, Sickness and Invalidity Benefit) Amendment (No. 2) Regulations 1986 (S.I., 1986, No. 1011), dated 13th June 1986, a copy of which was laid before this House on 18th June, be annulled.

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that the Supplementary Benefit (Conditions of Entitlement) Amendment Regulations 1986 (S.I., 1986, No. 1010), dated 13th June 1986, a copy of which was laid before this House on 18th June, be annulled.

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that the Housing Benefits Amendment (No. 3) Regulation 1986 (S.I., 1986, No. 1009), dated 13th June 1986, a copy of which was laid before this House on 18th June, be annulled.

Mr. Newton: It must be acknowledged that any link, other than for debating purposes, between some of these regulations is somewhat tenuous. The regulations refer to two particular aspects of the benefit system, and so my speech will correspondingly fall into two halves. I shall discuss first those parts of the regulations that concern the position of students in relation to social security.

As the House knows, the background to the proposals can be found in the view expressed now for a long time by the Government, which is reflected in the social security Green Paper of 1985 and in the social security White Paper of December 1985, and which has been clearly stated by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and myself several times in the House. In the long term, it cannot be sensible that students be subject to two separate but related systems of support. It cannot be satisfactory to have students permanently dependent on a system—the social security system—that is principally designed for those who, for various reasons, cannot work, rather than for those who have withdrawn voluntarily from the labour market in order to study.

That general view is not confined to the Government. As the Opposition and others have fairly made clear, it also has their broad assent. The same is true of the Social Security Advisory Committee and of many students. The issue in relation to students is perhaps not one of principle, but of how we can return to a situation that almost everyone really wants.

In January, the Government published a set of proposals concerning social security benefits for students and associated proposals concerning the grant for students living away from home. Those were put to the Social Security Advisory Committee for consultation. I pay tribute to the committee. It engaged in a substantial and thorough consultation exercise. We are grateful to the committee for its work.

I met the National Union of Students in what I felt, and I hope it felt, was a useful and constructive meeting. I need hardly say that Ministers and officials received a substantial stream of representations from Members of Parliament and others about the consultative proposals.

It is fair to say that the consultation revealed a view that, while some steps on social security were generally thought to be appropriate, others went somewhat further than was generally felt right at that stage. It was felt that some of the proposals needed further consideration in conjunction with a review of the main system of student support.

The Government have responded considerably to both those lines of concern. The social security proposals have been modified significantly. However, they maintain the proposed £36 additional grant increase to students living away from home. As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science said in a statement to the House on 18 June, the Government have

"decided to institute a comprehensive review of all aspects of financial support for students" —[*Official Report*, 18 June 1986; Vol. 99, c. 1046.]

The debate is concerned with the modified social security proposals. It may be easier if I deal with them in terms of comparison with the proposals originally put forward in January. Essentially, we are proceeding with four of the original changes in the forthcoming academic year — 1986-87. First, supplementary benefit and unemployment benefit will be removed in short vacations. I emphasise the word "short" because there was some initial misunderstanding. It was never proposed that the measure should apply to long vacations. The benefits will be removed in short vacations. Support is provided in the grant for short vacations. That points to the fact that students are indeed students at such times, and not unemployed people.

We know that many students have course work to do in short vacations. They may even have to get their tutors' permission to do any paid work. In future, we shall treat them as being on their courses for the whole of the grant-aided period. There is also an administrative consideration. I think the House knows that we are in the somewhat absurd position whereby it costs £1 to deliver every £3 of unemployment benefit. The position is even more absurd with supplementary benefit when small sums of money are often involved.

Secondly, housing benefit will be removed for halls of residence. In general, hall fees need not be as high as private rents since the aim is simply to cover their costs. Therefore, we see no justification for bolstering hall fees via a kind of alternative housing benefit subsidy, especially since that entails wholly disproportionate administrative costs in which £5 of benefit paid out costs £3 to administer. I stress that there is one significant, and I hope helpful, modification to the proposal concerning halls of residence in that the exclusion will not apply where the education institutions are acting simply as intermediaries between students and private landlords. Using the jargon of the trade, the problem is known as head leases. I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Oxford, West and Abingdon (Mr. Patten) for the part he played in bringing the problem to our attention.

Thirdly, students' income will be averaged across the whole grant-aided period, instead of them being treated as having different amounts of grant available in the term time and in short vacations. That logical proposal has been widely welcomed. It is, again, something which is sensible not least for its administrative advantages. The change will

prevent the need for local authorities to undertake up to six reassessments of housing benefit and will help to reduce delays in processing claims both for students and other claimants, especially those in university towns.

Fourthly, the regulations will restore our policy on the treatment of students' income from deeds of covenant. Some hon. Members will be aware, especially those representing university towns, that a commissioners' decision last year led to a position in which students would have had the parental contribution to the grant taken into account during the summer, which the grant is not intended to cover. As soon as that came to my notice during last year's summer parliamentary recess, I initiated urgent extra-statutory action to overcome the injustice involved. Since then, we have made extra-statutory payments to prevent losses to individual students.

The regulations will restore our policy that the assessed contribution to the grant should not be taken into account outside the grant-aided period. Should a parent choose to be generous and give his student son or daughter covenanted money in excess of the contribution to the grant, we shall take the excess into account over 52 weeks, subject to the usual disregard.

Those are the four social security proposals from the original package that are going ahead, broadly as originally proposed, but with some modification. Alongside those proposals, we are proceeding with the extension of the students' dependants' hardship scheme to cover two-parent families as well as single-parent families for the full year which is the position at present.

We shall continue to make two changes contained in the original package a year later than we originally intended. One concerns the proposal that housing benefit should no longer be payable to students who take accommodation specifically to study and then leave it empty in the long vacation for more than a brief period. We have made no secret of our view that it cannot be right that housing benefit should pay large numbers of students for accommodation in which they do not live—perhaps for over three months. The measure does not affect accommodation in which students actually live. It only affects accommodation in which they do not live.

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): What happens to property which is not occupied by students during the summer? Is it relet to someone else? Does the hon. Gentleman understand that enormous turmoil is caused in a student's life when he returns at the end of a vacation and someone else has taken the property?

Mr. Newton: Historically, students have managed to overcome the problem. It is only in recent years that students have received housing benefit on any significant scale. I acknowledge, in part, the point that the hon. Gentleman made. That is why the proposal was deferred. Our original intention was to implement it effectively from this month. We have deferred that until next year, because we have listened to the view that to have introduced the change this summer would have caused undue difficulty for students who would already have entered into commitments for the current year. To ease the problem, we deferred the proposal for a full year, until the long summer vacation of 1987.

It seemed right to us to defer the proposed improvement in the disregards for housing benefit—a disregard of the amounts in the grant for books and travelling costs. It must be right to bring housing benefit in line with supplementary benefit. That is what we intend to do. That is a helpful move. Alongside the deferment of the measure to which I have just referred, we are also deferring the proposal until the academic year 1987-88.

Apart from deferring the long vacation changes until next year, we propose to make a concession which will modify the effects of the proposal for existing non-grant-aided students. Those who do not live in their parents' home but have to rent accommodation are clearly the most vulnerable group. One effect of the fact that the regulations treat all students in the same way would have been a reduction in housing benefit entitlement for non-grant-aided students. To protect those already on their courses, who would have made certain assumptions about their income and the benefit they were likely to get, we shall allow them to carry on claiming on the same basis as before, so that they do not lose benefit. That concession will last until April 1988 and the introduction of the new housing benefit scheme. By that time, we expect that the vast majority of non-grant-aided students will have finished or be about to finish their courses.

Those are the two proposals which we have deferred rather than dropped.

Lastly, there is one proposal which we have withdrawn. It would have changed the method of calculating housing benefit for students, and would have taken the grant accommodation element fully into account instead of only partially. Although this can be seen as doing no more than putting students on the same footing as other claimants, it was clearly felt in the consulation process that it could cause disproportionate difficulty, perhaps particularly in London. We have, therefore, withdrawn that proposal. I think that is widely seen to have been an appropriate action.

On a number of occasions, when my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State made his statement and since, hon. Members have made it clear that they wish to know what the practical effects will be for students. More than 400,000 in all will be affected, and we estimate that some 140,000 of them will gain the full value of the £36 increase in the grant for students living away from home. The effect on the rest will vary, depending on their particular circumstances. I reaffirm what my right hon. Friend said at the time of his statement, that it is not possible to make generalisations beyond the 140,000 about the numbers and levels of the losses because students' circumstances vary so much, especially their housing benefit entitlements. Some students will gain less than £36; some will come out with more or less a neutral effect; and some will have a measure of reduced entitlement overall. Taken as a whole, it is now widely accepted that our proposed steps are a sensible move to simplify and rationalise the present system and to remove some of the worst anomalies and complications, while making some contribution towards the longer-term aim, which is generally accepted by both sides of the House.

Mr. Alton: The hon. Gentleman has mentioned three times the £36 extra that students will receive. Would he quarrel with the figure put forward by a number of students' organisations that during the eight-week vacation students will lose weifare entitlements worth £309?

Mr. Newton: Without the details of the particular calculation in front of me, it is obviously difficult to

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comment in detail, but that cannot be conceivably true of the general number of students affected by these proposals. The precise effect on any given student depends on his particular circumstances. It will vary according to those circumstances. For example, a student whose only benefit entitlement is a modest amount of supplementary benefit in the short vacations would not suffer a loss on anything like that scale. It would obviously be much tidier and neater for me if I could generalise. Points of the kind which the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) has reported were made in other quarters simply cannot be made to stand up as generalisations. It is grossly misleading to suggest that that represents the general pattern of the effect on students of these proposals.

Mr. Nick Raynsford (Fulham): Given the Minister's reticence in giving us figures on the impact of these changes on students, will he at least inform us of the number of students currently receiving housing benefit in respect of halls of residence who will cease to be eligible to receive that benefit as a result of his proposed changes?

Mr. Newton: From memory — I shall ask my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State to correct this later if I am wrong — about 80,000 students are receiving housing benefit in halls of residence. I want to emphasise that most of the amounts are very small.

The student benefit regulations represent a sensible, limited step towards simplification and rationalisation and towards removal of anomalies. They are a step in the appropriate long-term direction and I commend them to the House.

I come now to the other set of regulations concerning board and lodging. Although their main subject is board and lodging, I should make it clear that the new regulations also cover a change announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State in his uprating statement in February. The Supplementary Benefit (Requirements and Resources) Amendment Regulations make provision for changes in non-householder contribution and non-dependant deductions made from supplementary benefit. From 28 July no new awards of the non-householder contribution will be made to non-householders aged 21 to 24. Equally, no deductions will be made from the householder's supplementary benefit or housing benefit in respect of such non-dependants in that age group, so the poorest householders will therefore remain fully protected. This change is consistent with bringing the current supplementary benefit scheme into line with the proposed income support arrangements. The regulations provide only for changes in the supplementary benefit provisions. Regulations providing for changes in non-dependant deductions from housing benefit will be made shortly.

I come now to the main purpose of these regulations which concerns the board and lodging limits, both financial and other. As the House is aware, the draft regulations give effect to the outcome of the Government's proposed review of the financial limits from 28 July, the date of the supplementary benefit uprating. As I said in my statement on 18 June, we undertook to monitor carefully the operation of the revised arrangements introduced last year. We have now placed in the Library copies of the extensive—I might almost say voluminous—monitoring and statistical surveys which have been undertaken by us or for us, including the report by the consultants Ernst and Whinney on residential and nursing homes.

As I told the House on 18 June in respect of our concern about the growth in ordinary board and lodging payments, our latest figures show that the position at the time we acted was significantly worse than we had realised even then. In 1984, expenditure on ordinary board and lodging rose not to £380 million, as we thought earlier, but to more than £500 million, representing an increase of no less than 80 per cent. in a single year. At the same time, there was a 45 per cent. increase in the number of boarders, to more than 160,000.

As I said at the time of my statement, our monitoring fully confirms the existence of the accommodation market, heavily influenced by the available benefit rather than by normal commercial considerations, with widespread advertising to attract payments. In the light of our concern and the outcome of the monitoring, the House will be aware that one thing these regulations do not include is a general increase in the financial limits for ordinary board and lodging or in the related meals allowance. On our evidence, we did not believe that such increases were justified at the present time, and we felt that the evidence showed no case either for an increase in the hostel limits.

There is, however, one change in the shape of the regulations to which I should draw attention. We have taken the opportunity to incorporate in the regulations the main details of the ordinary board and lodging areas, the financial limits and the time limits by including them as a schedule. A number of representations were made to us that this would be more convenient than having them available only in a separate HMSO booklet, although that separate booklet containing maps and details of relevant DHSS local offices will continue to be available for the convenience of those who prefer to have it in that form.

There are two principal changes in the regulations in relation to ordinary board and lodging. The first is relatively limited and important and the other is of perhaps rather wider significance. The first is, of course, our decision that the ordinary board and lodging limit for couples without young children, which is currently one and three quarter times the single adult limit, should be increased to twice the single limit to avoid some of the difficulties about which representations were made to us. I hope that that will be thought helpful. The other, which has certainly gained wider notice and is of much greater general significance, is that the regulations incorporate the necessary provisions to prevent time limits being reapplied to claimants who were in board and lodging before November 1985, as had been intended on 28 July 1986.

The new regulations extend indefinitely the exemption that operated until 28 July 1986, which was included in the previous regulations, for those being paid as boarders on 24 November 1985. New boarders aged under 26 will continue to be subject to the existing time limits unless they come within the extensive range of exemption categories designed to protect those in need of board and lodging.

The limits for residential care and nursing homes were the subject of a good deal of that monitoring and research, including the study by Ernst and Whinney to which I have already referred. Following the significant increases of £10 a week in the residential care limits and £31·40 a week in the nursing home limits in November 1985, the evidence

is that, in general, the average costs in homes fall within the benefit limits and in several categories it falls well within.

As I said to the House on 18 June, we concluded that no general increase in those limits was justified, but, on looking at the point at which the fit was tightest, if I may put it that way, we felt that there was a reasonable case for some further increase in the residential care limit for the elderly. Therefore, the regulations incorporate a further increase of £5 in that limit from £120 to £125, which makes a total increase of some £15 a week in just over a year. I should emphasise that the ordinary residential care home for the elderly caters for by far the largest number of claimants in homes.

Apart from that, on the evidence that had come to us, we felt that the appropriate course was to concentrate on some more specific problems that had emerged. I should like to pay tribute to the work of a number of groups within and outside the House — the Social Security Advisory Committee, the all-party group on social services, ably chaired by my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe), and the National Council for Voluntary Organisations which, among other things, held a useful conference a few weeks ago which I was able to attend. Having listened and sought to respond to the representations that had come from those and other quarters, we felt it particularly important to make some improvement in the limits for those very dependent elderly people in residential care homes, for whom there are clearly additional costs. For elderly people in residential care homes who are very dependent and who are, in most cases, at present limited to £120 a week we have put a new limit of £140 a week in the regulations where they qualify for the higher rate of attendance allowance, which seems to be the best available indicator of the degree of dependence which is the cause of concern.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): I have a smallish number of constituents whose income from all sources, including the benefits that my hon. Friend has been discussing, does not quite match the charges of the home in which they are staying. That must be common across the land. I should be grateful for some sort of slightly more elastic procedure whereby there can be some adjudication process between what is available to the resident and the charge of the owner of the home so that some means of producing a match can be achieved. Perhaps it cannot be done. Perhaps the proprietor must be told that no more money is available. However, maybe the charge is legitimate and some more money should be made available somehow. Can anything be done?

Mr. Newton: I understand and appreciate my hon. Friend's concern in this matter. I should like to make two comments. The first is that the proposals I was outlining to the House are clearly and specifically designed to introduce a greater degree of flexibility into the limits to meet the sort of problem my hon. Friend has in mind. The second is that, as some hon. Members who are present will know, we have been actively pursuing discussions with the local authority associations through two working parties to see whether we can move towards a system in which there can be more individual assessment in relation to the needs of an individual claimant and in relation to the costs and charges of individual voluntary or private homes. Clearly the expertise involved in operating such a system significantly resides in local authority social services departments rather than in local DHSS benefit offices. That is why we have put so much emphasis on seeking to develop and carry forward this endeavour to work more closely with the local authority associations. We are actively seeking to pursue that and I can only hope, as my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) hopes, that it will bear fruit.

As part of that effort to work more closely with the local authority associations we are intending later this year to mount some pilot studies to test possible assessment procedures within that sort of framework. Although I cannot give my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North immediate satisfaction, I hope that he will accept that we recognise the importance of the point he has raised, and, far from being one we are ignoring or neglecting, we are actively exploring whether it is possible to move closer to the sort of policy which my hon. Friend has said he would like to see.

I have referred to the severely dependent elderly in ordinary residential care homes and our concern to give additional help to them through the device involving the use of attendance allowance as an indicator of the need for a somewhat greater payment. We are putting forward in the regulations similar proposals in respect of those who are blind, especially those who became blind in old age, but are in ordinary residential care homes. There, too, we are proposing a new limit of £140 for blind people over pensionable age where it is more advantageous than their present limit.

The other significant change, which I outlined in my statement and which is contained in the regulations, is the introduction of, effectively, a higher limit for residential care and nursing homes in London. Since my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North counts as being within Greater London, I hope that this will be of some help to him. We are proposing to increase the limits by a special extension of up to £17·50 a week. As I said to the House on 18 June, when taken altogether these proposals would mean, for example, that a severely disabled or a blind elderly person in a residential care home in Greater London could get extra help of up to £37·50 a week. That is a significant improvement.

One of the other concerns that emerged from our work and from the representations made to us by many hon. Members was about claimants who entered residential care or nursing homes before April 1985 when the revised structure of limits was introduced. We made what the Social Security Advisory Committee called generous transitional arrangements ensuring that benefit continued at protected levels, in most cases for life. We are now proposing, exceptionally in terms of the conventions that normally govern transitional protection, an addition of up to £10 a week above the protected rate for those transitionally protected at July who have had no extra help towards fees increases since April 1985. That has undoubtedly been welcomed by both sides of the House. There is another provision that has undoubtedly been welcomed, in respect of which I pay a special compliment to my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State who took a particular interest in it. We are proposing new provisions to help meet retaining fees for those who are away from home for a short period such as a holiday with their family.

Apart from those main changes, the regulations contain some clarificatory amendments of a beneficial nature, and

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change to restore the original policy intention concerning the treatment of attendance allowance in relation to the transitional protection provision.

As I said in response to the intervention of my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North, the regulations, with the specific and well-targeted changes that we have proposed, introduce greater flexibility, which is welcome, while maintaining a firm framework for that part of the benefit system, which is undoubtedly needed. The regulations as a whole rest on our determination to see that help is given as effectively as possible to the many people who need such help, but in a way that can be justified as compatible with the sensible administration of the benefit system as a whole. I believe that what we have proposed has been widely welcomed, and I commend the regulations to the House.

5 pm

Mr. Michael Meacher (Oldham, West): On one point at least, I am glad to say, the Minister and I are agreed. That is that there should be a single channel of support for students, and that that channel should operate through the education rather than the social security system. However, that is about as far as agreement can readily go, because beyond that point the story of how that principle is being applied by the Government has been one of muddle and mishandling. It is our strong contention that, despite the Government's concessions, they are still far from getting it right.

The Rowe report on housing benefit and the Social Security Advisory Committee both insisted that a complete overhaul of the student grant system was necessary before benefit could be withdrawn from students. That fundamental principle is still being breached by the Government. Indeed, neither the Secretary of State, when he made his statement on 18 June, nor the Minister for Social Security today has answered the basic question why it is necessary to make changes, except, perhaps, for those involving short-term vacation claims, in advance of the new review of student support.

In effect, students are being asked to take losses in benefit now in exchange for some vague, uncertain IOU, cashable at some unspecified time in the future. For students this summer, the question is not so much whether they would buy a second-hand car from the Government as whether they would part with money for a third-hand review of student grants—not a very enticing prospect in view of the aborting of the first two.

Secondly, we question whether it is warranted to carry through that upheaval when it will now produce such relatively small savings while generating major inequities among students. The original proposals would have saved about £40 million to £45 million gross, according to the Government. That is before the compensating increase in student grants and housing benefit disregards. The net figure, after compensation, is £20 million to £25 million. It is now stated by the Secretary of State that the "overall saving"—that was his phrase—will be £8·5 million this financial year and £16 million next year. Presumably that includes the extra expenditure on grants and disregards. If not, the savings would be piffling and not worth all the confusion. Even if those savings are net of the extra expenditure, the gain to the Government is still small and is certainly obtained at disproportionate cost in increased hardship to students.

The SSAC concluded in paragraph 64 of its statement:

"While students paying the highest rents and London-based students in particular will sustain significant losses, up to 140,000 students will receive a windfall of £36 unrelated to their needs."

The SSAC goes on in paragraph 65:

"The proposal to switch some of the specifically targeted benefit savings to an indiscriminate increase in student grants does not, in our view, make sense, and would produce major inequity within the student population."

Our third major objection is that, even despite the concessions that the Government have made, the cuts that are retained, especially those on halls of residence and unoccupied property in the long vacation, remain unfair. I accept that the Government have adopted, in their statement on the SSAC report, a number of the protective measures suggested by the SSAC for the so-called "problem groups"—not a happy phrase. Examples are transitional protection for students without awards, head leasing—I did not know what that meant until I read that paragraph—of accommodation and short absences during the summer vacation. Nevertheless, there remains a core of inequity in the cuts on which the Government are still insisting.

The Government still intend to withdraw housing benefit for students in halls of residence, without compensation, as the Minister made clear today. The SSAC recommended that that was warrantable only on the basis of three conditions. I quote paragraph 41 of the SSAC's report:

"We recommend that the funds currently devoted to housing benefit for students in halls of residence should be transferred to the University Grants Committee and used to subsidise university accommodation; the Government should consider the problems of vacation occupancy; and steps should be taken to ensure that only halls of residence and similar accommodation and not other types of tenancy are

The Government's answer to those points, such as it is, is partial and unconvincing. The Minister hardly touched on it today. One feels when one reads the answer that the Government, having retreated a little, for which we are grateful, are still determined to have their pound of flesh, whatever the logic. That retained cut is one of the victims of that determination.

Another example is the retained housing benefit exclusion from unoccupied property in the long vacation. In paragraph 47 of its report, the SSAC said:

"we are seriously concerned about the possible short-term effects of the proposed change. Even if the student housing market responds in the desired manner students may suffer stress and hardship during the period of transition. We suggest that the results of the change should be monitored carefully so that if there is evidence of serious hardship appropriate steps can be taken."

The Government argue that by deferring the change for a year they are meeting the SSAC's objection. They are not. The same problems of uncertainty, confusion and loss will simply recur, but a year later.

More generally, the SSAC argues that students have little choice in their housing. The growth in student numbers has not been matched, in general, by the growth in the provision of university accommodation. Moreover, it is true that students are forced to compete at a considerable disadvantage in a shrinking private rented sector. They require only a short tenancy and they possess fairly low income, in general. Therefore, the effect of the regulations where there is a shortage of accommodation —I take the point made by the hon. Member for

Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton)—will be to force students to take a 12-months lease without housing benefit cover for the summer months. That is the only way in which they can protect their housing when there is a shortage. That is scarcely fair or right. Like the iniquitous 20 per cent. cut in housing benefit for supplementary benefit claimants in the Social Security Bill, which is now rightly being struck out in another place, that is a straightforward, downright cut in benefit for which the Government have provided no adequate justification. For that reason, it remains as objectionable today as it was when the Government first announced it in December.

The Minister seemed coy about his mathematics on the housing benefit cuts. He said that 400,000 students will be affected, of whom 140,000 will gain. My arithmetic suggests that about 260,000 will be either in the same position or will lose. If he wishes to clarify that, I should be grateful.

Mr. Newton: I offer only a modest qualification. There is the possibility—I cannot put numbers on it—that some people who receive less than £36 a year in social security benefits, which may include those small sums charged by some halls of residence, will also be net gainers.

Mr. Meacher: Are they included in the 140,000 who will gain or will they be in addition to that?

Mr. Newton: The 140,000 are those whom we estimate to be living away from home but not receiving any social security benefits. Therefore, they will gain overall by the full extent of the £36 grant increase

Mr. Meacher: I understand that point. However, it would be a reasonable generalisation to assume that from 200,000 to 250,000 will lose, albeit some by only fairly small amounts.

What makes the housing benefit cuts all the more objectionable in principle is that, contrary to the Government's protestations that they are simply transferring support from social security to the education system, they are cutting both. We have been told that, even after concessions, the housing benefit cuts for students will amount to about £16 million in a full year. On the other side of the coin, student grants have fallen in real value by 20 per cent. while the Government have been in office. In terms of the current grant, that is a cut of £360 in purchasing power today compared with seven years ago.

I repeat that, although we accept in principle a transfer to a single channel of support via the education system, that is not what is proposed in the orders. The orders will bring about major cuts in housing benefit on top of the major cuts in the real value of the grant that have already occurred. To make, as Ministers have, meretricious noises about the possible conclusion of a future review of educational support which reopens the prospect of student loans is scarcely reassuring and does not begin to compensate for the reality of financial losses for students across a wide spectrum.

The other issue in today's batch of orders is the unrelated issue—I am not sure why they were all thrown together—of board and lodging. My hon. Friend the Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) will concentrate on that when she replies, but I wish to make a few general observations in the light of the new information available from the social security policy inspectorate surveys. I appreciate that they are voluminous, but they are also informative and I am glad that we have that information.

Perhaps the most significant finding from the inspectorate's interviews with 272 board and lodging claimants, in what it says is a representative sample of areas, is that one third of claimants pay a board and lodging charge which exceeds the financial limit laid down by the DHSS. The amount by which the supplementary benefit fell short of their accommodation costs varied from a few pence to no less than £45 a week. Leaving aside those two extremes, it is especially disturbing that one in eight of all board and lodging claimants was paid as much as £10 to £25 a week less than his accommodation cost. If the sample is representative, as we are told it is, that must reflect the experience of between 12,000 and 13,000 claimants today. That shows that in a significant minority of cases, the board and lodging regulations are still producing serious hardships.

Of the claimants whose supplementary benefit did not cover their accommodation costs, one third told the DHSS inspectorate that they could stay in the lodgings only by meeting the excess charge out of their meals allowance, personal expenses or, in a few cases, their savings. In addition, as many as one in eight said that they were in arrears with the payment of board and lodging payments to their landlords and that the arrears ranged from £10 to £400. Furthermore, others in the sample have already been forced to leave their accommodation because they were in arrears. That is a serious and worrying problem.

Another worrying finding which emerges from this material is that, contrary to the Government's complacent belief that landlords would rapidly adjust their board and lodging charges to the new financial limits, it appears that the opposite has happened in almost as many cases. The policy inspectorate found that, although 8 per cent. had their board and lodging charges reduced by between £5 and £30 a week, 6 per cent.—nearly as many—had them increased by similar amounts.

There is evidence that Ministers' claims about the extent of available accommodation which is within the financial limits is either exaggerated or fanciful. I see from today's copy of *The Guardian*—I do not know whether the Minister will wish to deny that it is his favourite newspaper—that the Minister rejected a claim by

"the Central London Social Security Advisory Forum . . . that 90 per cent. of over 700 hotels in London charged more than the DHSS limit."

That point was made in another context by the hon. Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway). The Minister claimed that his officials have located at least 20 cheap hotels that are within the limit. When the forum checked his list, it discovered that the Minister's claim was not substantiated in three quarters of the cases. I hope that the Minister will accept the validity of the serious comments made by the forum that almost all hotels in London now charge above the DHSS limit.

Mr. Newton: I intervene simply to say that, as a result of some discrepancies between the way in which the details were put in the CLSSAF's document and our report of this dipstick survey, there was an overlap of four or five cases. Nevertheless, our small survey—there was also a wider survey—showed 14 to 15 additional hotels. I emphasise that that was just the result of D[illegible] officials telephoning, on a one-off basis, in response to some advertisements that they found in the local newspapers. There is no attempt to

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suggest that the 20 hotels formed a great, comprehensive survey, simply that DHSS officials picked out 20 advertisements, telephoned and identified – we can haggle about the exact figures – 14 or 15 of which were not within the limits. While we are on this track, I should say that one further address, which was said to be unobtainable despite continuous ringing, was contacted by my officials at 9 am today and it was confirmed that the accommodation was within the limit.

Mr. Meacher: The Minister is a little less genuinely contrite than he normally is. I accept his latter point as that reflects one case. The truth is that, of the other 14 or 15 hotels, six were already on the list. I accept that those 20 hotels were taken at random, but the randomness makes it significant. Two more hotels were unobtainable – although the Minister now says that one is obtainable – one would not take claimants and four would take people within the DHSS limits only at three to a room. To suggest that that is readily available accommodation for unemployed, homeless people is a disgrace. One hotel had no telephone number or full address, so it would be difficult for claimants to contact. That left five which were correct. I accept that perhaps there are six. Out of the Minister's random list, only six out of 20 were available. The forum admitted that 10 per cent. were available within the limits, but that means that roughly 90 per cent. are not.

Mr. Raynsford: Will my hon. Friend confirm that, compared with the random sample of 20 hotels from which the DHSS drew its conclusions, the survey of the Central London Social Security Advisers Forum and other voluntary organisations was based on a sample of 710 hotels and might therefore be expected to give a more representative picture of what is happening in London?

Mr. Meacher: I am getting in the way of a significant dialogue. Perhaps the Minister wishes to intervene, because my hon. Friend's question was directed more at him than at me.

Mr. Newton: I am prepared to be a little contrite if the CLSSAF or the housing advisory service feel that I have been unfair to them—I have considerable respect for the activities of both, and was not seeking to attack them—but I merely question whether their list is as comprehensive and up-to-date as they claim.

I make it clear that to call the smaller of the DHSS's samples a random survey is to over-dignify it. An adventurous DHSS official simply thought that he would see what would happen if he picked out 20 hotels and telephoned them.

We also conducted a more properly structured sample survey which showed that, in addition to those reported by pressure groups, more than 350 boarding establishments in London were within the limits. Unfortunately, we cannot pass the details of the hotels in our sample to the pressure groups because, in common with other such survey information, we do not have the permission of those included in the sample to do so. By definition, the information given in the smaller survey was publicly available as my Department simply responded to advertisements in newspapers.

Mr. Meacher: I am grateful to have regained my speech. I thought that the Minister was about to make a second speech.

The key point is not the status of the 20 hotels that were telephoned; it is that an overwhelming number of hotels in London which provide bed and breakfast accommodation are charging significantly more for it than the DHSS financial limits provide. That fact is based on a detailed and comprehensive survey.

If the Minister wishes to challenge that fact he should produce detailed information and present it formally. Until that happens, the position in central London is as I have described and it is grossly unfair to subject homeless unemployed people to it. Simply providing sufficient money for their landlords will cut into the rest of their allowances. That is all that we are saying, but we are saying it strongly.

Another disturbing conclusion drawn by the policy inspectorate was that the overwhelming majority of boarders, including those in private households, have no alternative accommodation. One in seven of them could find some temporary accommodation, mostly with parents or relatives, but only one in 25 had access to alternative permanent accommodation.

That fact decisively rebuts one of the Minister's key arguments: that young people were leaving home unnecessarily to live in board and lodging accommodation. The main reasons revealed as to why those people became boarders were disputes with parents or relatives, the break-up of their marriages, or being forced to leave their previous accommodation. That shows clearly that they are simply people who have nowhere else to go.

That background calls into question the purpose of the board and lodging regulations. Are they designed simply to save money or to pressurise people into moving on to find jobs? If the latter, the board and lodging regulations have been a failure.

A DHSS document published last month, entitled "Monitoring the Impact of the 1985 Changes", stated:"

> "There was no evidence to suggest significant moving between board and lodging areas."

More explicitly, the evidence shows that the number of people who cease to claim supplementary benefit because they have found work is tiny. To that extent, it has not been a job-finding exercise. The Opposition are not surprised because no jobs are available.

If the purpose of the board and lodging regulations is to save money, two other questions immediately arise. Is it reasonable to save money at the expense of people who have been forced by personal misfortune into board and lodging accommodation because they have nowhere else to go, and who are then forced to cut food or other essentials to pay the accommodation charge? Even more importantly, is it fair to penalise the homeless unemployed in general when they are hapless victims of policies beyond their control which have led to soaring youth unemployment and almost the collapse of the local authority house building programme?

Since we believe that the answer to both those questions is a resounding no, we continue to oppose the principle of the board and lodging regulations. At the same time we strongly oppose, and shall certainly vote against, the major cuts in housing benefit for students, which are matched by inadequate grant compensation and aggravated by the huge fall in the real value of student grants under this Government.

5.25 pm

Mr. Robert McCrindle (Brentwood and Ongar): As a fairly frequent participant in debates on social security, I have listened to the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) many times. I am always struck by the stridency that he seems to bring to debates on social security. I pay him the tribute of equating that with a deep-seated opposition to whatever may be before the House at that moment.

This afternoon I was struck by the low level of stridency in the hon. Gentleman's speech. On some occasions, he has been guilty of detaining the House overlong, but on this occasion he managed to make his point in no more than 24 minutes, which is probably a record for him. From that the hon. Gentleman's opposition to the regulations, against which he will vote, is somewhat less than he would have had the House believe. The Government can take some comfort from the knowledge that, although there will be opposition, they should not become over-excited about it.

The hon. Gentleman returned to form by quoting extensively from *The Guardian*. Sometimes I think that, if that were not his principal source of information, his speeches would be appreciably shorter, if not non-existent. Some Conservative Members treat what is said in *The Guardian* with considerable interest, if also with a touch of circumspection. We read it avidly to establish the extremity of the position from which we can work back to the true facts.

I extend a general welcome to the regulations. I appreciate the fact that the Minister is prepared to listen to reasonable objections, whether from the Government Benches, the Opposition or from outside interests. There is no doubt that the regulations are much more acceptable to many Conservative Members than would have been the case had the Minister proceeded with his original intention. While listening to the difficulties that may have been encountered had we proceeded as intended, he kept in mind the balance which any Minister in his position must keep before him—that is the balance between the taxpayer, who has to pay the bill, and the beneficiary, to whom one wishes to extend all possible consideration.

I have had the temerity to press the view upon my hon. Friend the Minister of State when we have discussed these matters that housing benefits—a relatively new system of social security—were never intended to prop up students in the way that has become familiar in the recent past. I welcomed the introduction of housing benefits and I continue to believe that they make a major contribution to our social security system. I do not believe, however, that they are structured in such a way as to be able to provide for students the type of assistance which they can reasonably be expected to provide for others in rented accommodation. Having taken that line, I have been pressing on my hon. Friend and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for some time that it is correct to phase out the reliance on housing benefits which students have adopted over the past year or two.

I have drawn to the attention of my right hon. and hon. Friends that moving towards a phasing out of housing benefits for students in a year when the student grant increase is being restricted to 2 per cent. could be seen as moving too fast and an attempt to obtain advantage from each direction. There is a strong argument for more phasing and more understanding.

The regulations show that we remain, as my hon. Friend the Minister of State has said, dedicated to moving away from student reliance on housing benefits, but we recognise that the only way in which to proceed is in a progressive fashion. I must welcome what I hope we are about to agree when the Question is put.

This is not the occasion to spend very much time on the wider issue of students' grants or loans. I hope that I shall be forgiven if I say in passing that I have long taken the view that student support—it is sometimes forgotten that it is at a higher level in this country than in most other countries of western Europe or the United States—should be seen as a partnership between the taxpayer, who shoulders a large part of the burden, the parent, who according to his means is asked to make a contribution to the education of his children—in my judgment, he should continue to be asked so to do—and the student himself. I welcome the fact that there is to be an inquiry into student support, no doubt taking account of the social security considerations that we are discussing and exploring.

What have we to fear from an exploration of students' loans? My view, for what it is worth, is to be chary of moving in that direction. There are quite sufficient thoughts in a student's mind without adding to them the matter of his creditworthiness. On the other hand, I do not have a closed mind. If we were able to take forward the partnership between the taxpayer, the parent and the student, that would be a good thing. In the meantime, we must take it that in whichever direction we move, and at whatever pace, housing benefits for students were never designed to achieve the purpose for which progressively they have been used. To that extent, I welcome the fact that the Government have moved in the direction that I prefer.

Mr. Raynsford: The hon. Gentleman will recall that the Government introduced with their housing benefits scheme an entitlement to students in halls of residence to claim the benefits, a right which previously did not exist. There was some logic and reason behind that. We know that housing benefits were designed to reflect the wide differences in housing costs which can apply in different circumstances, unlike other social security payments, that are designed to meet basic needs. If we are to treat students on a par with others, there should be a means of giving them assistance when, through no fault of their own, they have to meet exceptional housing costs. That circumstance continues and the removal of entitlement to claim will lead to hardship.

Mr. McCrindle: I understand that. The only reply which I wish to make immediately is that the housing benefits system is still, in my judgment, far from being effective. We have been taking stock of how the system is working out in practice and introducing such changes as become necessary. In working up to what the final shape of housing benefits should be, it is not surprising that student support should be included within their ambit. I am saying that it would make no sense to have permanently two parallel systems of support for one section of the community. Instead, each section of the community that needs support should rely on housing benefits per se or on a grant system such as the student grant system.

Mr. Raynsford *rose*——

Mr. McCrindle: I shall not give way to the hon. Gentleman again. There is a confusion between these systems of support. We have seen the creation of a dual system for students — on this ground they have stood almost alone — and this has flown in the face of the intention behind student grants and housing benefits.

I shall say something about housing benefits more generally before moving on to the issue of board and lodging. I was struck by an early-day motion in the name of the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton). The motion is headed "Abuses of the Housing Benefit System". It draws attention to the serious concern that is being expressed in some quarters at the "extensive abuse" of the system. It expresses the belief that

"a number of private landlords are acting in an unscrupulous and profiteering manner".

It states:

"unemployed people are encouraged to apply for tenancies and . . . landlords subsequently charge extortionate rents well above the levels approved by the rent officer".

That goes somewhat beyond the discussion in which we are engaging this afternoon, but I draw attention to it in passing because it is a fact that that abuse of the housing system is known to have taken place. There is a suspicion that collusion takes place from time to time between beneficary and landlord. To that extent, it seems that we cannot consider board-and-lodging regulations without taking account of the wider operation of the housing benefits system.

We should pay attention to the early-day motion No.1031 which is supported by Liberal, SDP and Labour Members. At the end of the day, we are all taxpayers. I hope that we are all compassionate and that we all wish to direct social benefits to where they are needed. If there are examples that show that that is not happening, the conclusion of the motion — that there should be an inquiry established into these abuses — will have my support.

Mr. Alton: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for referring to my early-day motion and for offering his support for the call for a inquiry. Will he support the principle that, wherever rent is being paid directly through the housing benefits system to a claimant, the rent should be registered with the rent officer?

Mr. McCrindle: I am not an expert in this area and I should need some opportunity to study whether that is the best or only way to achieve the objective that probably unites the hon. Gentleman and myself. I hope that he will forgive me if I do not give him an immediate answer off the top of my head. I do not exclude the possibility that his suggestion is the solution.

There is no question in my mind but that a good deal of heartache has been created as a result of the operation of the board-and-lodging regulations. There is equally no doubt that there were abuses of the system which led to the Government feeling that it was necessary to introduce the regulations. In introducing amendments to the regulations, we should be ensuring that genuine social security needs are effectively met, while taking every opportunity to curb the abuses, of which, I suspect, every hon. Member has some first-hand knowledge.

I welcome the Government's decision to increase by a further £5, to £125 a week, the payment to people in residential care homes. I note with approval that there has been an increase of £15 a week overall since April 1985. That underlines the fact that the Government have clearly listened to the representations made by some of us who felt that £110 a week was cutting it very fine indeed and that, while some homes could survive on that, it would be extremely difficult in some parts of the country.

Mentioning that geographical distinction leads me to make a mild criticism of the Government, and, in the process, to declare an interest. I am pleased to note that, in addition to the overall increase of £15 a week, there is to be a further increase in the London area of £17·50 a week. There can be no doubt that costs in the London area, be they transport or labour costs, are higher, and it is justifiable that the amount paid to residents in homes in the Greater London area should benefit in the way that the Government propose.

However, as the Member of Parliament for the first constituency over the Greater London boundary to the north-east of the city, I shall find it difficult to explain to those who run residential homes in my constituency that, whereas £142·50 is a reasonable figure to pay for a residential home in the London borough of Havering, it is reasonable to pay £17·50 less than that in my constituency. I should have preferred, and I urge the Minister to consider, some form of tapering. It will always be difficult to draw a boundary, but if this payment had been tapered it would have been seen as fairer. My constituents view this as the thin end of the wedge because their costs are not materially different from those of people in Greater London next door.

Having said all that, let me express my appreciation to the Government and to Ministers for having listened to the various representations that have been made. What we are being asked to support this evening is a considerable improvement on the earlier regulations. With the one or two minor qualifications that I have felt it necessary to express, the Government can rest assured that they will have my support in the Lobby tonight.

5.43 pm

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): It is a pleasure to listen to the hon. Member for Brentwood and Ongar (Mr. McCrindle), although I disagree with his ultimate conclusion. I would find it difficult to vote in favour of the regulations tonight because of the qualifications and caveats that I want to enter during my contribution to the debate. I was glad that the hon. Gentleman raised the question of abuses of housing benefits and I shall return to that later.

I endorse what the hon. Gentleman said about student loans. I, too, oppose the introduction of student loans. In reality they are already being introduced by the back door. With the fall in the value of the student grant, by about 20 per cent. in real terms in the past seven years, many students are being forced to go to their bank manager to borrow money. They then find themselves taking large overdrafts which put them into penury for long periods.

The hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) also talked about the position of students and I concur with everything that he said. The clock is being turned back to before the Education Act 1944, with less and less opportunity, particularly for young people from underprivileged and poorer backgrounds, to enter higher education because of the financial penalties which are involved. Hall fees are one example of that. The Minister talked about that but he failed to mention that between 1979 and now hall fees have gone up by 77 per cent.

Mr. Martin Brandon-Bravo (Nottingham, South): I hope that the hon. Gentleman will clarify the remarks that he has just made. He seems to be saying that it is the people at the bottom of the income scale who are being denied access to higher education. But surely it is precisely that group who get the full grant. They are not adversely affected. It is the so-called middle-class students who are sometimes in trouble. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will clarify his position.

Mr. Alton: The hon. Gentleman will be aware that whether students come from the poorest background or from the middle band, to which he has rightly referred, the costs involved in trying to sustain oneself through the vacations, in trying to buy the necessary books and in trying to cope with all the everyday living costs are so enormous that many students are finding it more and more difficult to cope. That has led many young people, for whom it may not be the normal course to go on to higher education, to simply opt out. I see plenty of evidence of that in my constituency.

The Minister said that the proposals that we are considering today are well targeted. I do not agree with that. They are a pot pourri of proposals which attempt to spatchcock together a wholly unsatisfactory package. The Minister mentioned several times during his speech how students will receive a £36 a week increase, but he did not mention what reduction there would be for students who would lose their benefit entitlement during vacations. When I challenged him on that, he was unable to give the House a figure. The National Union of Students estimates that as much as £16 million will be withdrawn from the benefits system. Supplementary benefit and employment benefit will disappear for short vacations. The Minister drew comfort from the fact that that did not apply to the long vacations but I regret that it is happening at all.

From student entitlement to welfare benefits, it is extraordinary that the Department is pre-empting the Department of Education and Science whose Secretary of State said only in the last few days that he wanted to have a longer-term look at student financing. It would have been far better to wait and see what conclusions he arrived at before bringing forward these proposals tonight.

The Government's proposal that students should give up their accommodation during vacations when they will be denied housing places them in an impossible position. They will have to start the search for new accommodation all over again at the end of a vacation. In cities such as my own, a property that is left vacant while a student is away will almost certainly be vandalised and that will cost dearly.

Mr. Nicholas Lyell (Mid-Bedfordshire): What the hon. Gentleman has just said about students having to start again to find new accommodation flies in the face of my experience when I was a student, and, I suspect, when he was a student, when we made arrangements with our landladies which lasted through to the end of the summer term, gave up the accommodation in the interim and then made fresh arrangements from the autumn.

But will the hon. Gentleman comment on a wider point? He says that the provisions will damage the opportunity of poorer students to take part in higher education. How is that consistent with the fact that today 13·8 per cent. of the available group — the highest proportion ever—are already taking part? That does not seem to support his contention.

Mr. Alton: I am not sure where the hon. and learned Member for Mid-Bedfordshire (Mr. Lyell) gets his figures. After 14 years representing people in the inner city of Liverpool, first as a councillor, now as a Member, my experience is that fewer people are availing themselves of the opportunity to go into higher education. More and more people are saying to me that they would find it increasingly difficult if they had around their necks the albatross of loans that they will have to pay back to the banks. They say that the burden of the repayment of those loans would prevent them from going into higher education. It is certainly a major disincentive.

Times are changing. I agree with the hon. and learned Member for Mid-Bedfordshire that in the 1960s it was easy to leave a property that one might take for a brief period and then it could be let to someone else during the vacation. In my city of Liverpool there are currently 6,000 empty public sector properties and 3,000 private sector properties. That is a disgrace. Given that situation, it is unlikely that anyone would take those vacancies which, on the whole, are not in the houses of landladies but are in properties which students tend to rent in groups of two or three. Those properties will be left empty during vacations and I suspect that they will be subjected to vandalism.

These regulations also cover claimants in common lodging houses. The Government are trying to paint far too rosy a picture and to demonstrate that I should like to deal with part of the report by the social security inspectorate. The report shows that of those surveyed 34 per cent. were in bed and breakfast hostels and lodgings while 53 per cent. were in private or local authority accommodation. The most striking feature is that very few of those surveyed had alternative accommodation to which they could go.

Of the 228 claimants who were interviewed, only 12 had access to alternative permanent accommodation and only 43 to temporary accommodation. That bears out what the hon. Member for Oldham, West said in his speech, that there is no route home for many young homeless people who have the misfortune to find themselves in common lodging houses or in hostel accommodation.

I am a trustee of Crisis at Christmas. Several other hon. Members are also trustees of that organisation. It helps fund projects for homeless people, many of whom are young and single. We have found that the situation is getting worse. Many young people arrive in London believing that the streets are paved with jobs. When they arrive they are disappointed because they can find neither a job nor accommodation. Many of them have nowhere to which they can return.

Conditions in the common lodging houses and hostels are pretty awful. The House does not have to believe me, because recently in the Reading *Evening Post* a Government Whip, the hon. Member for Reading, West (Mr. Durant), said:

> "The main problem is the single persons who are homeless. They have very little hope and some of the bed and breakfast accommodation is appalling. The landlords in some cases treat them badly. In many areas claimants are being forced to pay sums well above the DHSS limit."

In Reading, for instance, it is about 82 per cent. above the limit. In Swansea it is 79 per cent. above the limit, and in Canterbury, Folkestone and Dover it is 75 per cent. above the limit.

[Mr. Alton]

There is also the issue of inequitable treatment. It is scandalous that claimants who were caught in the post-November 1985 time warp of DHSS limits receive less than those who applied before the regulations were altered. That is grossly unfair. Despite the fact that the Government are hitting vulnerable people, they will not allow local authorities that have sold off council houses to reinvest that money.

I have no point to make about whether councils should sell houses because that should be a matter for local authorities, but having received money from such sales surely the authorities should have the right to invest that money to provide housing. To prevent councils from using capital receipts for the provision of decent bed and breakfast, hostel or sheltered accommodation for vulnerable people is deplorable.

Next I should like to deal with housing benefits. One aspect of these regulations particularly gives me cause for concern. It is the failure of the Government to insist that any tenant, student or otherwise who is in receipt of housing benefit should automatically have his rent registered with the rent officer. As I said in an intervention during the speech of the hon. Member for Brentwood and Ongar, that is the only way in which widespread abuses involving the loss of millions of pounds of taxpayers' money can be ended.

The Government cannot pretend that the news of the abuses comes as a surprise to them. Ever since the time when housing benefits were introduced Opposition Members have warned that the system was unnecessarily complex, ill-conceived and a potential gold mine for a new generation of Rachman landlords. In July 1982, four years ago this month, I warned the House that housing benefit regulations were:

"Byzantine in their complexity and bewildering to the average person."

I said that the schemes were "cumbersome and confusing." I also said that:

"The regulations serve to reinforce poverty, with the poor paying for the even poorer." — [*Official Report*, 26 July 1982; Vol. 28, c. 784.]

In March 1983 I complained again that the local authorities had not been properly consulted and that private tenants' rights were not being safeguarded. I said that the scheme was half-baked and not capable of being implemented.

Four years after its implementation the housing benefits system has become a nightmare. Government Ministers are being complacent and lethargic about tackling the mess that they have created. I was surprised when on 14 April, in answer to a parliamentary question that I tabled, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary, who I am glad to see in the House, said that no information was available about the number of tenants in receipt of housing benefit whose rents were registered.

Last year some £4·2 billion was paid out in housing benefit and in the year ending 31 March 1986 £4·6 billion had been paid out. Given those figures, the Government's approach seems to be remarkably cavalier. In failing to act they are behaving quite irresponsibly. What happens is that an advertisement will appear in a local newspaper suggesting that bedsits are to let and that people who are unemployed or in receipt of DHSS benefits are welcome to apply. The landlord then gets the tenant to fill in an application for housing benefit. I highlighted in an example in the early-day motion about which the hon. Member for Brentwood and Ongar spoke the case of a Mr. Caulfield who owns nine properties in a place called Denman drive in Newsham Park, Liverpool.

In one property alone there are 16 different bedsits and from those bedsits the landlord receives some £524 a week in rent and rates. That is claimed back through housing benefit. Of the nine properties that he owns in that road, a total of £120,000 a year is being collected through money paid via housing benefit. If those rents had been registered with the rent officer the landlord's entitlement would have been closer to £50,000. That is a rip-off of taxpayers' money.

Mr. Major: I am aware of the case to which the hon. Gentleman refers. I have signed a letter that I hope he will shortly receive about this matter. As the hon. Gentleman knows, the administration of the housing benefits scheme is a matter for local authorities. If he feels that there is abuse, I hope that he will make the details of that abuse available to local authorities so that they may take appropriate action. The review team on housing benefit specifically examined the question whether local authorities should be required to seek registration of rents paid by tenants who receive housing benefit. It concluded, and we accepted its advice, that indiscriminate use of that provision would adversely affect the supply of privately rented accommodation. Neither the hon. Gentleman nor the Government would wish to see that.

Mr. Alton: The Minister is wrong to associate me with the Government's philosophy of trying to create more private rented property. The way that shorthold was introduced and the way that housing benefits have been used are simply devices to try to increase the number of properties in the private sector. I should like to see an increase of rented property through housing co-operatives and housing associations rather than a growth in the number of private landlords.

I disagree with the Minister's final point about the review team and its recommendations. We need to look again at this matter. In the same area of Liverpool that I spoke about a few moments ago there are properties owned by housing associations. They have registered rents of as little as £10 a week. That compares with £35 a week being paid out in housing benefit directly to the private landlord that I mentioned. That discrepancy deserves to be investigated.

The Minister also said that it was the responsibility of the local authority to act and not his. Three parties can ask for rents to be registered. First, there is the tenant, but he has no incentive to do so because, it makes no difference to him what rent is being paid as it is being paid directly over his head. Secondly, there is the landlord, but he obviously has no financial incentive to do that. Thirdly, there is the local authority, but it has neither the financial incentive nor the staff to do so. The Minister was right to say that a local authority could seek registrations, but local authorities throughout the land are not doing so.

Mr. Newton *rose*——

Mr. Major *rose*——

Mr. Alton: I am delighted to give way to the Ministers.

Mr. Newton: I am sorry about this excessive enthusiasm of Ministers to get at the hon. Gentleman. With the erudition that he is displaying, I must assume that he has

read the social security White Paper and studied the proposals and the proceedings of the Social Security Bill. He will know that among the proposals which have proved somewhat controversial with the local authority associations are those designed precisely to create a greater incentive for local authorities to use their powers. I would welcome an assurance from the hon. Gentleman on behalf of the Liberal party, which has so far shown singularly little enthusiasm for any aspect of the Social Security Bill, that this is one proposal which it will support.

Mr. Alton: I was much impressed by the enthusiasm of the two Ministers, trying to jump to the Dispatch Box at once. It is a case of a two-headed monster, and I assume that their arguments are much the same. But I do not want to be unkind because I am grateful for their enthusiasm.

I cannot give the Minister that assurance because if local authorities are not given the resources required to do the policing job that we should like to see introduced, it would be absolutely impossible for them to ensure that the registrations go ahead. That cannot be done without personnel. If the Minister says that resources will be found for local councils to carry out that job, obviously I shall be happy to give him my support.

I can give the Minister an example from another part of the country because this is not an exclusively Liverpudlian problem. Earlier this week I spoke to Mr. Roy Murphy of Shelter in Manchester. He told me of a bedsit in a condemned property which has a compulsory purchase order on it, for which £65 a week is being charged. That rent is being paid through housing benefit direct to the landlord. On 14 April when I asked the Minister for Housing, Urban Affairs and Construction whether he would introduce new regulations to require local authorities to register rents like this one he simply said no. I hope that the Government will take this issue seriously, study the terms of the early-day motion which I mentioned, and recognise that the problem is a nationwide one.

Another illustration came in a letter I received this morning from a lady in Bolton who said:

"Whilst unemployed I moved into a flat in October 1984 . . . This is a large detached house which has been made into 8 flats and bedsits: on the ground floor there were 3 flats, on the first floor there were 4 bedsits, and on the second floor there was one flat . . . Outside the kitchen back door was a dilapidated outside toilet. Upstairs on the first floor was the communal bathroom and toilet. The toilet was often in a very unhygienic condition, and the bath had no hot running water . . . For all this I was charged £30 per week, which the Housing Department was obliged to pay. The landlord's wife (who dealt with the collection of rent) had falsely assured me that the rent had been registered with the Fair Rent Officer."

That pattern is repeated throughout the United Kingdom and it is part of a multi-million pound rip-off.

Homelessness has become a boom industry and housing benefits a licence for landlords to print money. In the face of that, we in the Liberal party believe that the statutory instruments and regulations before us today fail to address themselves to those fundamental issues. Indeed, they make matters worse.

At present 340,000 multi-occupied properties exist in England and Wales, of which 53 per cent. fall below even minimum housing and fire safety standards; 38 per cent. have no proper means of escape from fire; 33 per cent. are in a serious state of disrepair with leaking roofs, severe damp and crumbling walls; 28 per cent. lack essential amenities such as toilets, bathrooms or cookers; and 23 per cent. are wretchedly managed by landlords. Sixteen per cent. of tenants live and sleep in overcrowded conditions, often with no privacy. Some 2 million people live in multi-occupied bedsits, lodgings, hostels and bed and breakfast hotels in England and Wales. Tonight's debate takes little account of their needs. Nothing is being done to end the abuses of existing arrangements, or to tackle those fundamental problems, and for those reasons we shall vote against the Government tonight.

6.4 pm

Mr. Nicholas Lyell (Mid-Bedfordshire): None of the Opposition Members who have spoken in the debate has made clear the principles on which they would spend public money in any of these areas. The principles which our Government should follow are that we should set out to help people to help themselves, and to concentrate our state help where it is needed and where it will help people. In my short speech I shall try to apply those principles to three areas under discussion: board and lodgings, the care of the elderly, and student support and the benefits system.

We have seen a phenomenal increase in public expenditure on board and lodgings which is doing nobody any good because the expenditure is benefit-led. Young people move away from home, whether it be London, Bedford or wherever, into board and lodging accommodation in small hotels and hostels, and in rooms from landlords and landladies because they receive large benefits for doing so. Then they do not find a job. Over the past few years the sums spent on board and lodgings have increased from about £50 million a year to £500 million a year. Yet the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) said that only one in 28 of such young people find a job when they move from home into bed and breakfast accommodation. What earthly good does it do anybody to encourage young people to leave home and their roots and to go into bed and breakfast accommodation only to be unemployed, and to waste about £500 million a year in doing so? My right hon. and hon. Friends were right to look at the matter, to call a halt and to ask whether we can direct the money more effectively so that it will assist the young unemployed.

Mr. Raynsford: If I am allowed to speak later, I shall tackle the principle of public expenditure in this area. Is the hon. and learned Gentleman aware of the Department's social security policy inspectorate's report on the reasons why people live in board and lodging accommodation? It reveals that only 2·8 per cent. live in such accommodation because they are financially better off, as opposed to 27 per cent. who are there following a dispute with parents or relatives, 14 per cent. on the break-up of a marriage, 11 per cent. because they are seeking a job and, perhaps, taking the advice to get on their bikes and look for one, and 11 per cent. because they have been evicted and have nowhere else to live.

Mr. Lyell: I can see that the hon. Gentleman has great knowledge in one sense in this area and will be misled by that report. It will be interesting to see how he develops his speech. Whatever answers one receives to that type of questionnaire, the fact is that a young person who comes to London and lives in board and lodging accommodation will be paid about £70 a week. If one is young and not well qualified, one is extremely unlikely to find a job which can possibly substitute or fund that £70 a week. Consequently,

[Mr. Lyell]

we are kidding our youth. We are giving them a benefit-led opportunity which leads them away from the real chances to better themselves. We ought to be spending this money on better training—I am glad to say that we are, and we all heard the statement today—on improvements and developments in the youth training scheme, on better opportunities for work through the community programme, on teaching people how to present themselves for work in their own areas and on enabling them to release their own energies.

I have seen this happening in Bedford, and we shall hear how it has happened in London. In Bedford, people are taking short-term or long-term bed and breakfast accommodation. If they are unable to find jobs, it is not that there are no jobs available, but that those jobs do not pay a sum that is equivalent to the amount that they formerly received from social security for that kind of board and lodging payment.

The way to tackle the problems of these young people is to help them to help themselves and to release the energies of the individual and the private sector by opening up the inner cities. In many Socialist-controlled areas—I hope that we shall never cease to concentrate on this, and I suspect that it is true of Liverpool, however small the opportunities may be in other respects—if people wish to buy their house or premises for business purposes, or if they wish to do anything in the private sector, they are not allowed to do so. That is true of Southwark. Those local authorities will do anything they possibly can to place difficulties in one's way.

As for long-term care for the elderly, we are seeing a phenomenon that is both encouraging and has warning signals. It is encouraging in that there is a lot of provision for the elderly—a growing section of our society—from the private sector, but we must be careful that it is not benefit-led, in the sense that the benefits made available are so high that people simply go into this as a business for its own sake rather than because there is a demand from elderly people for the particular services.

If we wish to care effectively for our own families and the families of others, we should design the system so that we encourage people to remain in their own homes. We should support those who care for them, and we should provide support, for example, to encourage people to be cared for short-term during holidays while home carers have the rest that they so badly need. We should also encourage the wonderful and new phenomenon that we have seen over the past five years in the hospice movement. That would mean that, having lived out one's life at home with support from the family and the state, properly directed, and having become so feeble and ill, a person could move to a hospice or be cared for at home as in a hospice, and be able to die in dignity.

Those are proper fulfilments of the principles in which we as Conservatives believe. We must be careful not to be led astray, as we undoubtedly have been, by the fact that we are paying people to live in unsuitable places. To some extent we are over-subsidising the development of residential homes, as the Ernst and Whinney report has suggested.

We must concentrate our public moneys on releasing private energies and other private moneys which will not only target themselves much more effectively but also produce far more for the state input involved.

As for student support, I am convinced that the Government are right when they say that it is not proper that those in our higher education system should be encouraged to look either to social security or to housing benefit for their support. We well understand why they do so to some extent at present—because supplementary benefit and housing benefit are available. When we announced that they would not be available, much anxiety was caused, but in most cases that anxiety was quickly allayed when the parents and students realised that for this year at least we would not remove those benefits during the long vacation if the students in question could not obtain work. We made it clear that if they had to keep on such accommodation and live in it during the long vacation, they would continue to get housing benefit.

Once my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary had answered our letters with a number of long and complicated replies—for which I thank him very much indeed—my constituents who had been considerably alarmed had their alarms almost entirely allayed.

My hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, South (Mr. Brandon-Bravo) rightly said that much of the problem of student support comes not from those in the lowest income groups but from the middle income groups—from those whose family income is £12,000, £15,000 or £20,000 a year. That income is usually heavily committed, be it on a mortgage, bringing up other children or maintaining a standard of living that cannot easily be adjusted. In those circumstances, an extra £400 or £500 a year can make as much difference as the extra sixpence made to Mr. Micawber. Consequently, the changes that we are bringing about are entirely right in principle, but they must not be brought forward too quickly or unthinkingly in practice. From the responses that we had earlier this year, I believe that the Government are sensitive to those views.

However, on all occasions we should remind ourselves to stick to our principles of helping people to help themselves and of concentrating state help where it is really needed and where it can do most good.

6.16 pm

Mr. Nick Raynsford (Fulham): I regret that the hon. Member for Brentwood and Ongar (Mr. McCrindle) is no longer with us. He referred to the tone of the Opposition and the way in which our criticisms of the Minister were perhaps voiced less stridently than they might have been on previous occasions. The hon. Gentleman drew one conclusion from that, but I draw a different one.

This is the third time in as many weeks that we have debated social security issues. Those who read the *Daily Telegraph*—which I do not always read—will have noticed that the Minister has not altogether got a good press. Indeed, the sad, heart-wringing story of the poor treatment afforded to Brer Newton last week has undoubtedly influenced Opposition Members to be terribly nice today. However, in no way will that change the strident criticisms that we shall make about the content of these measures.

The first issue on which I wish to speak relates to students. All of us agree in principle that it cannot be sensible in the long term for students to depend on income support, but the House is making a mistake if it concludes that all forms of assistance, including assistance with housing costs, should be treated in the same way.

The point that I tried to make earlier was that one of the reasons for having a housing benefits system is that there are wide variations in housing costs — far wider than in the costs of other things for which income support is designed to apply. The accommodation element contained in the student grant cannot possibly cover the wide variations in costs that students must meet in different circumstances. Those in certain areas or in different tenures or types of accommodation often have to meet housing costs that are two or three times the level that other students have to meet.

Therefore, short of having a very complex grants system that attempts to take these variations into account, it is sensible to allow housing costs—where they exceed the amount provided for in the grant — to qualify for some assistance through a housing benefits scheme. That was my understanding of the reasons for extending housing benefit to cover most students. That was a correct decision, and that is why I regard the Government U-turn on this issue as misconceived.

It is all the more misconceived because it comes, as everyone knows, at a time when students are trying to cope with a grant that has been reduced dramatically in real terms by this Government. The Government have cut away assistance towards housing costs, especially for those meeting high housing costs, while the grant is inadequate; that is grossly unfair to students.

We must consider the Government's justification for doing that. The argument was advanced by the Minister for Social Security that the costs of administering benefits to students were disproportionate to the benefit. Many Opposition Members were surprised to hear that argument advanced on this occasion when we did not hear the same argument advanced with respect to the 20 per cent. of rates contribution which the Government are still —if we believe reports in the press—eager to bring back despite the House of Lords' correct decision that that was an objectionable proposal which should be dropped. In that case, the cost of administering and collecting 20 per cent. of rates was thought by many authorities to exceed the value of the money that would be collected. That is clearly a nonsensical arrangement.

The Government are prepared to stomach that administrative nonsense, yet they are now using the same argument to say that it is not worth paying the benefits to students. The truth is that streamlining the procedure—I welcome the proposal to get away from the need to reassess benefit six times during the academic year by averaging income over the short term and short vacation period — will reduce administration costs and that will result in greater value for money. That is the right and sensible approach. The Government should not deny students benefit on spurious grounds.

We should also be very wary about the argument on the withdrawal of entitlement to benefit in respect of accommodation which students cannot occupy during the summer vacation. Students are often required to continue to pay rent for that accommodation if they want to return to it the following term.

It ill behoves the Government, who have denied students the opportunity to pay retainers, which are generally rather less than the full rent, to have housing benefit on that — which would have been the sensible way to cope with the problem — now to state that the benefit will be removed entirely on the rent elements which have had to be paid by students who want to keep their accommodation for the following term. That is unfair to students and the fact that the proposal is being postponed for a year does not make it any more justifiable.

The issue of non-householder addition has not attracted much comment so far. However, we must be aware that that represents a further cut. Once again the Minister for Social Security was rather coy about the figures. We have not had many figures from him. When the Under-Secretary of State replies, will he tell us how many claimants aged 21 to 24, who currently receive non-householder additions, will lose that benefit? To be fair in this matter, will he also tell us how many non-dependants in that age bracket, for whom a non-dependant deduction is currently made, will no longer be subject to that deduction? How many will lose benefit and in how many households will there be a compensatory offsetting of the non-dependant deduction?

We should remember that this is not the first time but the third time that there have been adjustments to non-householder additions designed to achieve cuts. The first removed non-householder additions for 16 to 17-year-olds in 1983. The second, two years ago, took them away from 18 to 21-year-olds. And the Government now propose to remove them from 21 to 24-year-olds. These are a series of measures designed to cut expenditure and that is not justifiable.

I would like to focus on the board and lodging issue which has aroused a great deal of anxiety throughout the country. The Government have placed a great deal of emphasis on the increasing cost of payments for board and lodging payments to justify the steps that they have taken. However, they have not looked behind the increase to see why costs have increased. That is where the nub of the problem lies.

The increase in costs simply reflects the fact that there has been a continuing and rapid increase in homelessness under this Government because insufficient homes are available for people to rent at reasonable prices. The problem is not simply an increase in payments to people receiving board and lodging payments from the DHSS. There is a parallel increase in terms of local authorities placing homeless families, to whom they have rehousing responsibilities under what used to be the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977 but which is now covered in the Housing Act 1985, but they cannot provide homes because there are not sufficient homes. The authorities are forced to place people in bed and breakfast hotels.

The two phenomena go hand in hand and are witnesses to the terrible lack of accommodation for people who need rented accommodation at reasonable prices. They are the direct result of Government policies. To be fair, they are not policies originating from the Department of Health and Social Security. These problems are the consequence of decisions taken in the Treasury and the Department of the Environment. These decisions are having a knock-on effect, because increased homelessness and a lack of alternative housing mean that more and more people have to resort to unsatisfactory and grossly expensive bed and breakfast or board and lodging accommodation for lack of an alternative.

The fundamental problem is the growth in homelessness and the lack of alternative accommodation. It does us no service to attempt — as the Government do — to tackle that problem by attacking the symptom. The Government are attacking the cost rather than the cause, which is the shortage of housing. The Government would

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have been advised to have considered the advice of the Social Security Advisory Committee which commented succinctly and appropriately on the issue recently. In relation to the Government's first proposal to impose restrictions on board and lodging payments, the committee said:

"The assumption that some other form of accommodation is available for young claimants currently in board and lodging accommodation seems to us particularly questionable in the light of the known scarcity of public and private rented accommodation accessible to single people, especially those dependent on social security benefits."

The committee continued:

"To a very large extent, we believe a long-term solution has to lie in housing policy, not merely to develop a greater range of accommodation available to single people, whether individually or in shared housing, but also to improve the quality and value for money of existing lodging accommodation."

How true! The Government's advisory committee has hit the nail on the head, yet the Government have not accepted the recommendations.

Mr. Lyell: Would the hon. Gentleman accept or reject the idea—which I support—that the private sector has a real role to play in providing that accommodation?

Mr. Raynsford: I believe that all agencies capable of providing accommodation available to rent at a reasonable price should be encouraged. The experience of the past 80 years is that private landlords have been taking properties off the market because the rate of return from renting is less than they could receive by investing their money elsewhere. There is a fundamental problem. High capital costs are involved and house prices are high in areas such as London. The returns which a landlord would receive from renting to relatively poor people, without receiving massive subsidies, would be insufficient to justify investment of large sums of money in that property. That is why we should consider other sources of accommodation, such as the public sector, housing associations and bodies which have proved themselves able to provide rented housing for people in need.

The problem is therefore fundamentally a housing one. If the Government are looking for savings, they will find it easier to make them by providing new homes to rent through councils and housing associations rather than depending on board and lodging. Ministerial answers over the past six months have stated that it is cheaper for the state to pay for people to occupy new council housing than to pay the vast costs of keeping them in board and lodging. It makes social and economic sense to put people in council housing. Sadly, the Government do not appear to have learned that lesson.

The Government are desperately trying to make savings and they are penalising claimants as a result. I will not examine the Minister's arguments in detail as time is short. After a careful scrutiny of the detailed reports to which the Minister referred—which are in the House of Commons Library—about the surveys carried out on people in board and lodging, it is abundantly clear that many people are not able to meet the costs of their board and lodging as a result of the Government limits.

According to the Government's own figures, some 47 per cent. of board and lodging charges are above the limit and 34 per cent. are more than £5 above the limit. Those are national figures. In London, to the south of London and in the south-west, the discrepancy is likely to be far greater. Details are not available in the report, but those are the areas with the largest number of claimants whose board and lodging costs are above the limit.

As a result of Government policies, grotesque overcrowding has developed. Young single people are sharing three or more to a room. Yet the Government have taken no action to attack and improve bad standards. I absolve DHSS Ministers in this regard as it is the responsibility of the Department of the Environment. People have been forced to leave their accommodation and become homeless. I very much regret the Government's failure to recognise that they have made a disastrous mistake. Ministers at the DHSS should withdraw the board and lodging regulations and discuss with their colleagues at the Department of the Environment ways to get a better housing programme going so that people can live in decent homes and have a choice in housing rather than being left in highly unsatisfactory and overcrowded board and lodging accommodation, trying desperately to stay there by sharing because the limits make it impossible for them to meet the costs or, worst of all, forced to become homeless and in some extreme cases driven to suicide by the despair engendered by this grossly unfair and inhumane policy.

6.30 pm

Mr. Martin M. Brandon-Bravo (Nottingham, South): As the House knows, I have a particular interest in student support as Nottingham university, which happily falls in the upper half of the current merit league, and the equally excellent Trent polytechnic mean that our city has many thousands of students. The case for reform in this regard has not been challenged by anyone, even the hon. Member for Fulham (Mr. Raynsford). A proper balance of grants, family contributions, vacation earnings and, I believe, student loans is clearly the right way forward. Our target is therefore to remove the social security element of that support in a reasonably phased manner because the social security system was not basically intended for student support.

In taking that view, I have substantial support within the student body although there is no doubt also much opposition. On the new register, the number of votes in my constituency has leapt upwards by 3,000 persons. I am told that this is due to the registration of students who had not previously bothered to register. Whether their motive is to compliment me in due time on my efforts on their behalf or the reverse, time alone will tell. Having a constituency with a large number of students, however, does not detract from the duty to do what is right. It is all too easy to make electorally convenient noises, but some of us like to be able to sleep with our consciences.

I am sure that no one really challenges the loss of short vacation benefit as there was never any real case for it. As I said in an earlier debate, students who go home for Christmas cannot claim that they are going home to look for work. They go home for Christmas and they have probably earned the break. With regard to the long vacation, I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Minister for allowing time to phase the problem out. Although we are taking something away from students, and there are many of them in my constituency, it seems wrong that they should claim housing benefit for one address while living and claiming supplementary benefit at another address. That simply cannot be right. The hon. Member for

Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton)—sadly, he has left the Chamber—destroyed his own case when he spoke of people paying rent for only nine months and of the risks in the remaining three months. If there are so many empty properties in his city, I cannot believe that the annual rent paid by students is so very high.

As I have said, I believe that I have substantial support from within the student body. Members of the Trent Polytechnic Conservative Association have no reason to tell me what I want to hear just because they are Conservative students. They are perfectly entitled to say what they want as students and I am happy to support them. They firmly believe that Government spending must be kept under tight control, they recognise the link between high public spending and inflation and they are therefore quite content for their support to be discussed in that atmosphere. They recognise, too, that the grants and support for students in this country are better than in any other western nation. Moreover—my hon. Friend the Minister will correct me if I am wrong—I believe that the number of grant-aided students has quadrupled in the past 20 years. So not all students oppose the Government's approach.

I should like briefly to describe the situation of four students. One had no grant and lived on parental contributions, rent rebate, supplementary benefit and—a bloated capitalist!—£80 in building society interest, making a total income of £2,760. After listing all his outgoings, he refers to savings of £160 a year—probably to be generous to me as no doubt that sum is spent on leading the life of Riley. The second student has the £1,800 grant. I do not have time to go through all the expenses listed, but there is £600 left for travel and leisure.

I see my hon. Friend the Whip signalling that I have taken too much time, so I conclude with just one question about the board and lodging proposals which has recently been brought to my attention. I understand that residents in care homes at present receive no supplementary benefit if they leave the residential care home for a short period, for example, for a holiday, but I am told that under the new regulations that benefit will be paid. Perhaps my hon. Friend the Minister will confirm that. On that note, I bring my greatly truncated remarks to an end.

6.37 pm

Mrs. Margaret Beckett (Derby, South): This has been an interesting debate. Like my hon. Friend the Member for Fulham (Mr. Raynsford), I was somewhat surprised at the tone adopted by the hon. Member for Brentwood and Ongar (Mr. McCrindle), unusually for him, in his comments on the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher). I understand the hon. Gentleman's wish to welcome the postponement of some of the major effects of the changes, but I was surprised at the extent of that welcome. The hon. Gentleman seemed to imagine that my hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, West had taken most of his observations from *The Guardian*. Much as I admire that newspaper, I should point out gently to the hon. Member for Brentwood and Ongar that the evidence adduced by my hon. Friend actually came from the large pile of documents accompanying the regulations.

There is no question but that the Minister glossed over the problems that will be caused for students. As so many hon. Members have pointed out, many students will lose substantially and will be forced into debt. Inevitably, this will be a further discouragement to students from poorer homes and perhaps especially to mature students. A constituent of mine has come to me over the years as the Government have steadily reduced her housing benefit. As a divorced lady with two small children, she has naturally faced increasing problems. She has now taken a great step for one in her circumstances and established herself as a mature student, only to find that the Government are still pursuing her and propose to reduce the benefit entitlement on which some of her financial calculations must have been based. Like so many others, she will no doubt find it hard to agree that the Government's position is justified.

It is especially difficult to justify the Government's refusal to allow students in halls of residence to claim benefit on the ground that the accommodation costs should not be so high in the first place. The National Union of Students would wholeheartedly concur with that view and has, indeed, been urging it on the Minister's colleagues at the Department of Education and Science for a considerable period—only to be told that keeping hall fees artificially low "would not be businesslike".

Perhaps, therefore, in view of the observations that have been made on the purpose of the regulations, the Minister would have a quiet word with his colleagues at the Department of Education and Science and tell them that if they cannot get on speedily with the third review of student grants in recent years they should examine again the charges that students are forced to meet. We hope that this time the review of student grants will be concluded, although presumably it will not be before the general election and certainly not before the regulations come into effect.

As to the board and lodging regulations, again we are dealing with a set of regulations which, as has been said many times in the House, have been from their inception completely discredited. The rationale of the changes is that under 26-year-olds could go home because most of them had left home frivolously anyway because they thought that it would be nice to live in seedy board and lodging accommodation. That seems to have been the argument for imposing the limits on the sums of money that they were allowed to draw. The hon. and learned Member for Mid-Bedfordshire (Mr. Lyell), who sadly is not with us at the moment, seemed not to be aware that students actually pay the money to the landlords in whose premises they live. They are not entitled to use that money to live on the fat of the land.

When the regulations were made, attention was drawn to the fact that they had been drawn up without evidence to support them. The Minister will recall that the Social Security Advisory Committee described such evidence as was quoted as anecdotal at best. The Minister has told us today that the evidence is now available. Certainly it is available in quantity although the quality may be questionable.

When we read the Government's own evidence and any independent evidence it is still not easy to see how it justifies the Government's claims. The Government have quoted some who, in the surveys that were done, indicated that they were satisfied with the accommodation that they were living in and thought that it was good value for money. What comes through clearly is that these people are in a different category from those with whom generally we are concerned when we debate the regulations. They are people who are living in reasonably satisfactory private accommodation. They are not the potentially homeless,

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the people who have quarrelled with their parents, the people who have no parents, the people who have been thrown out of their homes or the people who have nowhere else to go. The people who are vulnerable will remain vulnerable to the provisions of the regulations.

The Minister has tried to indicate that the reports that he has laid before the House show that the Government limits are adequate. The reports show that in 58 out of 134 offices where inquiries were made, the staff knew of at least one establishment where charges had, they believed, been reduced since the new reduced limits were introduced by the Government, something that the Government said would happen on a widespread basis. That is not the same as indicating that in the vast majority of cases charges would be reduced, as the Government appeared to imagine would happen.

It also remains a fact, again from the Government's own evidence, that in 76 out of 134 local offices surveyed not one establishment could be found where charges had been reduced. The Government's own evidence shows that about 60,000, or 47 per cent., of those involved have to pay sums that bring them above the Government's limits. Since these charges are and remain frozen, the number must steadily be rising, even though, as has already been quoted in the debate by the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) among others, 70 to 80 per cent. of claimants in some areas are paying above the limits as they now stand.

If we consider the independent evidence that is coming forward and do not rely merely on the Government's evidence, the picture is even bleaker. Reference has been made in the debate to the fact that only 60 hotels could be found by an independent survey in London that were below the Government's limits, and that there were vacancies in only 22 of them. We are talking about a potential market of 10,000 claimants, so only a tiny percentage of the people who want accommodation can possibly find it at charges that are below the limit. To keep below the limit in that accommodation, on average four people have to share a room, and in some cases the number expected to share a room is as high as 12.

In Preston an independent survey has been carried out, first covering the bed and breakfast establishments and hotels listed in yellow pages. None of them was within the allowance and only one had ever taken people who were unemployed. The list provided by Preston housing advice centre gave a slightly better picture. All of its accommodation was within the maximum limit, but only one had vacancies. Again at all the establishments residents were expected to share rooms with strangers.

A similar picture emerges from an independent survey in Ipswich where no bed and breakfast accommodation within the cash limits was found and just one that purported to offer full board. Here again it is apparent that in order to meet their bills claimants have to use their meals allowance.

That brings me to the meals allowances themselves. The allowance is not over-generous, being £4·20 per day, and not having been increased for two years. Presumably that means that the Government now think that two years ago the sum of £4·20 was grossly over-generous since they have chosen not to increase it, although in that period not only have the costs of food risen by 12 per cent. but VAT has been imposed on take-away food, which must mean that the charges that people are expected to meet from the meals allowance have risen considerably.

Of course, we are glad that the Government have decided to allow couples to receive twice the rate of benefit for a single person since that is what landlords have always charged. There at least there is some recognition of reality, but is it still the case that no money is payable towards hotel charges that may be imposed for children under the age of 11 even though in London, for example, every hotel in which charges are below the limit makes a charge for such children?

In relation to under 26-year-olds, I want to draw attention to the implications of the non-householder addition which is being abolished by the regulations. The Government have argued in much of their evidence, and say that the supporting evidence is justification for their view, that people are being allowed to remain in accommodation at reduced payments on the basis that they may draw the non-householder addition. It is not clear from the evidence how justified the Government are in that claim. The surveys may have been carried out shortly after the limits were imposed. If the surveys had been done after a longer period, that might not have been a valid contention.

Even if the Government's contention that people are being allowed to retain the award of the non-householder addition is valid, what do the Government expect to happen when that addition is abolished, as will happen to under 25-year-olds under the regulations? In regard to the limits for board and lodging for bed and breakfast accommodation, the Government have relied on the argument that people can get the non-householder addition and that that will be sufficient. But when they do not get that addition, what do the Government expect them to do—to starve or to turn to crime?

In regard to residential homes, the Ernst and Whinney survey has been drawn on and emphasised by the Government even though it had only a 28 per cent. response rate. What did it cost the Department to obtain a survey of such unparalleled dimensions? Although the survey claimed that the limits that the Government had imposed were adequate, it collected costs at the start of 1985 and compared them with the limits that were established by the end of 1985, by which time the costs had probably risen. There is a rise for London but not for anywhere else because the Ernst and Whinney report says that the response rate was too low.

If limits are completely inadequate elsewhere, the Government do not know because the survey does not tell them. The table of average costs, on which it is claimed that the limits are adequate, is again based on shared rooms despite the fact that the Government's own code of practice advises that residents in such accommodation should preferably have single rooms. Yet when it comes to deciding whether the money is adequate, the Government make the decision on shared rooms rather than single rooms. Again, what the Government say conflicts with all the evidence.

The survey of the National Council for Voluntary Organisations, which was published in February 1986, showed that average charges for voluntary homes were between £130 and £180, yet the Government are patting themselves on the back for having increased the limit to £125. In May, the Council for Care of the Elderly showed that even inexpensive, voluntary, non-profit making

homes in London charged about £189, while many charged £220. Thus there is a deficit of at least £50 on the sum that the Government are allowing.

As people cannot meet those charges, about one third of the more than 50,000 people in geriatric wards, who would like to leave, are stuck there, even though it costs the taxpayer at least £300 to £320 to keep them in unsuitable accommodation. It is not clear from what has been said, although I thought that we had got things clear at Question Time yesterday, whether people who become blind or otherwise incapacitated and who are over pension age will continue to receive only the lower rate of benefit. I thought that we had clarified that point, but it seemed less clear from what the Minister said.

I shall repeat a point that he put when the statement was first made. If, as the Government argue, the general limits that they are imposing are adequate, why increase the transitional protection? What is the argument for that? The transitional protection applies only to limits that are already above the figure that the Government are giving. If it has to be increased, the limits must be inadequate. That seems to follow logically.

I am sorry to say that, once again, in these regulations the Government are attacking the victims rather than the problem. They have carried out research and surveys, not in order to establish what the problem is, or to find out how to solve it, but to justify what they did, and were overturned in the courts for doing three times during the past year. Once again this Government are flying in the face of all independent evidence, of much of their own evidence. Once again, unfortunately, it is the vulnerable, elderly, young and handicapped who are suffering.

6.51 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mr. John Major): We have had an interesting and wide-ranging debate, and in the few minutes left to me I shall endeavour to answer as many of the important matters raised as possible.

Throughout the debate I have been particularly struck by the fact that, with the possible exception of the reservations expressed by the hon. Member for Fulham (Mr. Raynsford), there seems to be general concurrence with the basic principle that benefits are an inappropriate way of supporting students. My hon. and learned Friend the Member for Mid-Bedfordshire (Mr. Lyell) made that point, as did other hon. Members, and the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) certainly conceded more than a general nod in that direction. I am delighted that on that point, at least, there seems to be an element of near consensus.

There can, of course, be very severe and legitimate conflict about the nature and extent of student support through the grants system. But the fact that there is a broad consensus about how the assistance can be delivered gives us a worthwhile and useful backcloth to the inquiries established by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science. I shall, in particular, draw his attention to the blandishments of the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) about what may or may not be in his report. I am sure that he will give that due care and consideration.

The original package of measures that we put to the SSAC and the local authority associations was designed primarily to tackle those aspects of the present arrangements that we felt could not be justified either in principle—I have in mind the double provision of grants and unemployment benefit during the short vacations—or in administrative terms—I have in mind the need to reassess housing benefit by up to six times a year under the present system. The advisory committee and the local authority associations had little to quarrel with in principle. But they of course had some concerns about the practical effects.

In these regulations we have sought as far as we think proper to respond to those concerns. The result is the revised package before the House today, which still tackles the most wasteful aspects of the system, but which has been very considerably modified to reduce its impact on students, and I am grateful to those hon. Members who made that point today.

At the beginning of his speech, the hon. Member for Oldham, West asked what might be thought to be the fundamental question. He referred to the student changes and asked why we should cause this upheaval when there appeared to be only small savings. He correctly quoted the figures, and asked why we should cause what he saw as major inequities between students. There are several observations to make about that, as it is an important point.

I am not sure that I accept—and if the hon. Member for Oldham, West was standing at this Dispatch Box, I am not sure that he would accept it either—that a saving of £16 million in a full year is an insignificant sum, particularly bearing in mind, say, the double provision of grants and unemployment benefit during the short vacations. My hon. Friend the Minister has already pointed out the wholly disproportionate administrative costs of delivering very small amounts of benefit. It is absurd to have a £1 million administrative cost for delivering £3 million of unemployment benefit and to have a £3 million administrative cost for delivering £5 million of housing benefit for halls of residence. That is not a worthwhile use of the limited resources that any Secretary of State has to hand. I think that the hon. Gentleman would recognise that if he was in charge of these regulations—*[Interruption.]*

The hon. Members for Derby, South and for Oldham, West spoke about the failure, as they saw it, to control prices in the context of the social security policy inspectorate study. They clearly felt that the proposals had failed to control prices and that landlords had not dropped them. However, we have very firm indications from our local offices throughout the country that landlords have held, and in other places dropped, their prices significantly. More than 85 per cent. of our local offices are known to have experienced charges being maintained at the same levels when price rises would have been automatic if limits had been increased after November 1984.

In the south London and south-west regions—two regions with a high number of boarders and incidences of reported abuse—more than 90 per cent. of offices confirmed that charges had been pegged. That is an important point.

I should tell the hon. Member for Derby, South, that, if I remember correctly, the cost of Ernst and Whinney was approximately £110,000. However, if that is inaccurate I shall write to tell her.

I was asked about help for families with children. Children aged over 11, who would normally be expected to occupy a separate room, are eligible for the adult rate,

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whereas younger children receive one and a half times the normal scale rate, with an amount for personal expenses on top.

My hon. Friend the Member for Brentwood and Ongar (Mr. McCrindle) felt that housing benefit should be withdrawn more gradually. The changes that we are making do not affect the greater part of housing benefit expenditure on students. Entitlement remains for those in private accommodation, and for any student who stays in his accommodation in the summer when he has no grant resource, even if he is in a hall of residence. We are therefore seeking to meet the point that concerns my hon. Friend, and, time permitting, I shall return to some of his other comments later.

The hon. Member for Fulham referred to the non-householder contribution, and asked how many non-householders currently receiving the non-householder contribution would cease to receive it. The answer is none. We have ensured in the regulations that all existing recipients of the contribution will not be affected by the changes. There will, therefore, be no cash losers. Similarly, where a non-dependant deduction is made in respect of a 21 to 24-year-old on supplementary benefit, it will continue to be made.

I was also asked how many students in halls of residence received housing benefit. Our estimate is that there are between 80,000 and 85,000 students in halls of residence who claim housing benefit currently, but that in many cases the weekly entitlement is very small indeed.

The hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) spoke about the abuse of housing benefit by landlords. I responded substantially to his point in my intervention, as did my hon. Friend the Minister, but I have also written to him on that point and I hope that he will receive the letter within a day or so.

My hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, South (Mr. Brandon-Bravo) raised a specific point about another area requiring reform which was forcibly brought to my attention by my hon. Friend the Member for South Ribble (Mr. Atkins). That was the need for retaining fees for temporary absence from care. That was a sensitive and acute problem. As the House will be aware, residential care and nursing homes are increasingly the permanent home for elderly and disabled people. I am glad that the changes we have made to retaining fees will enable many elderly people to take a holiday from such homes without an unfortunate effect on them or the home that is now their permanent home.

We have received a substantial amount of support for the regulations on housing benefit for students. I believe that the regulations are defendable in principle, defendable in logic, and defendable in equity. I commend them to the House.

It being Seven o'clock, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Question, pursuant to the Order [27 June].*

Question agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Supplementary Benefit (Requirements and Resources) Miscellaneous Amendment Regulations 1986, which were laid before this House on 18th June, be approved.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *proceeded, pursuant to the Order [27 June], to put forthwith the Question on the remaining motion.*

SUPPLEMENTARY BENEFIT

Resolved,

That the draft Supplementary Benefit (Requirements and Resources) Amendment Regulations 1986, which were laid before this House on 26th June, be approved.—*[Mr. Newton.]*

HOUSING BENEFIT

Motion made, and Question put,

That a humble Address be presented to Her Majesty praying that the Housing Benefits Amendment (No. 3) Regulations 1986 (S.I., 1986, No. 1009), dated 13th June 1986, a copy of which was laid before this House on 18th June, be annulled.—*[Mr. Rooker.]*

The House divided: Ayes 160, Noes 232.

Division No. 241] **[7 pm**

AYES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnett, Guy
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'mline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, R. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne N)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Canavan, Dennis
Carter-Jones, Lewis
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clelland, David Gordon
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S)*
Cohen, Harry
Conlan, Bernard
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry
Fatchett, Derek
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Garrett, W. E.
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Gourlay, Harry
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*
Hancock, Michael
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, Dr Mark *(Durham)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Jenkins, Rt Hon Roy *(Hillh'd)*
John, Brynmor
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kirkwood, Archy
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McCartney, Hugh
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKelvey, William
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
Maclennan, Robert
McTaggart, Robert
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Meadowcroft, Michael
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
Park, George
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Pendry, Tom
Penhaligon, David
Pike, Peter
Prescott, John

Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Richardson, Ms Jo
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, J. W.
Ross, Ernest *(Dundee W)*
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Rowlands, Ted
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Shields, Mrs Elizabeth
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Short, Mrs R.*(W'hampt'n NE)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C.*(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stott, Roger
Straw, Jack
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Tinn, James
Wainwright, R.
Wallace, James
Wareing, Robert
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Wilson, Gordon
Winnick, David
Woodall, Alec
Wrigglesworth, Ian
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Ray Powell and
Mr. Allen McKay.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Benyon, William
Best, Keith
Bevan, David Gilroy
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Bruinvels, Peter
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Butt, Alistair
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Carttiss, Michael
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, W. S.
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Couchman, James
Cranborne, Viscount
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Durant, Tony
Emery, Sir Peter
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Fletcher, Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Gummer, Rt Hon John S
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Harvey, Robert
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Hickmet, Richard
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hirst, Michael
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jackson, Robert
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Lang, Ian
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Antony
Mates, Michael
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Mills, Sir Peter *(West Devon)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Moate, Roger
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M. *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Normanton, Tom
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pollock, Alexander
Porter, Barry
Portillo, Michael
Powley, John
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Price, Sir David
Proctor, K. Harvey
Rathbone, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Richard
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Wall, Sir Patrick
Waller, Gary
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Wiggin, Jerry
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd and
Mr. Archie Hamilton.

Question accordingly negatived.

Orders of the Day

Housing (Scotland) Bill

Lords amendments considered.

Clause 2

INCREASED DISCOUNT WHERE DWELLING-HOUSE PURCHASED IS A FLAT

Lords amendment: No. 1, in page 2, line 12, leave out "(2)" and insert "(3)".

7.11 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Michael Ancram): I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): With this it will be convenient to consider Lords amendments Nos. 2 to 4.

Mr. Ancram: Hon. Members may recall that when the Bill had its Report stage on 4 March concern was expressed that the provisions of clause 2, which provides for improved discount on flats, did not go far enough, and in particular were less generous than the corresponding provisions of the Housing and Planning Bill, as it had been amended in Standing Committee.

On that occasion, I said that I recognised the strength of the views which had been expressed. I accepted also that it would not be right in principle for tenants who live in similar houses to have a different entitlement to discount in England and Scotland. I said, therefore, that the Government would look again at the discount which should be available on flats. The present amendments are the result.

As introduced, the Bill proposed that discount on flats under the right to buy should be increased by 10 per cent. Under our original proposals, people buying a flat would have been entitled to a new minimum discount of 42 per cent. after two years, rising to 70 per cent. after 30 years.

Amendments Nos. 1 to 3 provide a better deal for flat purchasers. We are now proposing that discount entitlement should rise by steps of 2 per cent. each year, instead of 1 per cent. as at present. A tenant with the minimum of two years standing will therefore be entitled to a discount of 44 per cent. on a flat, and the maximum of 70 per cent. will be reached after 15 years.

The upper and lower limits of the discount scale on flats sold under the right to buy will therefore remain virtually the same as in the Bill as introduced. However, the time required in order to qualify for the maximum discount will be halved. This will benefit the tenants of all types of flats. It recognises that, because of the way in which local authority allocation systems operate, tenants of flats tend to be younger people, and I believe that the amendments will be particularly welcomed by younger purchasers taking their first steps into home ownership.

These amendments fulfil the undertaking I gave to this House in March that we would again see whether we could improve our proposals for discounts on flats. They are consistent with amendments which have been carried to the Housing and Planning Bill, so that the rules on entitlement to discount will remain the same in Scotland as in England. I believe that the amendments will contribute to our aim of further promoting home ownership amongst tenants of council flats. I am confident that they will be particularly welcomed by younger purchasers.

Mr. John Maxton (Glasgow, Cathcart): These amendments are horrendous. The more I look at them, the more horrendous they become. I should like first to deal with the reasons why the Government considered it necessary to introduce them at all. The reason which we have been given is that the majority of members of the Standing Committee on the Housing and Planning Bill decided that they wanted a change in the upper discount for those who lived in high-rise or deck-access flats—hard-to-let flats—in England and Wales.

The Government said that the House believed that there should be an improved discount, but that was not the view of the majority on the Standing Committee on the Housing (Scotland) Bill. If the Under-Secretary of State is going to plead, as did the Secretary of State on Monday, how good it is that we have separate Scottish legislation and that things can be done differently in Scotland, it ill becomes him to say that, just because something has happened in England and Wales, he will immediately bring Scotland into line. It should not work that way.

We shall see when we consider later Lords amendments that the Government are not prepared to go along with what happens in England and Wales; yet, in this measure, which is another attempt to give away housing, that is what the Under-Secretary of State is prepared to do.

It must be continually pointed out that there is a difference between England and Wales in council housing stock and attitudes to housing. In England, the proportion of housing that is council controlled and the proportion of those council dwellings that are flats are considerably smaller than in Scotland. The attitude to renting in Scotland is based on a much stronger tradition than in England, and most people would happily accept that attitude. There is a difference of which the Government should take account when considering council house sales and tenants' rights. We must look at Scotland in a different way.

The amendments go considerably wider than the original proposal in Committee on the Housing and Planning Bill, which was limited to what were considered to be hard-to-let flats in high-rise blocks and deck-access blocks. This group of amendments extends to every flat in council ownership. By the Government's definition, that includes attractive—certainly in Glasgow terms—four-in-a-block flats. Those flats can be found in the constituencies of my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) and of hon. Members from Glasgow and the west of Scotland as well as in my constituency. They are the most desirable form of housing in the Glasgow district council's stock. The provision to do something about hard-to-let property is now being extended to highly desirable property, giving those who are in housing in which they want to live anyway a massive and accelerated discount.

I shall give an example of a person who lives in a Glasgow council flat in Moss Park, in the constituency of my right hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Millan), or in Knightswood, in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Garscadden. Both areas are sought after by council house tenants in Glasgow. At

present—I have checked this with the Glasgow district council—a flat there would be valued at approximately £21,000. Someone who originally got a tenancy from the Glasgow district council or from any other district council at the age of 21 could, at the age of 35, purchase that house —he may not have lived in it for more than one day— for £6,300. Three years later he can sell the house for £21,000. I am not including any profit he may make, but I accept that he will probably get something for inflation, so he would probably sell it at £22,500 or £23,000. However, even if he sold it for £21,000 he is making £14,700 at the age of 37. I wish at the age of 37 someone had given me a lump sum of £14,700 to spend on my housing. Many people who have always lived in the private sector would have loved to have had that amount of money to invest in their housing at the age of 37 or 38.

Let us look at exactly what that means. The people who sell their flats in that way have £14,700. What have they paid out for that flat over 15 years? At present the amount paid by council house tenants in somewhere such as Mosspark is about £100 a month in rent and rates. Therefore, they are paying approximately £1,200 a year. Fifteen years ago they were paying about £20 a month in rent and rates. If we average it out and say that over the 15 years they have paid an average of £500 a year in rent and rates, they are now taking away almost double what they have paid in for their housing. Therefore, they have had their house for 15 years rent and rates free. In fact, they have been paid to live in that council house for 15 years. That is what this amendment means.

Mr. Ancram: It is a flat.

Mr. Maxton: The Minister is obviously now very embarrassed and squirming because he has no answer other than to sit there and say "flat" every time I say "house". If *Hansard* would like to put in "flat" every time I say "house" that will suit me fine. I shall say "flat" because these are highly desirable flats.

Mr. David Marshall (Glasgow, Shettleston): Does my hon. Friend agree that he should perhaps reinvestigate the value of the houses. I am astonished to hear him say that they are only £21,000. I have houses in my constituency —they are houses, not flats—with three bedrooms and a front door and a garden or, in many cases, a side door and a garden. They are in the most desirable parts of the city. In Sandyhills in my constituency they are valued at £26,000. They are very desirable houses. I think that my hon. Friend's figures slightly undervalue the houses. No one in Glasgow would describe them as flats.

Mr. Maxton: My hon. Friend makes a good point. However, I phoned Glasgow district council this afternoon to check the figures and it said that the valuation for a three-bedroomed flat in Mosspark is £21,000. That is the valuation for sale which is based on the fact that there is a sitting tenant. If one buys a property for investment and it has a sitting tenant, one buys it at a cheaper price than if it has vacant possession. The Minister always claims that that is what the discounts are about. But that is another matter. My hon. Friend the Member for Shettleston is right; the person may be able to sell it three years later for £28,000 or £29,000. I am being modest in saying it would be sold for £21,000. Therefore, the profit margin is bigger. What I am saying is that, even if it is sold at the price it was bought for, the person will have been paid roughly £500 a year for each of the 15 years he has lived in that house rent and rates free. That is an absolute rip-off of public property. It has nothing to do with the principle of whether one buys or sells. It is to do with whether we have a Government who have any regard for public expenditure and the public purse. They keep claiming that that is what the Government are about.

Mr. Ancram: I am listening carefully to the hon. Gentleman's argument. He suggests that these flats—I use the word advisedly because it is the word in the amendment—are attractive and that therefore any help to people to buy them is, in effect, a rip-off. If they are so attractive, can he tell me how many of the flats are at present being sold to their sitting tenants?

Mr. David Marshall: Too many.

Mr. Maxton: I would accept that in Glasgow there has not been any great rush to buy. Surely that might just say to the Minister that his policy is wrong and that the tenants in Glasgow do not particularly want to buy their houses. He is doing everything to get rid of them. He is giving them away now. He is telling people they can live rent and rates free for 15 years and the Government will then pay them a bonus of £500 for every year they have been in the house —sorry, I mean flat. I must get it right or the Minister will complain. As my hon. Friend the Member for Shettleston said, many people consider those four-in-a-block flats as houses because many of them are on the ground floor and have a garden, a drive and a garage and all the things most people would consider to be highly desirable. Of course there are other flats. *[Interruption.]* The Minister says that they are selling increasingly. Yes, they are selling. *[Interruption.]* The Minister says "Good" because he wants to be rid of them. If the Minister or his right hon. and hon. Friends were to show the same disregard for the shares of the British Gas Corporation or British Telecom he would be rooted out of the Government by his right hon. Friend the Prime Minister so fast that his feet would not touch the ground because his action would be against every principle that the Government stand for — probity in terms of public finance, controlling public expenditure and trying to ensure that we have efficiency in the public sector. The Government are giving away money and giving away public property at knock-down prices not even for the sake of a principle because there is nothing principled about it. They have an antipathy and hatred of all that is in local authority control and they want to do something about it. They are trying to give away the flats.

I can assure you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that I shall be urging all my right hon. and hon. Friends to vote against this amendment.

Mr. Hugh Brown (Glasgow, Provan): I know we need to be brief but it would be wrong to let this pass without having another observation on it. I must say to the Minister in the kindest possible way that the Bill has been badly handled. I would describe it as a complete and utter shambles. It was not prepared properly and there have not been enough discussions. He knows that to be true. Then it had to suffer so many defeats in the Lords. Perhaps there is a badge to be awarded to Ministers who reverse unpopular decisions made in the other place by their own supporters.

I am not sure what our view is on this. Perhaps somebody will put me right if I am wrong. I do not

[Mr. Hugh Brown]

necessarily believe that it has to be on all fours with the discount in England and Wales. It is difficult because if there is something better or more generous in England and Wales we would be complaining if we did not have a right to it. Therefore, there is an element of doubt about the right way to proceed in this. I am not concerned about whether the aim is to be on all fours with England and Wales. I am looking at the matter purely on the basis of whether the change in the discount is a good thing. I believe that it is not.

7.30 pm

Obviously, I slipped up on this. When we discussed the Bill on Second Reading and in Committee, I confess that I did not realise that a flat was what we would call a four-in-a-block house. That is typical of technical descriptions not being in accordance with what things are popularly understood to be. I am sure that that was an omission on my part, and that there has been no change, as the Minister said.

Most of the flats about which I am concerned are in good quality housing areas. To me, a flat is a tenement flat, and there are many of them in good housing areas. In Riddrie, for example, we would be giving a 70 per cent. discount in good quality property in a highly desirable area with one of the highest amenity groupings in Glasgow. Frankly, the lengths to which the Government are going to keep up their statistics for the number of houses being sold are absurd. That is what is behind it.

I refuse to give the Government credit for having a housing policy.

Mr. Ancram: What about the Green Paper?

Mr. Brown: The Minister quotes the Green Paper to me with great regularity, but he is not getting away with it this time. It was never my intention to go along the road of flinging houses away at a 70 per cent. discount after 15 years' tenancy.

The disadvantage is that these are good houses. I do not want to rehearse all the arguments. If they are not being sold now under the present discount, this little bonus will have little or no effect. That is my guess. It might look all right, but I do not think that there will be much effect. The present level of discount is so generous that if people have not bought their houses by now I doubt whether the extra discount will make a great difference. Therefore, I do not see the need for the amendment. On that general principle, I shall vote against it.

The Bill is a shambles. This is the third attempt by the Government to change the discounts in fewer than five years. They will have to realise this sooner or later. There is a growing hope among many families in what are called difficult-to-let areas that they will move out of those areas. They cannot afford to take on a mortgage because they are on low income or supplementary benefit. If they cannot move out or have no hope of moving out, there is greater hopelessness. I warn the Minister that sooner or later, whether it is drug abuse, alcohol abuse or violence, the end result to the big housing estates will be social trouble of one sort or another. The Government, who do not care about those problems, much as they always say they do——

Mr. Ancram: We do care.

Mr. Brown: If the Government had any knowledge or feeling for those problems, they would be putting more resources into those areas than they are now. This is a trivial way in which to pursue an ideological objective. I know that we shall not win in the vote tonight, but I have no compunction about voting against the amendment. I hope that the public will realise that this Government are a poor substitute for a housing policy. The sooner we get a Government who know something about housing the better.

Sir Russell Johnston (Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber): The hon. Member for Glasgow, Provan (Mr. Brown) put a contradictory case. He said that this was a bad proposition and then he said that it would not make much difference and that it was essentially trivial. If it is essentially trivial, I am not sure why we are making such a tremendous fuss about it.

Secondly, we are not making a judgment on the absence of a housing policy, which, I agree, is true in respect of the Government. Throughout the Committee I took the position that we in the alliance support the right to buy, and accept that the various incentives that the Government have introduced with a view to improving the possibility of people doing so and enabling those in some difficulty to do so more easily may be a crude form of redistribution, but it is a form of redistribution. I recognise it as such.

The Government have failed in that, while being willing to reduce the available public stock by the amount that is sold, at the same time they have been unwilling to make available to the local authority the necessary finance to provide more general needs housing. Therefore, I do not see any particular contradiction in saying that I accept the system of discount, but that does not lead me to say that I think that the Government have a housing policy or that this is a central issue in housing policy, or, further, that they should not make available more money for general needs housing.

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): I accept for the moment that the hon. Gentleman is in favour of a sales policy and sees a discount as a form of redistribution. Is he happy with the rather arbitrary way in which people who may be in the most attractive and desirable properties with the largest possibility of capital gains are being given an unnatural advantage in an accelerated discount build-up as against other tenants who might want to buy their council houses? Is not the hon. Gentleman slightly offended by the illogicality of the amendment?

Sir Russell Johnston: It is not exactly illogicality; it is a fact that one cannot devise the perfect legislative way of doing it. Some people will benefit considerably. The hon. Gentleman is right about that. It is also a fact that people who are buying are the best off. They are the people who are best able to do it. The other side of the argument is that the Minister would reasonably say, "I am giving them, on an incremental basis, a considerable discount that will enable certain people who otherwise would not be able to contemplate purchase to do so." Although the system produces the unfairnesses and disparities that the hon. Gentleman properly puts his finger on, I am prepared to thole that in pursuit of the other general principle.

Mr. Barry Henderson (Fife, North-East): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir Russell Johnson: I am sure that you would be happier if I sat down, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Henderson: I had not intended to speak, but I should like to make a point arising out of the exchange between the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston) and the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar).

I am puzzled by the position of the alliance. To say that the alliance is in favour of sales is perhaps going too far. It is not against sales, which is the way in which the alliance tends to express its policy. It sounds as if it is not against sales in a few selective cases that it can imagine on occasions. It is not in favour of the right to buy. If I remember correctly, the Liberals have always voted against any extension of the discount system.

In the exchange between the two hon. Members to whom I referred, it seemed to me that the hon. Member for Garscadden was implying that the people covered by this part of the Bill are particularly favoured, but surely we are talking about flats—large blocks of flats. [HON. MEMBERS: "No."]

Mr. Maxton: That is the point. We are not necessarily talking about large blocks of flats. If the hon. Gentleman has been in Glasgow he will have seen what are called four-in-a-block houses, where there are only four flats in one building. Therefore, they are deemed by the Bill to be flats which could be sold with the discount.

Mr. Henderson: The hon. Gentleman's point might have had a little more validity if the distinction which he makes had been made in amendments tabled by the Opposition during the passage of the Bill. I was not a member of the Committee that considered the Bill. The Opposition may have moved amendments in Committee, in which case I apologise, but I was not aware of amendments appearing on the Floor of the House. In general, flats are not the most popular types of council houses available. They are not the most popular types of houses for people in the housing associations sector. To suggest that a specially privileged group has been given some special deal is fallacious. The Government's policy is much more reasonable.

The Labour party has consistently made it clear where it stands on the issue. I wish that we could obtain the same clarity from the Liberal party. It seems to be trying to find a position somewhere between the Labour party and the Tory party. There is no logical position on which it can rest its case.

Mr. Ancram: With the leave of the House, may I sum up some points that have been made in the debate? Had my hon. Friend the Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Henderson) been on the Committee he would have had no difficulty with the position of the Liberal spokesman, the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston) who, like his colleague the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) on a previous Bill, proved that the Liberal policy is simple. The Liberal party is for the principle of the right to buy but against the practice. It is a good position, and one which I am sure it will try to maintain for many years to come.

The hon. Member for Glasgow, Provan (Mr. Brown) continues to accuse me of not having a housing policy. If he considers the policy that has been operated by the Government since 1979 he will discover that he, if not its direct father, at least has a close relationship with it in terms of the Green Paper for which he was responsible in 1977, and to which Conservative Members have always given more credence than his hon. Friends and colleagues gave it when it was published.

Mr. Dewar: It is a splendid document.

Mr. Ancram: I am delighted to hear from the Opposition Front Bench spokesman that that is incorrect and that he regards it as a splendid document. I look forward to the greatest support from him for our housing policy.

The hon. Member for Provan made the valid point that we keep changing the discount. He is a man who believes in learning by experience. When the discounts were introduced in 1980, it was understood by all that, as we saw how it worked, we would review it. I do not wish to discuss in detail the figures which were given a great airing in Committee, but it is clear from the figures that flats, and that includes four-in-a-block houses, have not sold as well as ordinary council houses. The figure that I gave in Committee was somewhere between 4 and 5 per cent. That is the upper limit of the figure of flats, although there is a distinction between the types of flats. That compares with 14 per cent. for self-contained houses.

The reason for that, as I tried to say earlier during the course of the legislation, is that there are extra obligations and undertakings when buying a flat which do not exist when buying a self-contained house. The most obvious of those are the common charges for which the owner might be liable. That was why we moved an amendment to increase the discount to 70 per cent. During Committee proceedings on the Housing and Planning Bill, Opposition Members moved an amendment to introduce a better discount scheme for flats——

Mr. Maxton *rose*——

Mr. Ancram: Allow me to finish. I never give way in the middle of a sentence. I shall give way when I have finished it. During the course of the legislation, we accepted that we should reconsider types of flats, and the people who live in them. I understood, perhaps wrongly, that the Labour party intended to encourage and help younger house purchasers. Here is an example, as I said in my earlier remarks, where that could be achieved by giving a better rate of discount to those who live in flats, accepting that most of them are young.

On the basis of the experience of the right-to-buy policy, we accepted that further changes in the discount were required, and they have been made. When the Bill was in the other place, their Lordships — from all political parties—did not see fit to divide on this matter, so the principle was given credence in that House.

7.45 pm

Mr. Maxton: The Minister should not distort that amendment. It did not refer to flats; it referred to a specific group of flats which are recognised as being hard to let and hard to sell. They are high-rise deck-access flats. That amendment did not extend to all flats as this amendment does.

Mr. Ancram: I accept that the hon. Gentleman's colleagues made it clear in Committee that they were not averse to the principle of applying higher discounts to flats that are hard to let. They accepted that there were good reasons in some cases for applying discounts. That is not

[Mr. Ancram]

the line that the hon. Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) has taken this evening. He has once again shown us—I shall not ask him again what the Labour party policy is, since I have asked him enough times—that the Labour party, whatever the fudge that came out of its conference last March, is still opposed to the right to buy. That is the basic objection. On that basis, the hon. Gentleman is asking his hon. Friends to vote against the amendment. On that basis, I call on my hon. Friends to support the amendment.

Question put, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment:—

The House divided: Ayes 166, Noes 91.

Division No. 242] **[7.46 pm**

AYES

Alton, David
Ancram, Michael
Ashdown, Paddy
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Best, Keith
Bevan, David Gilroy
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Carttiss, Michael
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Cranborne, Viscount
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Emery, Sir Peter
Favell, Anthony
Fletcher, Alexander
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Glyn, Dr Alan
Gorst, John
Gower, Sir Raymond
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hancock, Michael
Hanley, Jeremy
Harris, David
Harvey, Robert
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Hickmet, Richard
Hicks, Robert
Hirst, Michael
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Howells, Geraint
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jackson, Robert
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kennedy, Charles
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knox, David
Lang, Ian
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Macfarlane, Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Antony
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Meadowcroft, Michael
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M. *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Mudd, David
Nicholls, Patrick
Normanton, Tom
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Penhaligon, David
Pollock, Alexander
Portillo, Michael
Powley, John
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raffan, Keith
Rhodes James, Robert
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Richard
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Waddington, David
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Wilson, Gordon
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Archie Hamilton and
Mr. Michael Newbert.

NOES

Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnett, Guy
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'rmline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, R. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne N)*
Buchan, Norman
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Carter-Jones, Lewis
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clay, Robert
Clelland, David Gordon
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S)*
Conlan, Bernard
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Craigen, J. M.
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry
Fatchett, Derek
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
George, Bruce
Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Janner, Hon Greville
John, Brynmor
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Leadbitter, Ted
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
McCartney, Hugh
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Michie, William
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
Patchett, Terry
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Randall, Stuart
Richardson, Ms Jo
Rogers, Allan
Ross, Ernest *(Dundee W)*
Sedgemore, Brian
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Snape, Peter
Spearing, Nigel
Stott, Roger
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Tinn, James
Wareing, Robert
Winnick, David
Woodall, Alec
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Allen Adams and
Mr. James Hamilton.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Subsequent Lords amendments agreed to.

New Clause

REMOVAL OF RESTRICTION ON SECURITY OF TENURE

Lords amendment: No. 6, after clause 9, insert the following new clause:

"A — In Schedule 1 to the 1980 Act, paragraph 1 (tenancy not to be secure tenancy if for period exceeding 20 years) shall cease to have effect."

8 pm

Mr. Ancram: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): With this it will be convenient to take Lords amendments Nos. 13 and 14.

Mr. Ancram: The purpose of amendments 6 and 14 is to repeal paragraph 1 of schedule 1 to the Tenants' Rights Etc. (Scotland) Act 1980. This paragraph provides that the tenancy shall not be a secure tenancy, and therefore the tenant shall not have the right to buy, if it is for a period of more than 20 years. The effect of the present amendments is that tenants who have such long leases will in future be secure tenants and will enjoy the right to buy, no matter whether they entered into the long lease before or after the date the Bill comes into effect.

The amendment clears up the confusion which existed earlier for tenants in the Central region. Earlier in the year, we learnt that the Central regional council was seeking to persuade its tenants, who presently do not have security of tenure, to enter into 21-year leases or to buy their property at a 10 per cent. discount. It was clear that by this means the council hoped to prevent tenants being given security of tenure and the right to buy at full discount when the Bill came into force. That would not be acceptable and the amendment makes it clear that that cannot be done.

Mr. Michael Forsyth (Stirling): I thank my hon. Friend the Minister for moving the amendment, which will affect a number of my constituents. I believe that the Central regional council, in seeking to persuade its tenants either to buy their properties at a 10 per cent. discount or to enter into a 21-year lease, was involved in a thoroughly cynical and reprehensible act, which caused considerable concern and upset to tenants. We hear from some sections of the Labour party that they are not opposed to the right to buy, but on this occasion the Central regional council did everything possible to remove that right from its tenants. This was thoroughly disgraceful and considerable distress was caused. I am grateful to my hon. Friend for the speedy way in which he has acted. I am delighted to be able to convey to him considerable gratitude from my constituents who will benefit from the amendment.

Mr. Maxton: We shall not oppose the amendment, but I do wish that the hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth) would stop parading his vindictive prejudices against the Central regional council.

Question put and agreed to.

Subsequent Lords amendment agreed to. [Special Entry.]

New Clause

FUNCTIONS OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES WITH RESPECT TO PERSONS WHO ARE HOMELESS OR THREATENED WITH HOMELESSNESS

Lords amendment: No. 8, after clause 19, page 18, line 15, at end insert new clause B—

"B. — (1) The Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977 shall be amended in accordance with the following provisions of this section.

(2) In section 1(2) (homeless persons and persons threatened with homelessness) after paragraph *(c)* there shall be inserted the following paragraph—

"*(d)* it does not provide the ordinary facilities of a residence and it is inappropriate for his needs, or it is unreasonable for him to continue to live in it."

(3) In section 4 (duties of housing authorities to homeless persons and persons threatened with homelessness) after subsection (6) there shall be inserted the following subsection—

"(7) Where a local authority has a duty under subsections (4) and (5) above "accommodation" shall be defined as either—

(a) a separate dwelling house that shall not be overcrowded as defined in section 89 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1966 and shall meet the tolerable standard as defined in section 14 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1974, or

(b) in exceptional circumstances where a separate dwelling house as defined in *(a)* above is not appropriate to the needs of an applicant accommodation that is appropriate and reasonable in all the circumstances.""

Mr. Ancram: I beg to move, That this House doth disagree with the Lords in the said amendment.

This is not the first time that the judgment of the Law Lords in what has come to be known as the Puhlhofer case has been debated during the consideration of the Bill.

Hon. Members will recall that when this matter was first raised, when the Bill was discussed on report in March, I indicated that I would wish further time to take advice and to assess the implications of the Law Lords' judgment, but that I intended, along with my colleagues in the Department of the Environment, to give the matter careful consideration. In the following weeks, we looked very carefully into the implications of the judgment and in the light of the amendment passed in another place we have further reviewed this matter.

We concluded that the judgment of the Law Lords accurately reflects the effect of the Act and what we understand to have been the intention of Parliament on two main points. These are, first, that a local authority has discretion to reach a view on whether an applicant is homeless, taking account of the accommodation available to him. Secondly, where an authority accepts that an applicant is homeless and that it has a duty to secure accommodation for him, the authority again has discretion to decide what sort of accommodation is appropriate, having regard to the code of guidance issued by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. That was the position before the Law Lords' judgment; and it is the position today.

We have concluded, therefore, that the suggestion that the homeless persons Act needs to be amended is premature. We have, however, offered to keep the position under review, and if it can be demonstrated, over the coming months, that local authorities are taking a substantially different approach to the discharge of their responsibilities to homeless people under the Act as a

[Mr. Ancram]

result of the judgment, we would be prepared to reconsider the matter. I have to emphasise that we have no evidence so far to support the claim that the decision in the Puhlhofer case is having an adverse effect on the prospects of homeless people who apply under the Act.

Sir Russell Johnston: The Minister has said that if the behaviour of local authorities could be demonstrated to have changed, he would be prepared to reconsider the matter. Presumably that means that he would be prepared to reconsider legislation. The reality is that the opportunity of introducing the relevant legislation is with us now. I fear that the Minister has not explained to the House what disadvantage will stem from making a change now.

Mr. Ancram: I shall turn in a moment to the amendment from another place that we are considering. When I last addressed the House on this issue on Report, I said that my view, which was based on advice that I was being given, was that in practice the judgment would not change the way in which local authorities operated in practice. I have given considerable further consideration to the matter. I have taken advice and I have consulted my colleagues in the Department of the Environment. It remains the Government's view that there is nothing to the contrary in what is happening, so far as we know, in Scotland or England to suggest that our view is wrong. We do not believe that the judgment has affected the way in which local authorities will act in practice. It does not have an effect upon the guidance given by the Secretary of State under the code of guidance and I have no intention of reconsidering the matter.

The amendment is unnecessary for the reasons which I have set out and I believe that it is dangerous. In the first place, it would give rise to severe difficulties of interpretation. Secondly, in spite of the claims that the amendment seeks only to restore the position to that obtaining before the Puhlhofer judgment, it will in fact impose substantial new duties on local authorities, and for that reason the amendment cannot be allowed to stand.

Sir Russell Johnston: New duties such as what?

Mr. Ancram: The hon. Gentleman asks, "New duties such as what?" from a sedentary position. Subsection (2) of the new clause provides that a person shall be homeless if he has accommodation which

"does not provide the ordinary facilities of a residence".

No definition is provided, however, of what is meant by that and the other phrases that are used. In my view, they are not capable of being so defined. It would be left to the local authority to interpret the phrase as it saw fit. One can imagine the scope that could arise for litigation as a result.

Secondly, subsection (3) seeks to go beyond the present provisions of the Act by making mandatory what is at the moment advice contained in a code to which authorities must have regard. There are two points to consider, the first being what the amendment actually does, which is to define what accommodation will count as fulfilling an authority's duty. If an authority placed a homeless family in other accommodation — for example, bed and breakfast—it would not have fulfilled its duty and could be open to applications for judicial review.

This is quite different from the present position, where an authority would be fulfilling its duty by placing the applicant in bed-and-breakfast accommodation, but must have regard to the code of guidance which says that that should be used only as a last resort, and even then as a temporary measure. There will inevitably be circumstances in which authorities have to provide temporary accommodation for an initial period.

The amendment stresses the need to provide permanent accommodation and this is, I suspect, its main purpose. The code asks that permanent accommodation should be secured as soon as possible, but I believe that we should think carefully before extending local authorities' duties in the way that the amendment envisages. The implications for local authorities could be severe.

I accept that in carrying the amendment the other House acted with the best of intentions, but the Law Lords' judgment is not having the dire consequences that it fears. To amend the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act in what I believe is a hasty and ill-thought-out way is not justified on the basis of the evidence that is available to us and could have unforeseen and damaging consequences. We are proposing a much more measured approach of monitoring the position to see what, if anything, happens, and then to bring forward carefully considered amendments both for England and Scotland if they prove to be necessary. I believe that that is a much more sensible way in which to proceed and on that basis I ask the House to reject the amendment.

Mr. Dewar: It is always tempting streckly to accept any occasions when the Minister defends local authority discretion. That is not usually a virtue of which he approves. Therefore, I am sorry that I have to be a little sceptical and ungrateful on this occasion.

This is an amendment of some importance. In a sense, it is another round in a running battle which has been, to use an appropriate adjective, nobly maintained, largely in another place, and has been hard fought at almost every stage.

I should make it clear that, apart from the parliamentary activities, there has been some excellent briefing from outside the House, particularly from Shelter, which has a close interest in the matter. Some of the points I am about to make are based on information that that organisation has supplied. I think that it has the best of the argument and it is correct that this should be put before the House.

I moved an amendment on Report on 4 March and the Minister has referred to that debate. I want briefly to rehearse the argument. It all goes back to Lord Brightman's judgment in February 1986 in the Puhlhofer case versus the London borough of Hillingdon. In that case there was judicial consideration of the meaning of the word "accommodation" in the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977.

The facts were simple and I do not need to detain the House long on them. It was the case of a young couple who were applying for help under the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act. They were put into bed-and-breakfast accommodation and the husband, his wife and two young children occupied one room which was inevitably cluttered with a double and a single bed, a dressing table and the various items of equipment that are needed for a small family. The council argued that that was adequate accommodation and that the couple were not homeless because they were being housed in those circumstances.

The merits or otherwise of that particular argument were not decided by the court. Lord Brightman did not take the view that he had to decide whether the course taken by the authority had been reasonable or unreasonable. He came to the conclusion that it was entirely a matter for the authority. He made the point:

"Parliament plainly and wisely placed no qualifying adjective before the word 'accommodation'."

His Lordship said that the word "appropriate" or "reasonable" is not to be imported. Accommodation is not to be disregarded as accommodation merely because it is unfit for habitation in terms of the Housing Act.

His lordship developed that argument, and his position was that there are no rules. He did not talk at great length about the code of guidance. His position was that there are no rules. The House will remember the rather picturesque phrase that he used. He said that it was a misuse of language to describe Diogenes as having occupied accommodation within the meaning of the Act, but, by implication, almost anything else would go. Therefore, however much one might sympathise with the young couple, at the end of the day, the word of the authority, however unreasonable it might seem to any outsider, could not effectively be challenged.

It seemed to Labour Members and to a large number of people outside the House, as the Minister knows, that we should make some attempt to remedy that position and to write in a definition which would allow the homeless persons provision to operate in a way that Parliament would have wished when it put the Act on the statute book. The Minister referred to the fact that he was merely doing what Parliament always intended. I did not quite follow that argument, but, in any event, none of us wanted the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act to be operated unfairly. The vast majority of local authorities do not want to operate it in a way that is ungenerous or in such a way that the safety net is a particularly uncomfortable temporary resting place.

Therefore, on Report we attempted to build in one or two definition phrases and to suggest that someone was homeless if their accommodation was inappropriate to their needs, it was unreasonable for them to continue to live there, or if the accommodation did not measure up to certain statutory minimum requirements.

There was, as the Minister knows—I do not think that I am exaggerating—fairly widespread support and sympathy for that point of view. Indeed, the amendment that stood in my name was also signed by the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Fletcher), who I am sorry is not here this evening. It is clear that there was all-party support. Certainly, we had the support of other parties on the Opposition Benches.

8.15 pm

The Minister himself was not unhelpful in his remarks. He made some caveats, of course. He said that he would have to look at the matter. At that stage I did not appreciate the somewhat sinister implications of his references to the need to consult the Department of the Environment. We did not force the amendment to the vote, I think wisely, and I left the debate fairly hopeful that we would see some action by the Minister. I was prepared to accept that my amendment was probably in many ways defective and might have substantial inherent difficulties that I had not thought of. But I hoped that we should see some attempt to meet the point of the amendment in a more professional manner with the help of the Minister's considerable departmental resources.

Therefore, it was a disappointment when it became clear in subsequent proceedings in another place that the Minister's position had hardened and that he had retreated from the rather more open attitude which he had displayed on the first airing of the argument. When on 13 May the Lords debated the issue on an amendment moved by the noble Lord Mackie of Benshie, tremendous emphasis was placed on the technical difficulties of the amendment that had been put down. It is significant that in most of the debates technical difficulties have always been advanced. When, finally, it was debated on 11 June in another place, the Minister, the noble Lord Gray of Contin, although he accepted that the matter had aroused the conscience of the House, went on to advance a number of arguments, at which I want to look briefly, which have been largely repeated by the Minister today.

The first and basic argument was that the whole matter was premature—the Minister used that word again a few minutes ago—and that there was no evidence of abuse of any kind. There are different degrees of enthusiasm for the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act. My local authority in Glasgow has an excellent record and has tried hard to give the cover envisaged in the Act. But there is some evidence that those variations can be worrying and that there are different approaches in different parts of the country.

The very fact that the Puhlhofer case emerged and has re-written—or rather almost unwritten—the Act would be a case for action. Given the measure of latitude which has been introduced, it should at least sound off some warning bells, to which the Government should listen.

Mr. Henderson: The hon. Gentleman has perfectly fairly made the point that local authorities have been trying to operate the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act. It has had slightly different effects in different parts of the country but he is right to say that there has been a genuine attempt to work the Act. None the less, he will also agree that local authorities have had difficulties in working that Act. That is why I would ask him to consider at this point whether this is a sensible time to make further difficulties and to change the ball game of the Act when local authorities are still feeling their way for dealing with the Act as it now is before we amend it. We should find positive reasons in Scotland for changing the Act at this stage rather than simply go along with something that has happened in England which may not be relevant.

Mr. Dewar: I understand that argument. It is perfectly fairly put by the hon. Gentleman. I suspect that it would be a good argument for not having a 1977 Act at all. If I remember the history of the legislation, many people argued at the time that, however desirable it was, it was an unreasonable burden, given the problems of the housing stock and that therefore we should not legislate.

The judgment of Lord Brightman means that a massive gap has opened up and it is only right that we should try to put in some minimum standards which will greatly bolster the statute and return us to something like the position that I imagine we were in in terms of the code of guidance. The code of guidance was helpful. It is still there, but is now in doubt because the House of Lords, which is

[Mr. Dewar]

persuasive in Scotland in any judicial proceedings, even if not binding, has taken this much more lax approach to the duties of local authorities.

I shall ask the Minister a specific question that he can deal with when he is winding up. It is about the monitoring. The Minister and the noble Lord Gray of Contin have said that the Government will monitor using their regular quarterly statistical returns from the various housing authorities. I am not familiar with these forms but I think that form HL1 is relevant.

My information is that it is extremely difficult to monitor on the basis of the information contained in the forms. In order to monitor, one might need to know the number of people who had been refused on the grounds that they were not properly homeless and the other reasons why they had been refused. At the other end of the process it would not be enough merely to record the number of people placed in accommodation under the Act. One would also need to have information about the nature of the accommodation and its standard. I am advised by people who work in housing that there is at least a lot of professional scepticism about whether the present forms cover such matters. I should like the Minister to deal with that point, to explain how the monitoring will work and to say whether it is sensible and directed in a way that will deal with the point about standards which is at risk here.

The other arguments that the Minister used against the amendment were that it would be pushing us not back to the status quo, but into a different and undesirable position. I am not sure that that is true. He suggested that if, for example, a local authority put a family into bed and breakfast accommodation as a temporary measure, the authority would be failing in its statutory duty if the amendment were accepted in its present form and might be subject to judicial review and find itself in trouble in the courts.

The Minister would prefer to leave the situation as it is and run the risk of Lord Brightman's interpretation of the present Act. A lot of the information and advice that I have received would dispute that concept, and the Minister is not on safe or sure ground. However, let us suppose for the moment that he is and that there are problems of the kind that he has described. That is a case for the Minister coming forward with his own amendment to meet the point that we are striking at but which avoids some of the dangers that he spies in the form of words that the other place has inserted in the Bill.

Most of the arguments about the difficulties of definition are specious. The Lord Gray of Contin said that the phrase in the Tenants' Rights Etc. (Scotland) Act 1980 "reasonably suitable for the needs of a tenant" had taken half a schedule to define . I have no doubt that there are a great many examples of cases where a good deal of work has gone into statutory definitions. If we read any piece of housing legislation or even the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977 itself we will see many instances where terms like "reasonable" or "appropriate for needs" are used and yet do not seem to have resulted in the kind of difficulties spoken about by the Minister. My attention has been drawn to section 14 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1974 as an example of exactly the kind of phraseology that is well established in the statute book.

I hope that Shelter will not mind me saying this, but I understand that it has taken legal advice in Scotland and in England. A number of the people consulted are familiar to me and I suspect that they would be even more familiar to the Minister. In England, Shelter consulted Mr. Robert Carnwarth, a silk who has written a standard book on the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act. He takes a different view from that of the Minister and said that the difficulties that had arisen from the failure to define accommodation in the Act were very considerable. I am not saying that we should stand or that we would have wanted to stand on this definition if the Minister had produced a better alternative. However, I am certainly not prepared to recommend to the House that we fall into line and abandon the whole enterprise as the Minister is inviting us to do.

I am sure that the Minister has read the debates in another place. In the past, the noble Lord the Earl of Selkirk was not unconnected with the Conservative party, although he seems to plough a somewhat independent furrow nowadays. That is to his credit. I think he spoke for noble Lords in all parts of the other place when he said that there was an overwhelming feeling that if there were practical difficulties the Government had a duty to bring in their own version. He said that that was what the other place wanted and that it was an almost unanimous feeling.

The Minister prayed in aid the noble Lord ? Wilberforce as the only respectable prop to his attack on the amendment, but if one reads what the noble Lord said during the debate in the other place one will see that, although he had some caveats about the form of the amendment, he made it clear that he supported it. That would seem to suggest that the Minister was reading isolated parts of the debate.

It is disappointing that the Minister has not come forward with something to satisfy the wish to remove the evident dangers arising from the judgment which we have been discussing and which has dominated this argument about housing policy. I am sorry to say that to some extent we can see in this matter the dead weight of the Department of the Environment. I suspect that the new Secretary of State is antipathetic to the spirit of the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977 and probably regards it as dangerous welfarism of some sort.

In Scotland we have a different legal tradition and system and, if I may say so, a different housing system and tradition. There is no reason why we should stay in step with the Department of the Environment. There is a case for the Scottish Office showing a little bit of smeddum and going its own road on this occasion. We should not take, as we are being asked to do, the line of least resistance and wait for some substantial evidence of scandal or abuse before we act. That is the approach the Minister recommends.

The legal consequences of the decision in the Puhlhofer case will be far-reaching. My attention has been drawn to one decision, admittedly English but interesting, involving the London borough of Wandsworth ex parte Lindsay in which the judge, Mr. Justice Simon Brown, made it clear that the law would have to change because of the Puhlhofer decision. He said:

"Although hitherto it has been accepted, in particular following the Court of Appeal decision in Part *v* Wyre Borough Council, that in order to properly discharge the duty under section 4(5) the accommodation offered must be appropriate, Puhlhofer makes plain that this is not so. On the contrary accommodation within the meaning of the Act, whether for the purposes of section 1, section 4 or section 17

—and there may well be other relevant sections—need only be premises properly so describable even if in certain respects they are unfit, inadequate or otherwise unsuitable."

He felt that he had no option but to refuse to consider the facts which at least prima facie deserved consideration on the grounds that even if—I repeat the point—the accommodation was "unfit, inadequate or otherwise unsuitable" it was still accommodation under the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977 and that was the end of the argument. If that is the decision taken by the courts, admittedly in England, relying on a House of Lords judgment which will be persuasive in Scotland, the code of guidance that the Minister relies upon is likely to be only a thin protective screen against that kind of legal action.

If the courts feel that they have to take that attitude, we should protect them from their own purism by trying to write into the Act the safeguards that the amendment represents. We are in difficulty because there may well be arguments against this form of words. However, we are in the unfortunate position that they are the only form of words we have because there is no way in which we can further amend, and the Government have declined to help us.

We cannot allow this matter to rest here and accept the Minister's advice. He said that he was taking "the more measured approach." I suspect that will amount to a do-nothing approach; there is a good deal of simple cosmetic camouflage in all the talk of monitoring and further legislation if it proves necessary. If we do not do something now and keep the pressure on, I suspect that we will sell the pass on the matter of importance. On that basis, I invite the House to agree with the Lords in the amendment.

Sir Russell Johnston: The House is greatly indebted to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) for the clarity with which he has put a strong case. We are all disappointed that the Government have not responded either here or in the other place to the arguments which have been rehearsed several times.

As the hon. Gentleman said, the amendment in the other place which was carried was moved by my hon. Friend Lord Mackie of Benshie. That was particularly appropriate as the original Act was taken through the House by my hon. Friend the Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Ross). It was a private Member's measure with all-party support, but, obviously, the Liberal party has always felt that it has a special responsibility for it.

8.30 pm

The hon. Gentleman has rehearsed the arguments thoroughly and I do not wish to be repetitious. However, I should like to re-emphasise one or two points. The hon. Gentleman said, correctly, and any objective observer would agree, that the argument has been won by those anxious to correct the position created by the Puhlhofer judgment which, to use the words of the hon. Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Henderson) in a different context, has changed the ball game. The judgment, not the amendment, has changed the ball game.

The arguments advanced by the Minister of State in the other place, Lord Gray of Contin, and repeated by the Minister tonight were characterised by Lord Mackie as inadequate. He described the idea of monitoring as a method of procrastination, and the hon. Member for Garscadden repeated that. One must admit that technical and legal arguments are perhaps the most difficult for hon. Members to deal with. Time and again we hear the Minister say, "The hon. Gentleman may intend such and such by the words, but the consequence will be different."

However, we have the advantage that Shelter has given considerable, detailed legal and technical attention to the arguments advanced originally in another place and reiterated by the Minister this evening. It is not the case that the amendment is unworkable.

That is the considered legal view, not only of Robert Carnwath, but of Jonathan Mitchell and Paul Watchman, a lecturer in law at Dundee university. Moreover, they are willing to be quoted as expressing that view. They are noted experts in their own right on the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977, and they all agree that the amendment is workable, and deny that the amendment uses terms which are ill-defined. It has already been said that the Housing (Scotland) Act 1974 uses the words "tolerable standards" acceptably. All three experts agree that it is not the case that bed and breakfast accommodation would be ruled out. The Minister touched on that argument. Nor does the amendment return the position to the status quo which was that accommodation should be "reasonable". That was the judgment of Brown, and a family such as the Puhlhofers would be considered homeless. The amendment passed in the Lords does not go beyond that.

The amendment provides for homeless people to be housed by local authorities in accommodation which meets the tolerable standards and overcrowding standards laid down by law. It does not go beyond the code of guidance, and, perhaps, it does not provide very exacting standards. It does not stop local authorities providing a better than minimum standard. Indeed, if I may be permitted to come near to a quotation of my noble Friend, Lord Mackie, he made it clear in another place that even he would find the guidelines reasonably easy to follow.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): Will the hon. Gentleman speak up?

Sir Russell Johnston: Is the hon. Gentleman going deaf already? I do not wish to tire the patience of the House by repeating what I have said, so I invite the hon. Gentleman to read my speech as I know that the *Hansard* reporters have good hearing. I am interested to know that a reason why the hon. Gentleman frequently makes his speech in a loud manner is that he does not even hear himself well.

Finally, it is alleged that the amendment does not define the exceptional circumstances effectively and properly, but the view is that the words are rightly used in social security law and that they do not represent an insuperable obstacle.

It is rare for Governments to change their minds, and to do so at the last moment of the 11th hour is exceptional. I cannot even think of an example. However, I suggest most seriously to the Minister that the arguments expounded in the other place and here both on Report and tonight from the hon. Member for Garscadden make a good case. Even if the Minister is right that so far the consequences of the Puhlhofer judgment have had no marked effect, we now have the opportunity to ensure that they never will. Surely that is desirable, particularly if the Government's objections appear, in the view of experts and persons skilled in the law and the interpretation of the Act, not to have legal substance.

Mr. Gordon Wilson (Dundee, East): When one relies on common briefings there is a danger of repetition and that the same speech will be made repeatedly. As the lead

[Mr. Gordon Wilson]

speech given by the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) was so clear, perhaps the best thing to do is, to use the legal vernacular, to say "I concur". However, I wish to add some points.

By seeking to overturn the House of Lords decision, the Minister has put himself in a dangerously isolated position. If things go wrong and local authorities do not accept the spirit of the guidelines, people will remain homeless and the Government and the Minister personally will have to accept responsibility. It is a pity that the Minister has not adopted the advice given by the Earl of Selkirk who said that he supported the amendment so that the Government could think again. I am probably going beyond his argument, but I am sure that the noble Lord wanted a form of words which the Government could table with the confidence that there would be no observable legal loophole.

Governments are not necessarily right about legislation and there are plenty of examples where Governments have been proved wrong, if anything, sometimes a long period after the event. In this instance, the legislation was passed in 1977 and now, nine years later, their Lordships, in their appellate capacity, have blasted a vast hole in the middle of the Act. It is discouraging and disappointing that in a sense the Government have gone back to the attitude adopted in the mid-1970s and before, that legislation was not necessary. The Housing (Homeless Persons) Act was carried through by a Back Bencher who was successful in the ballot. I recollect that at the time it was argued that it would be dangerous to legislate to deal with the problem of homelessness and that this would be far better left to guidelines to be issued by the Department of the Environment or the Scottish Office as those would be followed by local authorities.

There is no doubt that where particular problems develop local authorities may seek to get around the guidelines, and if there is no legislative back-up they will be perfectly free to do so. If an abuse occurs, we shall probably find that months, if not a year or more, will elapse before the slow-moving juggernaut of Government grinds into action and produces legislation. It is not always the case that a legislative vehicle is handy at the given time. If such a vehicle does not exist, hardship could be caused by the failure to take account of the changes that have been made in the law.

I cannot understand the Minister's reasoning. On the one hand, it seems that he is saying that there is no need to act because in effect the law has not changed—that Puhlhofer is the latest interpretation of the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act and he does not think that the changes that have been made by Puhlhofer so upset the law in relation to homelessness as to require himself or his Department to intervene with the legislation. On the other hand, he is indicating that, should problems emerge over a period of time, his Government will act. That is his excuse for action in the future.

I take the view that the Puhlhofer judgment in effect drives a huge gap in the homelessness legislation. In particular, one must look at the decision of Brown v. Hamilton district council, where Lord Wheatley said in the Court of Session:

> "I reject the argument that as long as accommodation was available it did not matter what the nature of the accommodation was. In my view it must be reasonable in all the circumstances".

He went on to make the interesting and picturesque statement that:

> "A pigsty might be accommodation but not reasonable accommodation."

No doubt he extended the argument as far as it would go, and while it would seem that Lord Mackie was conversant with very comfortable pigstys, he declared that he would not want to live in them.

Mr. Foulkes: He is a black sheep.

Mr. Wilson: I wish that the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) would not treat this serious subject with such levity. If the hon. Gentleman has come in late from dinner, perhaps he will be quiet and allow the House to deal with this matter. He may not be homeless, but other people are. He should address himself to the House by speaking if he so wishes, but in the meantime I would be grateful if he would haud his wheesht.

8.45 pm

I contract what was said in Brown v. Hamilton district council with the judgment by Lord Brightman, where the word "reasonable" is effectively taken out. Either accommodation is reasonable or it is not. Puhlhofer says that it does not have to be—an extremely persuasive judgment. Indeed, it is one that local authorities could legitimately follow. I take the view that the rights of people who are homeless have changed, whereas before the Puhlhofer judgment those who were in that unfortunate situation had a right to be rehoused. It now boils down to the fact that they will be rehoused at the discretion of the local authority. That is a very dangerous development.

It is always the last resort of a Minister who is bankrupt of arguments to attack an amendment not on the basis of the argument but on its possible defects. I take this opportunity of congratulating Shelter on going to the exceptional trouble of taking legal advice. It had the arguments that were put to the other place on behalf of the Government by Lord Gray outlining the attack on the amendment. Shelter has given good, persuasive and sound reasons why the defects as seen by the Government do not exist. The Minister's attitude is completely unsupportable.

If one looks at the advice that has been given, it seems perfectly clear that the amendment can serve the purposes for which it is designed. The Minister took objection to the fact that a piece of guidance at present in the guidelines was now being imported into statute. There is nothing reprehensible in such a practice. It has been proven that the guidelines will work if they have been observed and are backed up by statutory authority. Therefore, there is no reason why the guidelines should not be rephrased and set in statutory form.

There are many cases in which advisory guidelines have subsequently been made law. The change made in this amendment is perfectly acceptable. At the end of the day, the problem is that the Government have been given a chance to make a perfectly reasonable change in legislation and to make it accord with the views of the Scottish public and the vast majority of Scottish Members of Parliament. But, as the hon. Member for Garscadden said, they have refused to take up that opportunity, largely as he suspected—and as I suspect—because they have been told not to

do so by the lead Ministry, the Department of the Environment. Here was a chance for this Minister and the Scottish Office to show that they had some autonomy. By that standard they have failed the test.

Mr. Hugh Brown: I shall be brief. I say that because I was interested when my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) said that he would make a brief speech. It was such a speech in accordance with what he thinks is a brief speech. Nevertheless, I am on the same side.

I have listened to the Minister, to my hon. Friend and to two contributions from the same stable. I suffer from the advantage of not having received the brief. Therefore, I am not confused. You, Mr. Deputy Speaker, must be interested in this debate, because you and I were the perpetrators of all the difficulties that apparently are now to be corrected. Therefore, to some extent I cannot help having some sympathy with the Minister, although I shall not overdo it. I listened to the Secretary of State for Scotland's cheap comments in Edinburgh on Monday about poor attendance. I wonder what he would think about today's attendance. This is peak viewing time and also peak eating time. I will not make any apologies but it does not do us justice or credit to have such a poor attendance for Scottish business.

No doubt we shall lose this amendment. I am not 100 per cent. convinced that the amendment is necessary. However, when a Minister gives an undertaking that he will conduct a thorough review, I believe that that is what he means. If legislation is necessary — and we will not win the vote on this amendment — I hope that the Minister will tell us when he replies how he intends to conduct the review.

I am in favour of local authorities having discretion. I am not convinced that further legislation and definition is necessarily the right way to proceed. I must be cautious about this. I want an assurance from the Minister that the review will be thorough and that he will tell COSLA, Shelter and any other council for the single homeless that he will monitor what happens. He must disabuse us of any idea that there is a plot on the part of the DOE.

As you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the DOE is a very powerful Department. However, although there was much argument when the original Bill went through the House about cross-border problems, I do not believe that this is a major cross-border problem. I cannot believe that droves of people will flock to Scotland simply because there is a slightly different interpretation of the law in Scotland, which, according to the Minister, is not really a difference of interpretation. I hope that that is not a suspicion that would carry much weight.

This is not an easy matter to resolve. The Minister said that this could impose substantial new duties on local authorities. If that is the case, new duties mean more money. Unfortunately the Government will not receive co-operation from the housing authorities, which are hard pressed. That is further evidence of a suspicion that the Minister is putting up the case because he is not willing to find the additional resources that would be required if that meant an imposition of substantial new duties.

I hope we shall receive an assurance that the review will be thorough. I hope that we say with some confidence that if changes are needed in legislation the Opposition will co-operate to that end.

Mr. Ancram: We have had a useful debate on this important subject. It has become clear, and I am sure that the hon. Member for Glasgow, Provan (Mr. Brown) will have noticed, that there are two distinct and different views of the Puhlhofer judgment on both sides of the House. There is the view which I had expressed, that the judgment in practice will make no difference to the operation of the Act by local authorities in Scotland. The other view was expressed most forcibly by the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston) who stressed that his noble Friend Lord Mackie of Benshie was anxious to correct the new position created by the judgment. The hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber said that the judgment had changed the ball game and the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) said that the judgment had unwritten the Act. That is the point of difference.

It is my view and the view of those who advise me — and I must tell the hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. Wilson) that I did listen to Lord Selkirk and I considered the matter after the House of Lords decision — that the Puhlhofer judgment has not unwritten the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977. I tried to make it clear earlier that the Law Lords judgment has not changed the statutory position nor Parliament's intention. I have dealt with that in some detail. Nor will the code of guidance which local authorities must have regard to within the statute be changed. I believe that the code is not in doubt.

Different views may be expressed about the effects of the judgment. However, my view and the Government's view are based on careful consideration and advice. To that extent, I return to my earlier argument that there is no factual evidence for the Opposition's argument that the whole practice will be changed by the judgment. It is my experience as a Minister who has dealt with a number of such Bills — and as a constituency Member of Parliament — that where things are happening on the ground — if I may use that expression — there is usually no lack of anecdotal evidence about it. There are always examples of something that has gone wrong, either from people coming to a constituency surgery to complain or from reports from certain agencies which, hearing about certain cases, report them to hon. Members or to the Government. From the Government's point of view — and no further evidence has been adduced tonight — there is no evidence to suggest that the fears expressed in another place and here tonight are real.

Sir Russell Johnston: In making an assessment as to whether a legal view is correct before there is any practical effect, would the Minister accept that all one can do is consult people who judge themselves to be experts in that area? The alliance has quoted at least three people who have expressed it as their professional opinion that the Puhlhofer judgment changes the law. The Minister has said that there is no evidence for that. Surely that is evidence of some sort, is it not?

Mr. Ancram: It is my view, which is based on advice, that that is not the case. I do not suggest that alliance Members have received bad advice but in this instance my view, which I have taken on good advice, does not conform with theirs. Had it conformed, I would have had to examine the code of guidance. I do not wish to trouble the House again with the code of guidance but it is worthy of consideration. Hon. Members who consider the code

[Mr. Ancram]

will discover that their anxieties are covered there. Within section 12 of the 1977 Act, the local authorities must have regard to the code. I am satisfied that the code of guidance does not need altering in the light of the Puhlhofer judgment.

Mr. Henderson: There have been several complaints about local authorities which have not been helpful and which have positively obstructed the right to buy. Has my hon. Friend had any complaints about local authorities refusing to pay attention to the guidance to which he has referred?

Mr. Ancram: I do not want to mislead the House and give a categoric yes or no to that. However, in the light of the fears expressed since Puhlhofer, I have had no evidence that that judgment has altered the way in which local authorities are operating the 1977 Act.

The hon. Member for Garscadden asked about monitoring. I repeat this point to the hon. Member for Provan, that I have offered to keep the situation under review. If it can be demonstrated over the coming months that local authorities are taking a substantially different approach to the discharge of their responsibilities, I would have to reconsider the matter. In other words, I wish to monitor the situation closely and if significant evidence suggests that my view is wrong I shall wish to reconsider it. I say that quite openly.

To answer the hon. Member for Garscadden, we shall monitor the situation through the regular quarterly statistical returns submitted to the Scottish Development Department by district authorities. Those returns, known as the homeless household case returns, show the number of applications made to the authorities under the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act and the number accepted as homeless or potentially homeless. If, as has been alleged, the Law Lords decision is likely to encourage authorities to conclude that a number of applicants are not homeless, that would be clear from those statistics. When an authority accepts a responsibility towards an applicant, the statistical returns also show the type of accommodation secured for the applicant. Again, therefore, if the Law Lords decision encourages authorities to place a larger number of applicants in short-stay accommodation and bed and breakfast lodgings, this will show up in the statistics.

9 pm

We shall, of course, consider any evidence that Shelter or other organisations wish to submit arising primarily from detailed knowledge of individual cases at local level obtained through their housing advice centres. We believe that in that way we can monitor the situation closely and reach a conclusion within a reasonable period as to whether our view is correct.

Mr. Foulkes: In monitoring the quarterly statistics so far, has the Minister detected any trend for particular authorities to have especially large numbers of applicants, more than would be predicted or more than the Scottish average? In particular, has he had representations from Kyle and Carrick district council about the difficulties that it is facing in this and other matters? I refer to people coming from outwith the district, getting on to the waiting list and having to be given priority. Those problems occur not just in respect of homelessness but in other respects. Will the Minister take account of those representations and pay particular attention to that aspect in future monitoring?

Mr. Ancram: The hon. Gentleman will not expect an immediate answer on a specific constituency matter. I will check to see what representations have been made. I am sure that we receive representations as well as statistics in this area. At the moment, however, I am trying to identify for the hon. Members for Provan and for Garscadden the type of monitoring that takes place and to show that it will be sufficient to determine whether our view is correct.

Mr. Hugh Brown: How will local authorities know about this judgment which is to make such a great difference to the lot of the homeless person? Will the Minister be sending out a circular? If not, how does he expect the change to arise that he intends to monitor?

Mr. Ancram: I do not believe that there will be a change. It is the Opposition who take that view. My submission has been that there will not be a change in practice. Local authorities have discretion in operating under the Act, but the code of guidance is intended to be precisely that. I shall not bore the House with a description, but it is a detailed code and it states the Government's view as to how the Act should be interpreted.

The hon. Members for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber and for Garscadden said that the amendment would be workable. As I have said, I believe that there are two good reasons for rejecting it. First, as I have just argued, it is unnecessary. Secondly, it is dangerous because of the difficulties of interpretation. Here I disagree with the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber. The words

"ordinary facilities of a residence"

or "inappropriate for his needs" or

"unreasonable for him to continue to live in it"

could all give rise to considerable difficulties of interpretation, as I am sure the hon. Gentleman will appreciate. In the first instance, it would be for the local authority to interpret those words as it thought fit. I do not believe that the amendment is good legislation or that it is necessary. On that basis, I ask my hon. Friends to disagree with the Lords.

Question put, That this House doth disagree with the Lords in the said amendment:—

The House divided: Ayes 172, Noes 110.

Division No. 243] **[9.04 pm**

AYES

Alexander, Richard	Cranborne, Viscount
Ancram, Michael	Dorrell, Stephen
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*	Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Batiste, Spencer	Emery, Sir Peter
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony	Favell, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry	Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Benyon, William	Forth, Eric
Best, Keith	Franks, Cecil
Bevan, David Gilroy	Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Brandon-Bravo, Martin	Freeman, Roger
Bright, Graham	Gale, Roger
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon	Galley, Roy
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*	Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Browne, John	Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Burt, Alistair	Garel-Jones, Tristan
Butler, Rt Hon Sir Adam	Glyn, Dr Alan
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*	Gow, Ian
Carttiss, Michael	Gower, Sir Raymond
Colvin, Michael	Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Coombs, Simon	Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Cope, John	Hampson, Dr Keith

Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Harvey, Robert
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Hickmet, Richard
Hicks, Robert
Hind, Kenneth
Hirst, Michael
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jackson, Robert
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knox, David
Lang, Ian
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Staml'd)*
Lord, Michael
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
Madel, David
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Antony
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miscampbell, Norman
Moate, Roger
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M. *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Mudd, David
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Normanton, Tom
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Osborn, Sir John
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Portillo, Michael
Powley, John
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Price, Sir David
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raffan, Keith
Rhodes James, Robert
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Richard
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Waddington, David
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Wall, Sir Patrick
Waller, Gary
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Tony Durant and
Mr. Peter Lloyd.

NOES

Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashdown, Paddy
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnett, Guy
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'rmline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Carter-Jones, Lewis
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clelland, David Gordon
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S)*
Conlan, Bernard
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Craigen, J. M.
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Garrett, W. E.
George, Bruce
Gourlay, Harry
Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*
Hancock, Michael
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
John, Brynmor
Johnston, Sir Russell
Kennedy, Charles
Kirkwood, Archy
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meadowcroft, Michael
Michie, William
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
Patchett, Terry
Penhaligon, David
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Randall, Stuart
Richardson, Ms Jo
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rogers, Allan
Ross, Ernest *(Dundee W)*
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Snape, Peter
Spearing, Nigel
Stott, Roger
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Tinn, James
Wainwright, R.
Wallace, James
Wareing, Robert
Wilson, Gordon
Woodall, Alec
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. James Hamilton and
Mr. Allen Adams.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Schedule 1

Amendment of 1980 Act

Lords amendment: No. 9: in page 21, line 37, at end insert—

"( ) where a landlord so mentioned has at no time let (or had available for letting) more than 250 dwellings; or"

Read a Second time.

9.15 pm

Mr. Ancram: I beg to move, as an amendment to the Lords amendment, to leave out "250" and insert "100".

If the amendment were agreed to, it would be my intention to ask the House to agree with the Lords amendment as amended. I have to say that I move the acceptance of this amendment with my proposed modification with some reluctance. I believe that the problem that it is intended to deal with—that the right to buy would have some apparently harmful effect on small associations' viability—is overstated, and that its proposed rectification by straightforward exemption from the right to buy is wrong. But I recognise that there is strong feeling on the subject and I certainly do not wish to damage the prospects for new small associations.

[Mr. Ancram]

The viability of associations, whether large or small, is secured through a variety of allowances set, and grants paid, by my Department. The allowances which are of principal interest to us here are those for management and maintenance of the ordinary stock of an association. Those allowances are set at a fixed amount per house let by an association and are designed to cover all the ordinary expenses incurred by the association in running that house. If the association loses that house, whether by sale to a sitting tenant or to another association, it no longer has that day-to-day work to do and does not therefore require the accompanying allowance. Thus, in broad terms, the association's income matches its outgoings whatever size of stock it may have.

Some evidence has reached my Department that, for associations with relatively small numbers of houses, the allowances do not meet the full costs of running the stock. The evidence requires further investigation by my Department, and more detailed discussions with the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations, but if circumstances can be shown to warrant it, I am certainly prepared to modify the allowance system to help small associations. A revised allowance system would go a long way towards protecting small associations from a number of pressures which they may come under. The loss of a house under the right to buy is, to my mind, one of the smaller and probably less frequent events likely to disturb the finances of a small association.

For that reason alone, I should prefer small associations to stay in the right to buy so that their tenants may have the same rights as other tenants of housing associations. However, I am prepared to accept that there may be some justification for an exemption for the smallest associations so that their first tentative steps are not brought to an end by the sale of one or two houses. I suggest that the size of an association above which the right to buy should apply, and always apply, should be 100 rather than 250 as at present.

Mr. Bruce Millan (Glasgow, Govan): If the amendment is carried, how many associations will be excluded?

Mr. Ancram: I shall come back to the right hon. Gentleman on that. I do not have the figure to hand.

Mr. Millan: Why not?

Mr. Ancram: Obviously, over the years, associations, especially newer ones, have grown. I should not wish to mislead the House by giving figures on which I was not certain. The number of 250 houses, which was put forward by way of amendment in the other place, may have been chosen because it was thought that at that point an association becomes financially stable and is able to employ its own full-time staff.

Mr. Henderson: Is it not true that, since the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Millan) left office as the Secretary of State for Scotland, the annual funding of housing associations in Scotland has increased tenfold? It is not surprising in those circumstances that individual housing associations may have grown considerably in that time.

Mr. Ancram: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. He has made the good point that, despite the Opposition's protestations, this Government have considerably supported the housing association movement, compared with our predecessors. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Henderson) is aware of the growth and diversification of housing associations. The hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston) is equally aware of the growth in housing associations — initially small ones — in rural areas. We welcome that. That is one of the elements which we have considered in tabling the amendment.

If the discussions on allowances bear fruit and smaller associations make sensible provision — perhaps for sharing staff — I see no reason to exempt associations from the right to buy unless their size is below 100. The amendment would extend the right to buy to a further approximately 1,700 people. I am sure that they will welcome this as much as the tenants of larger associations. I am informed that the 1,700 difference would effectively leave 22 associations which have fewer than 100 houses. There are 33 associations which have fewer than 250 houses. Obviously, the figure of 1,700 is the difference between those two in terms of the people who will be affected.

We cannot make available to small associations the transferable discount which we know as HOTCHA. HOTCHA applies only to a tenant who is the tenant of a charitable housing association to which the right to buy does not apply. Small associations are not necessarily charitable, and thus the tenants of these associations cannot be given the transferable discount which we hoped would be some small recompense for being denied the right to buy.

I cannot amend the Bill to include such a scheme because we can now amend only those parts that have been amended in another place and certainly we cannot introduce new subjects. Therefore, the amendment I propose to reduce the size of an association to 100 has, to some extent, the effect of damage limitation. It would confine the absence of a right to buy and the absence of the second-best alternative, the transferable discount, to tenants of very small associations. To make the exemption any wider would be unjust to tenants and unnecessary for associations. I hope that the House will consider, in the light of the amendment in another place, and the present circumstances, that my proposal is a reasonable compromise and will support it.

Mr. Maxton: I suppose that with this Government any small concession of principle is worth taking, even if, as is typical of the few occasions on which I have seen the Government accept the principle, they ruin it by being mean-spirited in the way they do so. The Government accept the principle that there are small housing associations that require protection. That is what the other place said. The amendment was not the result of a figure being plucked out of the head. It was tabled with a certain amount of rationality. People thought it out.

Along come the Government who say, "Yes, we accept that some small housing associations might be affected, but we do not want a figure of 250. We shall make it 100." As far as I can see, that is a figure plucked out of the air. It is not based on any great rationality. Perhaps the Under-Secretary of State will tell us exactly what is the rationale of 100 as opposed to 250.

I accept that in the past two weeks there has been a change of mind, certainly in the Department if not in the

Government. Two weeks ago, it appeared from a letter by Mrs. Gunn to the director of the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations that the Department was not going to accept the principle. The letter stated:

"If you set an arbitrary limit, there is the immediately obvious distinction between associations with 249 houses"—

which is to become 99 houses—

"and those with 251"—

which is to become 101. There is a whole argument put forward in the letter from the Minister's Department of less than a fortnight ago. I am pleased that the Minister has at least accepted some of the arguments. Why could the Minister not just accept the amendment of 250 put forward? It would have been so much better. The Minister says it is too big. It is not too big. Two hundred and fifty houses is a small number to control, organise and manage. However, one requires a full-time staff and a lot of effort but if one starts diminishing the number, one is in some difficulty. That is true of 250 and it may be even truer of 100.

I hope that the Minister will clarify what he said. I was not clear on the numbers that he gave. He said that there were 33 housing associations with fewer than 250 houses. Was that the total?

Mr. Millan: That was the total.

Mr. Maxton: My hon. Friend may be more percipient than I am. I was not sure whether it was the total or a number between 100 and 250. The Minister said that 22 housing associations had fewer than 100 houses. Therefore, we are talking about some 11 housing associations covering 1,700 people. The Minister may care to tell us how many people are involved in the 22. Presumably it is roughly 2,200 who will be in the smaller housing associations.

For that number of people and housing associations it is not worth the Government's while. It would have been so much better if they had just left it as it was. The other place was right. It put in the correct amendment and it would have been better if the Government had left well alone. Having said that, I do not intend to divide the House because at least the Government have conceded the principle that there are small housing associations and the basis will be there for us to improve on when we come back into office.

Amendment to the Lords amendment agreed to.

Lords amendment, as amended, agreed to.

Lords amendment: No. 10, in page 21, line 51, leave out from beginning to end of line 12 on page 22 and insert "is, by virtue of section 360(1) of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1970 (special exemptions for charities), exempt from tax; or"

Mr. Ancram: I beg to move, That this House doth disagree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Speaker: With this we may take the Government amendment in lieu thereof.

Mr. Ancram: The Government do not feel that all charitable housing associations of whatever size, age or purpose should, just because they are charitable, be able to deny their tenants the right to buy. I and my colleagues in the Scottish Office have been urging housing associations for some years to operate practical voluntary sales policies, including the offering of discount on terms similar to those available to public sector tenants and, as I have said on a number of occasions during the course of this legislation, our requests have been largely ignored.

I announced our intention to legislate on this subject in June last year and, very soon thereafter, one of the largest associations in Scotland, which had been operating for many years very successfully as an ordinary housing association, decided that it should change its status to that of a charitable association. The change was done properly, and I have no doubts that the alteration in its objects is entirely consistent with its new programme of work. Indeed, I commend any association which works assiduously for those in special need. However, that association, and, for all I know, others, has substantial stocks of houses which under any ordinary definition would be regarded as for general needs. Their tenants are ordinary families who perhaps, at one time, found that a house rented from the housing association was the only housing option open to them. But now they no longer require the assistance the association gives and are ready and able to take over ownership themselves.

As I have said, we believe that it is right that they should have the opportunity to buy the house in which they have spent so long and that they should have available to them a discount reflecting those long years of paying rent. But their landlord associations have now acquired charitable status and unless the amendments I am are accepted both here and in another place, these tenants will not be able to buy the house in which they live. Opposition Members may say that those people should move elsewhere. I have heard that argument before. However, it seems very hard that people should have to give up the house they have occupied for so long and start again on the housing ladder simply because their landlord association has adopted a new constitutional model.

For those reasons, I do not accept that the exemption of existing charitable housing associations should extend to all such bodies. Unfortunately, the criteria by which we determine those associations which shall be exempt as against those which shall not cannot be as precise as we would wish and there are, inevitably, one or two associations caught on the wrong side of the line. In order to minimise that, we propose in the amendment in lieu that the date by which an association should have achieved charitable tax status should be amended to 14 November 1985, the date of introduction of the Bill, and we believe that a further four associations, over and above those exempt when the Bill left this House, will be exempted.

On the other arm of the exemption, the requirement to have had charitable rules since inception, we see no room for alteration. Associations set up for charitable purposes will, in almost every case, have started out with such rules. I know that there is at least one association, which I think I can name—Edinvar—which, possibly through no fault of its own, falls foul of that requirement, but I doubt that the impact of the right to buy on Edinvar will be at all serious.

9.30 pm

There remains the question of new housing associations. Earlier in our debates and in the debates in another place, the relationship between the right to buy and the Inland Revenue view of its impact on charitable tax status was much discussed. That was because the Inland Revenue had for a long time taken the view that sales by a housing association with discount, whether under a statutory

[Mr. Ancram]

provision or otherwise, would prejudice the ability of a charitable housing association to be granted or retain its charitable exemption from tax. However, that is no longer the view of the Inland Revenue. Following representations that we made at an early stage, it has reconsidered its long-held interpretation of the law. It explained its altered view in a written answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton) on 10 June. My right hon. Friend the Financial Secretary to the Treasury said that, contrary to the view the Inland Revenue had previously taken, the charitable status of a housing association for the purpose of the tax exemption section 360 of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1970 would not be prejudiced by sales which the association would be required to make at less than market value to sitting tenants who exercise their right to buy under an Act of Parliament. That means that the right to buy and the exemption from tax may co-exist in a charitable housing association. Thus, one of the main obstacles as seen by both sides of the other place and, indeed, by hon. Members in this House at an earlier stage of the legislation has gone. That was one of the main obstacles to imposing the right to buy on new charitable housing associations.

It is my view that if that information had been available earlier to members of the other place and if there had been time for my right hon. and noble Friend the Minister of State to draw attention to it on Third Reading there, we would not today be debating the amendment. The change in view by the Inland Revenue seems to be a significant change, which provides a powerful argument for exempting only the small group of charitable housing associations which we had originally intended to exempt.

I should say something of the discussions that my Department has had in recent weeks with the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations. One newspaper headline said that we were trying to gag the SFHA. Nothing could be further from the truth. We were asking it to look at factors that we believed had been overlooked, and to say whether their effects were acceptable.

Two major points arise. First, the transferable discount scheme is expensive. Already a number of associations are exempt by reason of their charitable status and some of their tenants may wish to have access to the transferable discount, but of the associations brought into the exemption in the other place, a much greater proportion have said that they wish to buy—perhaps as much as three quarters in one. Debarred from buying, many of them will want their transferable discount. The money for that would have to come from the overall allocation to the Housing Corporation, for there is no other source. Although I drew attention to that in Committee in this House on 4 February 1986, I fear that it has been lost sight of by those who oppose the right to buy. But I thought that it was necessary and right that the SFHA should be reminded of that necessary consequence arising from the wide exemption from the right to buy for charitable associations. We have to make the scheme availabie on grounds of equity and to place tenants in a position comparable to their counterparts in England and Wales. At the higher level that the Lords amendment would imply, the sums involved might seriously restrict the scope for development by associations generally.

Secondly, a general exemption of this kind opens all kinds of avenues to avoid the right to buy. My Department would have had to impose controls on the registration of new charitable associations so as to ensure that their proposed activities were such as to be easily recognised as charitable. Thirdly, there would have to be close scrutiny of the activities and funding of existing charitable associations so as to ensure that they do not provide further general needs houses in situations where a non-charitable association could do the job equally well. These would have been the inevitable and undesirable consequences of the amendment passed in another place.

I am sorry to have spoken at such length, but this is a subject on which people feel deeply. I hope that I have shown that the Government have had a proper concern for both housing associations and the aspirations of their tenants. We believe that, for too long, the argument has been seen only through the sometimes over-paternalistic eyes of the housing associations. Tenants wish to be free from such attitudes and the right to buy, for those who are able to take advantage of it, is the way forward.

I ask my hon. Friends to disagree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Maxton: Perhaps you were fortunate, Mr. Speaker, not to be in the Chamber for the first of our debates on the Bill, when the Minister made great play of the way in which the period leading to the maximum discounts on flats could be accelerated. He argued that the relevant provisions had to be inserted in the Bill because that had been done when the House was considering the equivalent English Bill. He contended that this Bill could not be out of line with English legislation. The amendment that has been tabled by another place brings the Bill into line with legislation in England and Wales, yet the Minister is now saying that that cannot be done. He is not prepared to allow that charitable status in England, Wales and Scotland should be the same.

The Minister has been pleading and arguing since the Bill first came before the House that he is introducing the right to buy to Scottish housing associations — this is almost the only major argument that he has advanced— because housing association tenants in England and Wales have the right. He forgets to mention that nearly 70 per cent. of associations in England and Wales are so registered charities whereas only a small percentage of the Scottish associations are so registered.

Initially, the Minister did not intend to allow any of the Scottish associations to be recognised as charities and for their tenants not to have the right to buy. He has made a concession but he has been mean in the way in which he has done it. He should have accepted the amendment which would mean that all associations would be recognised by the Inland Revenue. That would be the only way forward because in Scotland there is not a register of charities as there is in England and Wales. The amendment suggests that all the associations should be recognised as charities and that the rules that apply in England and Wales should apply also in Scotland. That would allow housing associations to become charities in future if they could convince the Inland Revenue that they had charitable status. That would mean that their tenants would not have the right to buy as in England and Wales.

The Minister recognised from the beginning that there were anomalies. There are housing associations in England and Wales that operate in Scotland and their

tenants would not have the right to buy while others would. A housing association may go to Berwick-upon-Tweed, establish an office and set up a small housing association there, then move to Edinburgh. It might be registered as a charity in Berwick-upon-Tweed, which arguably the Minister may recognise in future, while the Minister may not recognise the one in Edinburgh as a charity in future. He is creating further anomalies by the way in which he is acting.

Let us examine what the Minister is doing. Essentially, he has taken four existing housing associations out of the charitable status which the Lords put in. What are they? There is the Grassmarket in Edinburgh. That is below 100, so he has exempted that. There is the Gowrie in Dundee. That is almost entirely special needs housing. The Minister mentioned Edinvar. That is larger. It is over 100. But, again, it is almost entirely special needs housing, so again most of it is exempt.

We come down to one housing association that the Minister is concerned about — the Link housing association. From the beginning, I have always labelled the Bill as the "Lord James Douglas-Hamilton Benefit Bill". The Link housing association is largely in the constituency of the hon. Member for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton). That is about saving a Member of Parliament who has a majority below 100. It may be just above 100 but it is certainly not many.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton (Edinburgh, West): Four hundred and ninety eight.

Mr. Maxton: Nearly five hundred.

Many of the tenants of the Link housing association live in pleasant houses in an attractive part of Edinburgh and they are worth a great deal of money. Because the Link housing association is now recognised by the Inland Revenue as a charity, the tenants will be denied the right to buy.

The Minister may put up an argument to exclude all housing associations that are recognised as charities. Or he can put up an argument recognising that all housing associations recognised by the Inland Revenue as charities should be exempt. In this place we should not be spending our time debating the exclusion of one housing association which is recognised as a charity, because that is all it really is, because of the constituents of one hon. Member, who happens to have a small majority. They will now have the right to buy as a result of what the Minister is doing.

I do not want to be too personal, but one of the ironies is that the amendment in the other place was moved by the uncle of the hon. Member for Edinburgh, West.

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North): The hon. Member for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton) is going to find out whether it was his uncle.

Mr. Maxton: I can assure my hon. Friend that it was the uncle of the hon. Member for Edinburgh, West who moved the amendment. It may be that we should not get too involved in what is obviously a family squabble on this matter.

It really is rather strange that hon. Members are debating one housing association out of all the housing associations in Scotland. It is all down, as was the Western relief road, to the hon. Member for Edinburgh, West. I am sure that the Dunfermline college of education will be saved as well. The hon. Gentleman is a powerful Member of Parliament. He manages to get the House to spend a lot of time debating issues which are designed to save his seat. I congratulate him on that, but it is not worthy of the Minister that he should do this in this particular way.

Mr. Ancram: The hon. Gentleman is coming to that traditional tailing off, for which his speeches are so well known, but before he sits down, can he explain why on this occasion, when he is resisting the line being taken by the Government, he fails to make all the arguments which were so powerfully made last time, that without exemption these charitable associations would lose all the advantages of being charities? Is it possibly because the income tax law has now been reinterpreted and the hon. Gentleman has to make a specious attack on my hon. Friend in order to get anywhere with his argument?

9.45 pm

Mr. Maxton: The Minister knows my speeches better than I know them myself, but if he thought that I was tailing off he had better think again. I shall come to the point about the Inland Revenue, in a moment. The Minister makes great play about the Inland Revenue, but he should be consistent. If he is to be consistent, the only housing associations that he should exempt are those which were set up and by which many houses were bought and modernised through public subscription.

The Minister was one of the sponsors of Shelter in the 1960s. Such organisations are genuine, in the sense that they are not financed by public money. If the Minister wishes to be consistent in his argument about the Inland Revenue, that is the sort of organisation that he should exempt, but that is not what he has done. Large numbers of housing associations that were recognised as charities in the past few years will still be recognised as charities, but the Minister is excluding one, the Link housing association.

Is it strange that the Inland Revenue is now giving advice different from that which it gave a few months ago? The Inland Revenue believed one thing six months ago and now says something different. That is reasonable, because it is not written into statute: it is advice from the Inland Revenue and is contrary to advice that it gave some time ago. What is to stop the Inland Revenue six months from now again giving contrary advice? If the Minister had gone to his Treasury colleagues when the Finance Bill was going through the House and said that he wanted an amendment in the Bill to deal with this, he would have been on better ground.

The Minister is basing his decision on advice that I have not seen written down. Perhaps the Minister has written advice from the Inland Revenue but advice can change and I am not prepared to trust the Inland Revenue not to change its mind in the future. The generous and right thing for the Minister to do is to agree that housing associations should continue to be recognised as charities. That is what the other place wants to do and the Minister is being mean-minded in the way that he is treating this amendment.

Mr. Henderson: The hon. Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) has been uncharacteristically mean-minded in his speech. I would not be surprised if there were some Link housing association houses in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Minister in addition to those in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton). I

[Mr. Henderson]

have housing associations in my constituency and I am also interested in this question of charity. Many hon. Members will have had representations and will have been involved in discussions during the course of the Bill.

Mr. Ancram: My hon. Friend said that there were Link houses in my constituency. I can confirm that and tell the House that there are 159 such houses in Grangemouth. I am sure that the hon. Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) will suggest that we are trying to help the hon. Member who represents that area as well.

Mr. Henderson: I am grateful to the Minister for that additional information. This is a difficult subject and I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Minister for the way in which he has worked assiduously to get the right answer to extremely complicated questions. If I have time, I shall return to that later.

This might be an appropriate point to take up a comment which the hon. Member for Cathcart made about my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, West, whom we know must remain silent during the debate. He has been present for the entire debate and it is fair to recognise that his persistence and persuasiveness have most consistently argued for the right to buy for the tenants of housing associations. That arises directly from his constituency experience.

This is also a moment to reflect that we do not seek to extend the right to buy to tenants of housing associations because we are suddenly seized of some new concept of the right to buy. We have had years of it working in the remainder of the public sector, and it has worked extremely successfully for everyone involved. Local authorities have had about £750 million worth of new resources available to meet today's needs in housing as a result of the sale of council houses. The policy has been good for tenants who have bought their houses, and it has improved the balance of housing in Scotland substantially. Indeed, balance is exactly the right word. We have reached the point where 50 per cent. of the Scottish people live in a home which belongs to the family. In other words, they are owner-occupiers. Perhaps fractionally under 50 per cent. are tenanted. That is a considerable achievement and a balanced one. Tens of thousands of tenants have benefited from the right to buy, so it is not a novel policy but an extension of a policy which has worked well in other sectors and which is now to apply to housing associations.

Mr. Maxton: Would the hon. Gentleman wish to see his hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton) introduce a Bill next year extending the right to buy to tenants in the private sector, as it works so well?

Mr. Henderson: The hon. Gentleman drew a similar distinction in relation to charities. I think he was trying to draw a distinction between one sort of genuine charity and another. He was making a distinction between charitable housing associations operating with their own money and those which operate with public money. The fact is that most housing associations operate substantially with public funds.

Earlier the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Millan) sounded surprised when I said that the Government had been infinitely more generous to housing associations than the Labour Government when the right hon. Gentleman was Secretary of State for Scotland. He will find the figures given to me by my hon. Friend the Minister in a written reply. I asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how much public money had been paid to housing associations in Scotland since May 1979, and how it compared with the preceding five years. My hon. Friend answered:

> "Total payments from public funds amounted to £524·3 million in the six years from 1 April 1979 to 31 March 1985; this compares with £41·91 million for the five years from 1 April 1974 to 31 March 1979." — [*Official Report*, 11 December 1985; Vol. 88, c. 688.]

That supports my remark that there has been a tenfold increase in housing association funds under this Government.

I wish to give full credit to the part that housing associations have played in meeting the needs of Scotland's housing, especially in the case of special needs housing. They have been far ahead of local authorities in providing houses for people with special needs. Special needs were referred to specifically in the Green Paper published by the right hon. Member for Govan in 1976 as pressing needs, yet there were more met by housing associations, as he will agree, than by many local authorities.

Finally, my hon. Friend the Minister has been patient in meeting the representations from both sides of the House. In my case I have even given him contradictory representations from constituents and, curiously enough, he has been able to meet both because of the change in the Inland Revenue's advice. I am extremely grateful to him for the way in which he has met the needs of housing in Scotland and the interests of hon. Members.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendment No. 10 disagreed to.

Amendment made to the Bill in lieu thereof: in page 22, line 1, leave out '3 October 1980' and insert '14 November 1985'.—*[Mr. Ancram.]*

Subsequent Lords amendments agreed to.

Committee appointed to draw up a reason to be assigned to the Lords for disagreeing to their amendment No. 8 to the Bill: Mr. Ancram, Mr. Dewar, Mr. Durant, Mr. John MacKay and Mr. Maxton; Three to be the quorum.—*[Mr. Ancram.]*

To withdraw immediately.

Reason for disagreeing to Lords amendment No. 8 reported, and agreed to; to be communicated to the Lords.

AIRPORTS BILL [MONEY] (NO. 2)

Queen's Recommendation having been signified—

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Airports Bill, it is expedient to authorise the payment out of money provided by Parliament of any sums required by the Secretary of State for making grants to airport operators in connection with directions given under the provisions of that Act relating to the provision of special accommodation at airports.—*[Mr. Neubert.]*

Airports Bill

Lords amendments considered.

New Clause

STATEMENTS IN CONNECTION WITH FLOTATION

Lords amendment: No. 1, after clause 9 insert the following new clause:

".—(1) This section shall apply where—

(a) an offer for sale to the public of any securities of the successor company is made by or on behalf of the Crown;

(b) any invitation or advertisement is issued (whether or not in documentary form) by or on behalf of the Crown in connection with the offer; and

(c) that invitation or advertisement does not contain all the listing particulars.

None of the persons mentioned in subsection (3) shall incur any civil liability by reason of the invitation or advertisement, or any omission from it, if—

(a) the contents of the invitation or advertisement were submitted to the Council of The Stock Exchange;

(b) the Council did not object to the contents of the invitation or advertisement; and

(c) the invitation or advertisement and the listing particulars, taken together, would not be likely to mislead persons of the kind likely to consider the offer.

(3) The persons referred to in subsection (2) are—

(a) the Crown;

(b) any person acting on behalf of the Crown in connection with the offer;

(c) the maker of any statement contained in the invitation or advertisement;

(d) any person responsible for the preparation of, or of any part of, the listing particulars.

(4) The reference in subsection (2) to a person mentioned in subsection (3) incurring civil liability shall include a reference to any other person being entitled as against the person so mentioned to be granted any civil remedy or to rescind or repudiate any agreement.

(5) In this section "the listing particulars", in relation to the offer, means such particulars as, by virtue of any provision of any enactment other than this section or of any subordinate legislation, have been approved by the Council of The Stock Exchange for the purposes of the admission of the securities to which the offer relates to the Official List of The Stock Exchange."

9.57 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Michael Spicer): I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Speaker: With this it will be convenient to consider Lords amendments Nos. 78 and 83.

Mr. Spicer: The new clause contained in Lords amendment No. 1 relates to the use of a mini-prospectus in relation to the flotation of the BAA's successor company. Although it is not certain that we will wish to issue such a document, we may decide that it would be valuable as part of our compaign to widen the ownership of shares. The new clause provides exemption from civil liability resulting from a mini-prospectus where the document, when read together with the full prospectus, would not be misleading for potential investors.

This is a very limited exemption that ensures that liability does not arise simply as a result of abridging the prospectus. A similar provision has been included in the Gas Bill, and hon. Members will note that the Financial Services Bill will confer a similar exemption in respect of flotations in general. The principle is a sound one, and I hope that the House will approve it.

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North): The Minister said that this deals with a mini-prospectus, and I have no doubt that that is so. But it is clear from the way in which the amendment is drafted that it is an all-purpose escape clause that absolves from civil liability anyone connected with the issuing of this prospectus if someone challenges the facts during flotation.

We know that we cannot hold the new Secretary of State responsible for that, although I am sorry that he has taken on the bad habits of his predecessor with these catch-all clauses that are widely drawn and include belts and braces, buttons and every other kind of safety device that one could think of.

The Minister said that the amendmept is necessary, although I am not quite sure why. He has not explained the need for this all-embracing escape clause. Why was it not on the face of the Bill when it was first published? Has he simply decided that the Government might use a mini-prospectus, or does the reason go wider than that? The Minister confirmed that there is a provision similar to this in the Gas Bill, and it would appear that it will be a feature of all privatisation bills.

I am especially worried about the blanket immunity for omission from the invitations or advertisements. I am primarily worried about staff conditions and the possible position with regard to the undertakings given over pensions for existing staff. As I understand it, the position is — as the chairman of the British Airports Authority has stated clearly and specifically in writing — that the pensions of those people already in employment will not be changed.

It being Ten o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting, consideration of Lords Amendments to the Airports Bill, and the Drug Trafficking Offences Bill may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.—*[Mr. Neubert.]*

Airports Bill

Question again proposed, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Robert Hughes: The chairman said quite clearly that pension rights will be protected for those already in employment, although that may not and probably will not be so for new employees.

I am rather concerned that if the information issued at the time of flotation does not contain such an undertaking, there is a possibility that the new owner or owners might claim that the provision was not in the flotation documents and therefore does not apply. The Noble Lord the Earl of Caithness has written to my noble Friend the Lord Underhill on this issue, and he has repeated and confirmed the specific assurances about pension rights.

Unfortunately, the original correspondence from the Department to Sir Norman Payne is not to be generally made available. I should like a twofold assurance on this matter. First, I should like an undertaking that pension rights will continue and that that will be put in the record. Secondly, and more importantly, I should like the Minister to make it clear that in any flotation documents, the undertakings on pensions or any other undertakings given to the employees and staff in relation to conditions of employment, are clear, so that the new owners, whoever they may be, will be well aware of the assurances and that, when buying shares in the flotation, they are aware of their responsibilities which have been sent to them by the Department of Transport.

Mr. Stephen Ross (Isle of Wight): When the Minister replies, will he confirm that he intends that the articles dealing with flotation should include the golden share condition? That is not written in the Bill, but the Government said in another place and in Committee here that they intended to make that point clear. May we have an undertaking tonight that it will appear in the statements related to the flotation of shares?

Mr. Michael Spicer: I can give the assurances requested by the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) in respect of pension rights. They will appear in the documentation which we shall produce on flotation and there will be an assurance that existing pension rights to which the hon. Gentleman referred will be safeguarded. I hope that that gives the hon. Gentleman the assurance that he was seeking.

I can similarly assure the hon. Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Ross), that a special share will be retained by the Government for the purpose of limiting the shares held by any one person or institution to a maximum of 15 per cent. of the shareholding.

Question put and agreed to.

Subsequent Lords amendments agreed to.

New Clause

CAPITAL CONTROLS RELATING TO INVESTMENT IN PUBLIC AIRPORT COMPANIES BY LOCAL AUTHORITIES IN ENGLAND AND WALES

Lords amendment: No. 2, after clause 19 insert the following new clause:

".—(1) Where a local authority dispose of any securities of a public airport company (whether it continues to be such a company after the disposal or not)—

(a) any amount received by the authority in respect of the disposal shall be treated for the purposes of section 72 of the 1980 Act (expenditure which authorities may make) as a receipt of the authority which, by virtue of section 75(1) of that Act, is a capital receipt of the authority for the purposes of Part VIII of that Act (capital expenditure of local authorities etc.), but

(b) only the relevant sum shall be taken into account under section 72(3)*(d)* of that Act.

(2) In subsection (1) "the relevant sum", in relation to an amount falling within paragraphs *(a)* of that subsection, means—

(a) three-tenths of that amount, or

(b) if regulations are made for the purposes of section 72(3)*(d)* of the 1980 Act which prescribe a proportion other than three-tenths in relation to disposals falling within subsection (1), the proportion of that amount so prescribed.

(3) Where a local authority incur any expenditure in respect of the acquisition of any securities—

(a) of a public airport company, or

(b) of any company which, as a result of the acquisition by the authority of those securities, becomes a public airport company,

the amount of that expenditure shall, in so far as it is not prescribed expenditure of the authority for the purposes of Part VIII of the 1980 Act by virtue of Schedule 12 to this Act, be treated as prescribed expenditure of the authority for those purposes.

(4) In this section and section 20 "the 1980 Act" means the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980; and this section and section 20 apply to England and Wales only."

Mr. Michael Spicer: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): With this it will be convenient to take Lords amendments Nos. 3 to 7 and No. 60.

Mr. Spicer: I believe that the new clause introduced by Lords amendment No. 2 will commend itself to the House. It creates a new incentive for local authorities to introduce private capital into their airports by enabling them to use the proceeds from the sale of shares to justify extra capital expenditure. This is achieved by classing the proceeds as capital receipts which the authorities may add to their capital expenditure allocation. The only constraint is that the use of these receipts to justify extra spending will be limited by the prescribed proportion of three tenths which already applies to other non-housing receipts. The additional spending power may be used for any services.

I believe that the House will also welcome Lords amendments Nos. 3 to 7, which create a further incentive to introduce private capital. Clause 20 applies to private capital raised by public airport companies the same controls as apply to capital finance provided by the controlling authority because both add to the public sector borrowing requirement. The amendments deal with the situation in which the airport company issues securities which transfer control of the company to the private sector. Because the private sector would then bear the risk of the investment, the amounts raised from those shares would not add to the public sector borrowing requirement. The amendments therefore provide that amounts raised by public airport company share issues which transfer control to the private sector will not count against the former controlling authorities' capital expenditure allocation.

Lords amendment No. 60 is purely technical.

I commend the Lords amendments to the House.

Mr. Robert Hughes: It looks as though there has been some shift by the Government in relation to the use to which money raised by the privatisation of local authority airports can be put for spending on other purposes. Nevertheless, I am somewhat concerned about the three tenths qualification in subsection (2)*(a)* of the new clause. How far does that limit apply? Is it three tenths in any one year? Does it mean that the authority can eventually spend all the money for other purposes? If so, that is certainly some move.

In my view, it is quite wrong that there should be any constraint whatever on the use of the money raised. As the Minister knows, I totally oppose the selling-off of local authority airports and I am not at all pleased at the way in which the Bill compels authorities to do this against their wishes. The Bill does not actually say that they must sell the airports but the financial conditions laid down about the way in which local authorities can develop their airports in terms of capital spending mean that they will be forced to sell them off. In those circumstances, it is grossly unfair to refuse authorities the freedom to use the money as they think best. Incidentally, it is also entirely against the Tory philosophy about which we have heard so much of freedom for local authorities from intervention by the dead hand of Whitehall, although the Government have been intervening far more vigorously in local authority affairs than any Government for many years.

If there is indeed a relaxation of the public sector borrowing requirement rules by the Treasury I hope that that is the influence of the new Secretary of State for Transport, perhaps initiated in his former position at the Treasury. Many of us have been utterly bemused at the illogicality of Treasury rules. This move is at least some recognition of reality.

I have one small question about subsection (3)*(b)* of the new clause, which says:

"that expenditure shall, in so far as it is not prescribed expenditure of the authority for the purposes of Part VIII of the 1980 Act by virtue of Schedule 12 to this Act, be treated as prescribed expenditure of the authority for those purposes."

I am not sure that I understand all that gobbledegook. When a local authority decides that it has to form a private company and there are costs involved, will any extra cash be available to assist it? From the way the clause is drafted, I presume that it will be prescribed expenditure. I hope that no difficulty has arisen about that.

Mr. Stephen Ross: I wish to deal with a point that was raised by the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes). It seems odd that the provision about three tenths is written into the Bill. Can it be changed by order, or will there have to be and amendment to the Bill? Surely that is considered annually. We hope that the Government may relax the provision in relation to housing receipts. They have relaxed the provision slightly already for county councils. I wonder why the provision has been written into the Bill at this stage.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The hon. Members for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) and Isle of Wight (Mr. Ross) asked about the three tenths and wondered whether the additional elements will be applicable over the years ahead. The answer is, yes. I hope that answers that point.

I do not want to paraphrase too liberally the remarks of the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North, but he said that there was implicit in this part of the Bill an element of compulsion. That is not so. Indeed, he will know that since we met in Committee we have said that in determining the debt equity ratio and in taking out any debt element and leaving it with the local authority, the interest on that debt can be taken into consideration for rate support grant. Concern was expressed about that in Committee. Some hon. Members felt that there was an implicit element of compulsion in respect of some airports, so we have dealt with that issue.

Despite pressures from various quarters, there is no compulsion, although I do not think that either hon. Gentleman would accuse me of disguising the fact that we are enthusiastic about the involvement of private capital in the development of regional airports.

Question put and agreed to.

Subsequent Lords amendments agreed to.

Clause 22

PROVISION OF SERVICE FOR PUBLIC AIRPORT COMPANIES

Lords amendment: No. 8, in page 18, line 21, at end insert—

"(3) Where a principal council have entered into an agreement under this section, the accounts of that council shall include a separate account in respect of that agreement and—

(a) in England and Wales, section 24 of the Local Government Finance Act 1982 (rights of inspection) shall apply in relation to any such separate account

as it applies in relation to any statement of accounts prepared by the council pursuant to regulations under section 23 of that Act; and

(b) in Scotland, sections 101 and 105 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (rights of inspection and regulations as to accounts) shall have effect as if any reference to an abstract of the accounts of an authority included a reference to any such separate account."

Mr. Michael Spicer: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Clause 22 makes provision for a principal council to provide a very limited range of services to an associated public airport company at proper commercial charges. In Committee several hon. Members, in particular my hon. Friends the Members for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) and for Saffron Walden (Mr. Haselhurst), asked me to see what more could be done to stimulate competition in the provision of such services by local authorities. The amendment before us requires that where any agreement has been entered into under the provisions of clause 22, the accounts of the principal council concerned shall include a separate account in respect of that agreement. It also provides for public rights of inspection of such accounts.

It will be open then for other potential suppliers of those services to tender, if they so wish, as suppliers to the airport company when the particular contract next comes up for renewal. The amendment meets some of the concerns expressed, in particular, by some of my hon. Friends when we discussed the issue in Committee.

I hope that the amendment commends itself to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

New Clause

AVOIDANCE OF RESTRICTIONS ON TRANSFER OF SECURITIES OF PUBLIC AIRPORT COMPANY

Lords amendment: No. 9, after clause 23 insert the following new clause—

"—(1) Any provision to which this section applies shall be void in so far as it operates—

(a) to preclude the holder of any securities of a public airport company from disposing of those securities, or

(b) to require the holder of any such securities to dispose, or offer to dispose, of those securities to particular persons or to particular classes of persons, or

(c) to preclude the holder of any such securities from disposing of those securities except—

(i) at a particular time or at particular times, or

(ii) on the fulfilment of particular conditions or in other particular circumstances.

(2) This section applies to any provision relating to any securities of a public airport company and contained in—

(a) the memorandum or articles of association of the company or any other instrument purporting to regulate to any extent the respective rights and liabilities of the members of the company,

(b) any resolution of the company, or

(c) any instrument issued by the company and embodying terms and conditions on which any such securities are to be held by persons for the time being holding them."

10.15 pm

Mr. Michael Spicer: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to discuss Lords amendment No. 10.

Mr. Spicer: The Bill provides that any restriction on the disposal of securities in a public airport company, however or wherever that restriction is expressed, should be void. That is how the Bill now stands. This provision is to ensure that the Government's policy of encouraging the sale of airport company shares to the private sector is not in any way frustrated by the imposition by councils of conditions making the disposal of shares difficult or impossible.

However, some restrictions or conditions on sales of shares might, we recognise, be necessary. In particular – this point was raised by the hon. Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Ross) – we have agreed that there will be a restriction on the maximum holding of British Airports Authority shares by any one person or body. We believe that it would be wrong to deny local authorities the chance of incorporating a corresponding restriction in the articles of association of the new public airport companies.

It is also important not to invalidate restrictions or conditions arising in a normal contract for the sale of securities. I think, for example, of an agreement binding the seller to transfer securities to the buyer at a certain date in return for a consideration. The amendment has, therefore, been designed specifically to define the restrictions that are to be prohibited, and the instruments or circumstances in which restrictions are to be invalid.

Clause 24, which the new clause replaces, will be withdrawn. However the Opposition may feel about the general thrust of this part of the Bill, I think that the amendment, which gives greater precision and which allows the flexibility that I have outlined, will commend itself to them.

Mr. Robert Hughes: The Minister has been very reasonable, just as he always has been in our debates on this part of the policy which deals with local authority airports. But, as I understand clause 23, it is trying to stop what has happened in Manchester dead in its tracks. I am sorry that the Minister did not understand from the Committee and Report stages, just how strongly people feel about this issue. Manchester has met all the conditions that the Government sought to impose about the running of local authority airports.

The Minister says that he has never hidden his enthusiasm for introducing private capital into local authority airports. However, it goes slightly further than that. He has never hidden his enthusiasm for selling off the airports so that they are no longer in local authority hands. He has also found it necessary to dress that up slightly, so that it is not presented as sheer naked political dogma. He said that it was necessary to introduce the disciplines of a plc into the running of local authority airports. During our discussions, he did not give us any examples of local authorities being profligate with the public purse when it comes to running airports. But that is neither here nor there.

The fact remains that the sole purpose of clause 23 would appear to be to bring Manchester back into line. Manchester produced a private company that would have done everything that the Minister wanted, yet he still would not permit it. Also that strikes clearly at the freedom of local authorities to decide how they shall run their airport business. I am sorry that the Minister has not found it possible to meet our wishes that Manchester in

particular, having gone so far, should be left alone. However, we must accept that the Minister has the majority and that he will drive the measure through, whatever anyone thinks.

Mr. Richard Page (Hertfordshire, South-West): I support the amendment because it introduces an equality of treatment with the British Airports Authority. I take this opportunity to echo the words of the hon. Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Ross) in thanking my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary for accepting the spirit behind new clause 11. Back on 9 April, at Report stage, some hon. Members introduced protections for the British Airports Authority. Obviously, they sought to protect it through a golden share to ensure that it is not taken over by a series of foreign airlines. I should like my appreciation recorded in that respect. I believe it is only right that local authorities running airports should be placed on an equal basis. Hopefully, they will go down that route in the fullness of time.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I thank my right hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, South-West (Mr. Page) for his remarks. The advice and encouragement that he and others have given have been well heeded. The hon. Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) is absolutely right; there has never been any intention to disguise the fact that we should like either an element of private capital or the sale of the companies to the private sector. If that occurred, they would cease to be within the public sector borrowing requirement. There is nothing between the hon. Gentleman and myself on that issue. I feel strongly that there are enormous benefits for companies. I also believe, having got to know some airports quite well, that a number will eventually decide to go that way for various reasons.

Manchester has not met the condition that allows local authorities to sell shares freely. That matter will cause some concern. We shall consider the Manchester scheme with as little dogma as the hon. Gentleman has encouraged us to do. Our objective, as always, is to ensure that Manchester airport has every kind of assistance placed before it so it can quickly become a great international airport. I am quite certain that, as a result of the encouragement of the Government and the traffic rights which the Government have earned for it, that will be the case.

Question put and agreed to.

Subsequent Lords amendment agreed to.

Clause 28

DIRECTIONS TO AIRPORT OPERATORS IN THE INTERESTS OF NATIONAL SECURITY ETC.

Lords amendment: No. 11, in page 22, line 11, leave out from "security" to end of line 13 and insert—

"(2A) The Secretary of State may give to the appropriate person in relation to any airport a direction requiring that person (according to the circumstances of the case)—

(a) to do, or not to do, in connection with any operational activities relating to the airport a particular thing specified in the direction, or

(b) to secure that a particular thing specified in the direction is done or not done in connection with any such activities,

if the Secretary of State considers it necessary or expedient to give such a direction in order to discharge or facilitate the discharge of any international obligation of the United Kingdom.

(2B) In subsection (2A)—

"the appropriate person", in relation to an airport, means—

(a) the airport operator; or

(b) an associated company of the airport operator; and

"operational activities", in relation to an airport, means any activities—

(a) which are carried out on wholly or mainly for the benefit of users of the airport, or

(b) the revenues from which are wholly or mainly attributable to payments by such users;

but the Secretary of State may by order make such modifications of the definition of "operational activities" as he thinks necessary or expedient having regard to any international obligation of the United Kingdom."

Mr. Michael Spicer: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take Lords amendments Nos. 12 to 14, 18, 19, 22, 23, 27 to 38, 48, 72, 82, 84, 86, 87 and 92.

Mr. Spicer: There is a long list of amendments. I shall not go through them all in detail. However, there are one or two points which I think that the House would want me to make. I shall do so as briefly as I can. This apparently complex set of amendments deals with two related circumstances where an airport operator might not carry out airport-related activities himself—for instance, if an associated company carried on commercial activities, or if an intermediary company granted concessions for airport-related activities.

Amendments 11 to 14 deal with the first strand of the associated company problem — how to secure the discharge of the United Kingdom's international obligations in circumstances where an operator does not control the whole of an airport's business. If, for good commercial reasons, a decision were taken in future that the airport operator should manage only the aeronautical side of the business while a separate associated company managed the commercial side, a power of direction over just the airport operator could be insufficient to secure the discharge of the United Kingdom's international obligations. It would clearly be wrong for an airport group to receive all the benefits of those commercial activities without also being bound by the obligations that go with the business of running an international office. It would be equally wrong for the power of direction to be deficient. Amendment No. 11, therefore, extends the power of direction to an airport operator's associated company.

Amendment No. 11 also defines power with respect to "operational activities". They are defined to encompass the whole of the airport-related business, since there is no justification for allowing the power of direction to extend to activities which may be totally unconnected with the business of running an airport. Because our international obligations might change in the future, the definition is amenable by order, subject to negative resolution of both Houses of Parliament. This means that the power of direction will be extendable as far as our international obligations require, whatever may happen in the future.

The second strand of associated company problems relates to economic regulation. Since regulation is targeted on the airport operator, the same problem could arise in that an associated company could not be regulated under the terms of the Bill. It is clearly not right that an airport group could enjoy the financial benefits of commercial activities from a monopoly position without also being

[Mr. Spicer]

subject to the regulatory safeguards provided for in part IV. Amendment No. 92 closes that loophole by allowing the CAA to impose conditions direct on an associated company.

Amendments Nos. 18, 22, 23 and 32 to 35 introduce the more clear and precise phrase "operational activities" to all the clauses in part IV which refer to the whole airport-related business. Amendments Nos. 72, 84 and 86 allow clauses 28 and 38 to be extended to the Channel Islands and overseas territories by Order in Council.

Amendments Nos. 19, 27 to 31 and 36 are designed to deal with circumstances where the airport operator does not himself grant franchises or concessions to others to carry out operational activities but interposes an intermediary — for instance, a company specialising in franchising to do so on his behalf. In such a case, it would not be possible, under the Bill as it stands, to impose conditions on an airport operator to remedy the adverse effects of any monopoly abuse at the end of a chain of franchises. These amendments close that loophole.

I draw the attention of the House in particular to amendments Nos. 37 and 38 which fulfil a commitment made by the Government on Report in this House to meet the concerns of several hon. Members — in particular, my hon. Friend the Member for Hayes and Harlington (Mr. Dicks) — about the protection against monopoly abuse offered by the Bill to concessionaires at airports. The amendments provide that, where the Monopolies and Mergers Commission is investigating a matter which relates to the granting of concessions, then, in addition to the objectives in clause 31—which include furthering the reasonable interests of airport users — it should have regard also to the furtherance of the reasonable interests of concessionnaires. We believe that this provides the right degree of guidance to the MMC at the point it needs it without keeping the balance on its objectivity in one direction. We made that commitment and we have now honoured it.

I commend all these rather technical amendments to the House.

Mr. Robert Hughes: As the Under-Secretary of State said in his peroration, a series of technical amendments are included in this group. I must admit that I was slightly confused when we jumped from national security and relations with a territory outside the United Kingdom to franchise holders at airports, all under one group of amendments. That is not, of course, any criticism of the choice of amendments.

I was slightly worried by the introduction of the Under-Secretary of State when he said that there might be two separate companies—one operating the commercial side of the business and the other operating the aeronautical side. We have always been worried, with the proposed privatisation of the British Airports Authority, that something like this would happen. It is clear that the most lucrative part of the BAA's business is not the aeronautical side but the franchises and commercial activities. It has always been our concern that the commercial activities might be milked off in some sort of asset-stripping arrangements but that is a fairly general point.

I want specifically to raise the issue of security with the Minister because I certainly do not object to anything the Secretary of State might do to try to protect national security in time of war. I do not think that there is any quarrel on either side of the House about that. However, I think that the clause is a rather cumbersome way of going about it. I would have thought that in time of war in the interest of national security there was probably adequate existing legislation without this great long cumbersome clause now amended in the Bill.

10.30 pm

I wonder what representations the Minister has had recently from, for example, the airports or the airlines, about the cost of security at our airports, which is growing as each week and month goes by. I do not think that we object to the fact that security is increasing in cost. Clearly modern technological change will require better security equipment and certainly, so long as there is a security threat, we must have the necessary equipment and training. We do know that the new equipment will be extremely expensive. I hope that the Minister will look at that and discuss fully with the British Airports Authority and the relevant airlines how security might be improved and paid for. I am not asking him this evening for a commitment about who pays for security or anything like that. However, I hope that he will give an undertaking that he will discuss, or perhaps continue discussions, on what is a growing problem in terms of security and cost.

I wonder whether the Minister saw "Panorama" on Monday night. I did not see it myself but I know that it was a very worrying programme. I know that in a written answer the Minister has said that he is stepping up training and I am glad to hear that. However, basically I am concerned at the fact that the programme put a security man through a series of tests and he managed to pick out from a number of items of baggage all the things that had been planted for him to find except three. It so happened that the three he missed were suitcases containing plastic explosive. Clearly, it must be a matter of serious concern to see that we have the equipment to find that out.

My concern, in addition to security, is that if any part of that programme is shown in the United States it will do nothing to help the tourist trade and airline traffic, which as we know, is severely down from the United States. If people feel that there might be deficiencies in our security arrangements it will certainly not help to persuade people that there is no danger in coming to this country. I wonder whether the Minister might say something about that.

Mr. Anthony Steen (South Hams): It is right that security is tremendously important and we must ensure that our security is the best we can manage. However, would the hon. Member agree that the new arrangements that the British Airports Authority has introduced in terminal 1 are discouraging tourists from travelling on domestic services because of the delays that are taking place? They are causing such disruption to the airlines that planes are going without the passengers? Would he agree that the British Airports Authority must find a better way of speeding passengers through? There are four machines in terminal 1, but only one or two are ever working? Surely something should be done there.

Mr. Hughes: I was not going to mention that, but I am glad that the hon. Gentleman has raised it. I have made my own representations to the British Airports Authority because the new arrangements are appalling for the passengers. There is now a nice little notice up saying that the authority is sorry it is taking a long time but it is

recruiting more staff, please bear with it. I object to the change in the security arrangements. Previously, if one was flying the shuttle the security was done at the shuttle. If one was on British Midland, there were separate security arrangements. If one was on an internal domestic flight, there was a bank of two machines that one used to go through. That seemed to work quite well.

I have no doubt that the British Airports Authority has its reasons for having shifted the security system up front so that everybody goes through the same system. But on several occasions when I have been to Heathrow, I have found only two machines working at peak hours. One Friday evening, the queue was not just two deep, but eight or 10 deep, from the security point right back through the whole of terminal 1 to where people go for the European services. It was absolutely appalling. There was no warning.

Luckily, I did not have any baggage with me that evening. Perhaps I should not admit it, but I queue-jumped. I walked right past the queue, and through the individual machine. Heathrow has had its problems. They have not yet been satisfactorily resolved, but I hope that they soon will be. I do not blame the people there for trying to make the best security arrangements. Part of the problem is that they have started to do much more individual bag-searching. That is right.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): Does not the hon. Gentleman feel, as a regular traveller like myself, because we have to go up and down every week, that the people at Heathrow have put the machines in the wrong place? Passengers do not know which aircraft is taking off from which gate at what time. That information is shown on the board before one reaches the security system, and the passengers have to wait to reach it before they go through security. That causes part of the bottleneck. That has been my experience——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. It is not in order to have a long discussion about the arrangements at Heathrow on this group of amendments. I hope that we shall direct our attention more narrowly to them.

Mr. Hughes: I do not want to go further down the road of discussing where the information is, and so on. That is going into far too much detail than the amendments warrant.

Under the amendment, the Secretary of State takes the power to direct the airport authorities to make various arrangements for national security. I agree that national security covers the security of all passengers who fly out. It is right that there should be some discussion of it.

I hope that the Minister will have something to say which is not of a palliative nature, to the effect that everything is all right. One of the things that may have provoked some of the queries about airport security is that the hon. Gentleman has sometimes put on too bland a profile about how good security was. We have to get the balance right. I hope that if the Minister saw "Panorama", he will say whether there is anything in that programme that might be of assistance to him, and whether he will do something about it under the clause.

Mr. Robert McCrindle (Brentwood and Ongar): I am at least as confused as the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) as to the impact of this group of amendments. I am not even sure that this is the correct place in which to make the single point upon which I would welcome a reply from my hon. Friend the Minister.

My hon. Friend will recall that in Committee and on Report, amendments were moved to try to make it a requirement on the part of the privatised British Airports Authority to discuss with the airlines, as the principal users of the airports, the basis upon which the facilities that the BAA will continue to have to provide will be provided. In another place, Lord Kinnoull moved an amendment to require such consultation to be provided. In response to Lord Caithness's suggestion that the amendment be withdrawn to allow discussions to take place to see whether a reasonable compromise could be achieved outside the Bill, I understand that the amendment was withdrawn.

Have such discussions taken place? If so, is it likely that the Bill will require those consultations to proceed, as all the British airlines would prefer? Or as we reach the end of the parliamentary passage of the Bill, are we forced to hope that the British Airports Authority will, out of the goodness of its heart, decide that it is in its interests to have such discussions before providing, or failing to provide, facilities which the airlines consider to be essential?

Like the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North, I was unable to see the "Panorama" programme, but I have no doubt from reading press reports that it raised serious matters to which we are duty bound to pay attention. However, does my hon. Friend agree that, although it might have made splendid television, it might have been in the interests of many passengers, who might become nervous in the extreme at the prospect of travelling as we enter the peak of the summer season, if "Panorama" and the BBC had made further inquiries as to whether other activities were taking place to which they could not be made privy? That might have presented a more balanced programme. I am not in favour of censorship on such matters, but I get the impression from what I hear of the programme that much concern has been caused. Does my hon. Friend agree that, in all the circumstances, the BBC might have done a better service to the travelling public and to the tourism and aviation industries if it had presented the position in a more balanced way?

Mr. Stephen Ross: As a member of the Select Committee on Transport, I welcome amendment No. 11. The Minister is worried about security at airports, and he will know that a report from the Select Committee on security at airports, especially at Heathrow is either on his desk or about to reach him. I assure the House that we have considered the matter in great detail and that our report will be worth while. For the moment, we are reporting only to the Minister. The report will be published later.

I welcome the line that the Minister has taken on the amendment. I hope that the Select Committee's recommendations will find a niche in his views about the current position, which is not as satisfactory as it should be. There is no point in hiding the fact from the general public. I did not see the "Panorama" programme, but I have no doubt that it was overdone. I feel sorry for the BAA and the airlines, which must try to resolve problems that are almost unbearable. They cannot be dealt with to everyone's satisfaction. I have just returned from Istanbul, and I can report that the security at Istanbul airport is magnificent.

Mr. Steen: I agree with the hon. Gentleman that the British Airports Authority does everything that it can to ensure safety at its airports. Does he agree that there is no limit to the amount of money that could be spent? But it is not the BAA's money, it is the airlines' money. Does he agree that if there must be increased security, its cost should not fall only on the airlines that fly from that terminal and that the Government should take some responsibility for that expenditure?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. This has nothing to do with the amendments that are before the House.

Mr. Ross: If the hon. Gentleman is patient, he might discover that that is one recommendation of the Select Committee.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Before I deal with the points made by the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) may I tell my hon. Friend the Member for Brentwood and Ongar (Mr. McCrindle) that two points were implied in what he said. First, on the specific point of consultation, we shall issue an order when the relevant part of the Act comes into effect. If the thrust of my hon. Friend's questions was directed to mechanisms, capacity and consultation, these are matters that we shall discuss when we come to Lords amendments Nos. 58 and 88. I appreciate the difficulty of wading through this group of amendments while considering what it is all about.

10.45 pm

I say to the hon. Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Ross) that I respect the work that the Select Committee on Transport is doing on this subject. Its very existence and the thoroughness with which it has gone about its work have had beneficial effects. The Select Committee is acting in the best interests of all concerned. Much of its work has been unsung and has been done in privacy. That is in contrast to the way in which the Panorama programme approached the matter. To take up the remarks of the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North, I suspect that that programme has made life more difficult for the British tourist industry and I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving me the opportunity to respond to his comments. I remind the House that the powers of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State over security in this context come under 1982 legislation and will not come under the parts of the Bill that deal with national security and security in exceptional circumstances.

It is right that a balance has to be struck. As my hon. Friend the Member for South Hams (Mr. Steen) said, the security record of our airports is fantastic. It appears that Americans have been put off from coming to Britain from time to time, and over the past five years there have been 32 hijacks of aircraft originating from United States airports and four bomb attacks. In Britain, the comparable figure is zero.

Mr. Steen: I think that the House will want to pay tribute to the remarkable dedication of the staff at Heathrow and other airports in Britain who concern themselves with safety. As my hon. Friend the Minister has said, they have done a remarkable job. Does my hon. Friend agree that we should involve the airlines as well as the British Airports Authority in trying to find solutions to problems? When privatised, the authority should bring in the consumer in finding solutions. We should pay tribute to the sterling work that has been done.

Mr. Spicer *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The Minister is leading the debate into a wide general discussion of airport security, which is out of order and unhelpful. I hope that he will set an example and address himself specifically to the amendments that are before the House.

Mr. Spicer: I hope that you will allow me to respond briefly to the debate which has taken place, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I tell my hon. Friend that responsibility lies with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. A committee that is comprised of the airlines advises on security.

British airports have a superb security record, but it is right that we should not be complacent. The hon. Member for Aberdeen, North is right to press us on these matters and I think that I have responded satisfactorily to his remarks. The Government have taken a number of actions and if I were to refer to them in detail, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you would rightly call me to order. We are with the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North in recognising the need for training and the provision of the best equipment and the necessary resources.

Question put and agreed to.

Subsequent Lords amendments agreed to.

Clause 29

PUBLIC AIRPORT COMPANIES AND THEIR CONTROLLING AUTHORITIES

Lords amendment: No. 15, in page 23, line 41, leave out subsection (5) and insert—

"(5) Where—

(a) the subject-matter of any particular rules made by the Secretary of State under this section is a matter in relation to which the CAA has given advice to the Secretary of State (whether before or after the passing of this Act), and

(b) those rules are so made not later than five years after the giving of that advice,

the requirements of subsection (4) shall be taken to have been satisfied with respect to those rules."

Mr. Spicer: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

The amendment avoids the Secretary of State having unnecessarily to request fresh advice on traffic distribution rules from the Civil Aviation Authority where such advice has been given within five years.

Mr. Robert Hughes: I cannot let the Minister get away quite as easily as that. It looks on the face of it as though amendment No. 15 is a purely technical matter laying down a limit of five years in which the rules have to be changed if the CAA is given advice. But how does that fit in with clause 29, which it amends?

Here we have clearly set out the steps to be taken, first, by the Secretary of State, and, secondly, by the CAA. It makes it clear that where the CAA has been consulted by the Secretary of State, the CAA has to proceed with the consultation process in which it discusses with airport operators likely to be affected by the rules, the operators of aircraft and organisations representing airport operators or operators of aircraft, and so forth.

I have difficulty in seeing how that works and how amendment No. 15 fits in because, in a recent exercise in which the CAA has apparently undertaken a round of consultations, not a blind bit of notice has been taken of them. I wonder whether that will happen with the traffic distribution rules.

There have been discussions — CAP 510 — about feeding into Heathrow airport in particular, although Gatwick is also part of the system of airports serving the same area of the United Kingdom. The CAA has suggested that flights from Inverness should be shifted out of Heathrow and it has also suggested that the same might happen with Dundee and Plymouth, along with a whole range of other things in the first stage. There is also a second stage where various other flights from other British airports might be altered. The consultation process took place but I do not know anyone, apart from the CAA, who said that they agreed with CAP 510. Inverness, Dundee and everyone else are outraged that despite the consultations the CAA has confirmed what it said in the first place.

There is no point putting into legislation a whole set of rules which have to be followed about consultation with operators and everyone else and then at the end of the day simply saying, "That's it. We have had the consultation but we are going ahead anyway." If the changes proposed by the CAA take place all hell will break loose, even more than has happened in the past.

I do not know how amendment No. 15 fits in, but to say that the rules are so made not later than five years after the giving of that advice means five years of uncertainty.

Either the changes will be made or they will not be made, and we must know. The Minister must tell us a bit more about how clause 29 will work. How does it fit in with his general traffic management rules in other parts of the Bill?

This is a serious matter and those of us who represent or have interests in airports outside London will not have them dominated by the needs of Heathrow, the needs of particular operators or the needs as perceived by the CAA in a completely misconceived way.

Mr. Bill Walker: My hon. Friend the Minister knows that we spent a long time on this matter in Committee and on Report and he knows that I have been in consultation with noble Lords in the other place.

I do not wish to spend a lot of time on this, but when the Minister is replying could he tell the House how this amendment relates to the capacity and demand amendments Nos. 58 and 88? There is a demand from airlines to land at Heathrow. Amendment No. 15 *(b)* says: "those rules are so made not later than five years after the giving of that advice".

We know about the advice given recently by the CAA on the problems likely to be faced at Heathrow. It suggested that certain services should be removed from Heathrow, but we know that under the regulations the carriers cannot be told where to go. They can be told where they cannot go, to Heathrow. How does that marry up with the problems of capacity and demand? There is an opportunity to develop further at Heathrow and at Gatwick. How does that square with the amendment? If we accept amendments Nos. 15, 58 and 99, which will have priority? Nos. 58 and 88 say that there is a requirement for the capacity to meet the demand. How is that marvellous balancing act to be achieved?

Mr. Steen: Does my hon. Friend agree that this clause and the amendment are important? They give far-reaching powers to the Secretary of State, and while we are well content that the present Secretary of State will exercise his responsibilities in a proper way, we may well be anxious about how that would be done by any future Government. Does my hon. Friend further agree that whereas Heathrow airport is currently under-utilised, Gatwick airport is almost at capacity? There is a great danger that some unwise and badly advised future Secretary of State could get it hopelessly wrong.

Mr. Walker: My hon. Friend the Member for South Hams (Mr. Steen) has put his finger on the matter of how the official side, whether it is the CAA or the officials advising the Secretary of State, would view these things. In relation to amendment No. 15, the scheduling committee is the body which at the end of the day will determine the allocation of the available slots. That committee, certainly in respect of Heathrow, has clearly said that it is not yet unable to meet the demand.

Mr. Steen: Nowhere near it.

Mr. Walker: It says that on a daily and hourly basis there is still scope for aircraft and aircraft movements — if there is a demand for more. My hon. Friend the Minister will know that we spent a long time in Committee trying to find answers to these difficult and thorny problems. I compliment my hon. Friend the Minister on the way that he and his colleagues responded to the requests made in the House and in another place. We need some clarification from my hon. Friend the Minister on the exact relationship between amendment No. 15 — if it is accepted — and amendments Nos. 58 and 88 which we will discuss later. Those two amendments are linked and cannot be separated.

Mr. Ernie Ross (Dundee, West): I assure the House that as soon as the responsibility for transport is in the capable hands of my hon. Friend the Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) operators, airports and the travelling public will be well served and well looked after. Like my hon. Friend the Member for Aberdeen, North, I should like to know what amendment No. 15 adds to the Bill. All it appears to do is extend from 12 months to five years the period of uncertainty. As my hon. Friend said, CAP 522 is merely a restatement of CAP 157. No one agrees with it. It will have a tremendously damaging effect on the development of regional air services in the United Kingdom.

11 pm

On 10 July a deputation from Carlisle will come to see the Minister. They share the Dundee-Carlisle-Heathrow link with my constituents. We are greatly concerned that the Minister has a document in which the information is out-dated. The new operator on this service took over officially only in January 1986 and cannot provide that information from such a short experience of the route. Indeed, it is doubtful whether the CAA could provide it. It is nonsense when one arm of the Government, the Secretary of State for Scotland, is rightly concerned about the economic regeneration of Tayside and pumping a considerable part of his budget into regenerating the area economically and building up its attractiveness, while another arm, the CAA, threatens the viability and economic well being of the area.

The service is vital. Indeed, I travelled to London on it today. The CAA has said that it is concerned that the small companies using the slots into Heathrow should develop the interlining service. Of the 23 passengers on the flight this afternoon, three were travelling on such a service. One was going to Hamburg, one to Dusseldorf and one to

[Mr. Ernie Ross]

Houston. That is not a bad proportion. If the uncertainty over the route were lifted, I am sure that the present operator of Euro-Air could develop the service and make nonsense of CAP 522. At present it is carrying out a passenger survey to find out the final destination of the travelling public when they hit London. Early signs are that those travelling to London, especially British people, would prefer to come to London via Heathrow as they come in to what are termed the business areas in the M4 corridor. Gatwick would not be suitable.

I should certainly like to hear from the Minister that he does not accept CAP 522, but he will not say that tonight. I should like to hear how he thinks that amendment No. 15 will help him to ensure that the advice given to him by the CAA prior to the enactment of the legislation will permit him to make the right decision.

Mr. Steen: It is not just the scheduled services from Aberdeen, important as they are, which are worried about this clause, but all the charter traffic. The hon. Gentleman may know that some Conservative Members are taking a delegation to see the Minister. Every airline involved in charter traffic. Every airline involved in charter traffic is opposed to the powers of the Secretary of State and how they may operate against their interests. Does he agree that it would be a dreadful mistake if we did anything to damage our successful charter traffic?

Mr. Ross: I would not claim to be an expert on charter traffic, but I accept what the hon. Gentleman says. Obviously, these points have been made in Committee.

We need to hear from the Minister tonight why he thinks that amendment No. 15 will strengthen clause 29, and more particularly, how he intends to deal with the information he is given by the CAA prior to the clause standing part of the Bill.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I wholly understand this uncertainty point which has been raised by the hon. Members for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) and for Dundee, West (Mr. Ross) and my hon. Friend the Member for South Hams (Mr. Steen). However, it is only one of two schools of thought on the matter. Others, who also represent regional routes in relation to the advice produced by the CAA, say, "Let's wait and see." As my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) said, it is not fully predictable whether the peak hour period at Heathrow could be extended by the scheduling committee in such a way as to allow in more flights than was the case when the CAA considered the information.

A school of thought which is represented by some of the other routes affected by this decision is that we should wait and see. My right hon. Friend and myself must first decide whether we make a speedy response. However, I also recognise the point made by the hon. Member for Dundee, West about uncertainty. He and my hon. Friend the Member for South Hams have made representations about how uncertainty would affect their own regions. In the case of the hon. Member for Dundee, West it is a route that is thin and developing, and in the case of my hon. Friend the Member for South Hams it is a route in respect of which uncertainty causes great worries.

I entirely accept that there are two sets of decisions. I must quickly produce a decision recognising these factors. We are listening intently to what the hon. Member for Dundee, West and others are saying about the routes that have been threatened. However, I cannot give a decision tonight.

This is a simple amendment. Everything stays—there is no problem about that, except that we say that there is no point in going through the elaborate, time-consuming and expensive procedures implied in the clause more than once every five years.

Mr. Robert Hughes: The amendment states:

"those rules are so made not later than five years after the giving of that advice".

If, say, in 18 months' time, the Minister decides not to change the rules, presumably that is the end of the matter and it is not open to the CAA to ask him to change his mind without at least a further examination.

Mr. Spicer: As I understood the question, that is right. It will still be open to the Secretary of State to come up with new rules within that period if the circumstances have changed, but as long as he is within the five-year period he will not necessarily consult the CAA.

It is difficult to give the precise relationships that will exist between the gathering of advice in which the CAA will be involved in relation to traffic distribution rules, the advice it gives to the Secretary of State, and the advice that it will give on capacity. But clearly there is a relationship, and I entirely accept that it will be very much part of any total advice that the CAA gives, particularly on capacity.

Mr. Steen: It would be helpful if the Minister told the House that when looking at the powers under this clause——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. We are not discussing the clause. We are discussing Lords amendments to it. The clause has already been debated and decided upon by the House.

Mr. Steen: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for reminding me of that point. That is what I meant, but I did not put it very clearly. Does the Minister agree that with regard to these Lords amendments it is important for the Secretary of State to consider carefully—each time he looks at them—that private enterprise should be taken into account and that nothing should be done to destroy any airline that is operating in the private sector——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I do not see how that arises from these amendments.

Mr. Steen: I can explain exactly how it does arise——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Apparently the hon. Gentleman is seeking to intervene in his already overlong intervention, which seems to be totally irrelevant to the amendments.

Mr. Steen: I am willing not to pursue this, as I am sure the Minister has noted my point.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am glad.

Question put and agreed to.

Subsequent Lords amendments agreed to.

Clause 37

IMPOSITION OF CONDITIONS BY CAA

Lords amendment: No. 21, in page 33, line 3, leave out "and 47" and insert "to *(Breach of accounts conditions: criminal penalties etc.)*"

Mr. Michael Spicer: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take the following: Lords amendments Nos. 43 and 44.

Mr. Spicer: These amendments put in place a separate enforcement procedure for accounts conditions. The provisions relating to transparency of accounts in clause 38 have quite rightly been regarded as a disincentive to unfair cross-subsidy and other monopoly abuses. It is important, therefore, that any breach of the condition can be remedied swiftly to ensure that there are no gaps in the information that the clauses requires.

The existing enforcement procedures in clauses 46 and 47 work well for the conditions on prices and trading practices but are less effective in relation to accounts conditions. For example, it would be impossible to assess what loss or damage had been sustained by others as a result of a breach of an accounting condition and it is doubtful whether a compliance order could require separate publication of any information on an airport operator who had failed to disclose. That is clearly unacceptable.

The new procedure, which is modelled on equivalent enforcement provisions in the Companies Acts relating to accounts generally, will put that right. Because it allows for an airport operator to be liable for a fine and to daily default fines, there will be a strong incentive to comply with any accounts conditions enforced. If there should be a breach, the CAA will be able to take swift and effective action to ensure that all information required by the condition, but not provided, is published. I commend the amendment to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Subsequent Lords amendments agreed to.

New Clause

ORDERS UNDER THE 1973 ACT OR 1980 ACT MODIFYING OR REVOKING CONDITIONS

Lords amendment: No. 47, after Clause 50 insert—

" .—(1) Where, in the circumstances mentioned in subsection (3), the Secretary of State by order exercises any of the powers specified in Parts I and II of Schedule 8 to the 1973 Act or section 10(2)*(a)* of the 1980 Act, the order may also provide for the revocation or modification of any relevant conditions to such extent as may be requisite to give effect to or to take account of any provision made by the order.

(2) In subsection (1) "relevant conditions" means any conditions for the time being in force under this Part other than any conditions imposed or modified in pursuance of section 38(3) or (4).

(3) Subsection (1) shall have effect where—

(a) the circumstances are as mentioned in section 56(1) of the 1973 Act (order on report on monopoly reference) and the monopoly situation exists in relation to the carrying on of any operational activities relating to one or more airports;

(b) the circumstances are as mentioned in section 73(1) of that Act (order on report on merger reference) and at least one of the two or more enterprises which ceased to be distinct enterprises was an airport operator; or

(c) the circumstances are as mentioned in section 10(1) of the 1980 Act (order on report on competition reference) and the anti-competitive practice relates to the carrying on of any operational activities relating to one or more airports.

(4) Expressions used in this section which are also used in the 1973 Act or the 1980 Act have the same meanings as in that

Mr. Michael Spicer: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

The amendment ensures that nothing done by the CAA under part IV of the Bill can prevent the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry from using his powers under the normal competition law.

Question put and agreed to.

Subsequent Lords amendments agreed to.

Clause 52

SCOPE OF PART V

Lords amendment: No. 50, in page 53, line 4, after "(1)" insert "Subject to subsection (2A),".

Mr. Michael Spicer: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take Lords amendment No. 51.

Mr. Spicer: These amendments are technical and ensure continuity with respect to the statutory undertaker, status of airports between the present regime established under the Airports Act 1975 and the new arrangements set out in part V of the Bill. I beg to move.

Question put and agreed to.

Subsequent Lords amendment agreed to.

New Clause

DISPOSAL OF COMPULSORILY ACQUIRED LAND

Lords amendment: No. 53, after Clause 54 insert—

" .—(1) This section applies to the disposal of any land—

(a) which was acquired compulsorily by a relevant airport operator or any predecessor in title of his under section 54(1) or any other enactment; and

(b) which, at the time of the disposal, forms part of an airport or is attached to an airport and administered with it as a single unit or has, at any time since the date of its acquisition, formed part of an airport or been so attached and administered.

(2) A relevant airport operator shall not dispose of any land to which this section applies, or any interest or right in or over such land, within the period of 25 years beginning with the date of its acquisition as mentioned in subsection (1), unless—

(a) the disposal is for the purposes of the provision of any of the services and facilities associated with the operation of an airport; or

(b) the disposal is of a leasehold interest in the land for a term of less than 7 years; or

(c) the Secretary of State consents to the disposal.

(3) Any consent of the Secretary of State under this section may be given subject to such conditions as he thinks fit."

11.15 pm

Mr. Michael Spicer: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

[Mr. Michael Spicer]

I think that the House will agree that this is a sensible amendment. The new clause enables the Secretary of State to apply Crichel Down rules to the disposal of land that has been compulsorily purchased.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 61

PROVISION OF SPECIAL ACCOMMODATION AT AIRPORTS

Lords amendment: No. 54, in page 62, line 32, at end insert—

"( ) give the airport operator a direction requiring him to take such steps as may be specified in the direction for the purposes of, or in connection with, the use of such accommodation and facilities by such persons;"

Mr. Michael Spicer: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take Lords amendments Nos. 55, 56, 74 and 75.

I inform the House that Lords amendments Nos. 56, 74 and 75 involve privilege.

Mr. Spicer: These amendments clarify the Secretary of State's powers of direction over airport operators to provide and/or operate special facilities at airports. They also add a power for the Secretary of State, with the consent of the Treasury, to make grants to compensate airport operators for costs that they might incur complying with such directions. The amendments provide for any sums paid in compensation to come from money provided by Parliament. The Government's intention continues to be to pay airport operators additional operating costs in running special facilities. The amendments make the power behind that intention explicit in the Bill. I commend the amendments to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Subsequent Lords amendments agreed to.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I will cause the appropriate entry to be made in the Journal.

New Clause

MONITORING OF AIRCRAFT MOVEMENTS

Lords amendment: No. 57, after Clause 61, insert:

" ,—(1) Where an airport is designated for the purposes of section 78 of the 1982 Act (regulation of noise and vibration from aircraft), the Secretary of State may, after consultation with the airport operator, by order require him —

(a) to provide, maintain and operate such equipment as is specified in the order ((in accordance with any instructions so specified)) for the purpose of monitoring the movements, within an area so specified, of aircraft on flights to and from the airport, and

(b) to make to the Secretary of State such reports as are so specified with respect to the movements monitored by the equipment in pursuance of paragraph *(a)*, and to permit any person authorised by the Secretary of State for the purpose to inspect the equipment on demand] at any time;

and it shall be the duty of the airport operator to comply with the requirements of the order.

(2) Any reference in subsection (1) to the movements of aircraft shall be read as a reference to the routes taken by them measured by reference to both direction and height.

(3) Subsection (9) and (10) of the said section 78 (enforcement) shall apply for the purposes of this section as if, in subsection (9) of that section, any reference to subsection (8) of that section were a reference to subsection (1) of this section."

Mr. Michael Spicer: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take Lords amendments Nos. 85 and 91.

Mr. Spicer: The new clause enables the Secretary of State, after consultation with the airport operator, to impose on him a requirement to monitor the movement of aircraft — that is, their direction and height — on flights to and from the airport and to make reports. This will be done at the airport operator's expense, but it is a matter for the airport operator whether he chooses to cover the costs of installing and operating the monitoring system through airport user charges.

The new clause will enable compliance with the noise preferential routes to be more effectively monitored. That information will enable us to assist airlines in making greater efforts to keep to noise preferential routes. That, in turn, will make for the more effective limitation of aircraft noise and disturbance around designated airports. The enforcement of compliance will, of course, remain with the Government.

Mr. Robert Hughes: I welcome the new clause as one of great importance. Those of us with constituency interests in and around airports or the flight paths of aircraft continually receive complaints about aircraft noise and there has been a feeling that proper checking has not been taking place.

I hope that the Minister will confirm that helicopters, in particular, and not just fixed wing aircraft, will be covered by the provisions. Certainly in my constituency the biggest problem is the large number of complaints about helicopters not following the agreed preferred routes and not complying with the rules, but when we take the complaints up we are often told that the constituent is wrong abut where the helicopter was flying.

Provided that helicopters are covered, I believe that they must be, I welcome the help provided by the new clause in relation to monitoring, and so on, and I give it a warm welcome.

Mr. Steen: First, I must declare an interest in British Island Airways, which flies noisy planes that have been quietened by hush kits. I must also declare an interest in British Midland and in its subsidiary companies, Loganair and Manxair. There is considerable concern about the new clause. Noise is rather like security in that there is no limit to the amount of money that could be spent on abatement and safety.

Can the Minister give an undertaking that the clause will not be used to drive the smaller airlines, which often use older planes, out of business by insisting upon noise abatement equipment which is so expensive to install? I remind the Minister that British Island Airways was asked to install hush kits on its BAC 111 jets at a price of about £100,000 a plane, which added up to over £1 million for its fleet. According to the monitoring equipment, the actual noise on take-off is the same. The Secretary of State must not be persuaded to exercise the powers in this clause in such a way that he insists on more and more equipment being added to aircraft which will in theory make them quieter but which means that beyond the perimeter of the airport the sound to the public is exactly the same.

The clause gives the Secretary of State too much power which, in the wrong hands, could be exercised in the wrong way. Can the Minister give some reassurance to the smaller airlines, which cannot afford the mammoth expenditure that the state airlines can afford on new, hush-kitted planes, that they will get help from him if he insists on them increasing noise prevention?

The point must be made in the House that whereas the penalties on our airlines are considerable if they fly planes which go beyond certain noise levels, planes from Africa, for example, can continue to fly into Heathrow and into Gatwick even though they are noisier than the planes that our airlines are allowed to fly. I think particularly of the 707s, which our airlines are no longer allowed to fly but which Nigerian and Cyprus airlines will be allowed to fly for another two years. That is discrimination against our airlines.

Perhaps in his reply the Minister can say something about his wish not to discriminate against our smaller airlines or in favour of Third world countries which are today flying noisy planes into Heathrow and Gatwick.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I shall be happy to discuss that matter in detail with my hon. Friend. We have had an Adjournment debate on the subject initiated by him or perhaps by my right hon. Friend the Member for Taunton (Sir Edward du Cann). It would be out of order to deal with the matter now because the new clause deals specifically with compliance with noise preferential routes.

I am grateful for what the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) has said. I have felt strongly about the matter for some time. It seems nonsensical to have noise preferential routes and to have no means of ensuring that they are adhered to. Although costs will be involved, I am grateful for the support of the hon. Gentleman on this important new clause. I can give the assurance the hon. Gentleman sought that helicopters are included.

Question put and agreed to.

Subsequent Lords amendment agreed to.

New Clause

DUTY OF CAA WITH RESPECT TO IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS CONCERNING AIRPORT CAPACITY

Lords amendment: No.58, after clause 61 insert—

" .—(1) If, after considering any recommendations made to him by the CAA in pursuance of section 16(2) of the 1982 Act (recommmendations concerning airport capacity), the Secretary of State so directs, the CAA shall take such steps as it considers appropriate for the purpose of encouraging or facilitating the provision (whether by an airport operator or any other person) of any facilities or services that are necessary for the implementation of those recommendations.

(2) The steps taken by the CAA in pursuance of subsection (1)—

(a) may, without prejudice to the generality of that subsection, include the furnishing of information, the provision of assistance to persons requesting it and the provision of advice (whether or not requested); but

(b) shall not include the carrying out of any works of construction or alteration or the defraying of, or the making of any contribution towards, expenses incurred by any other person in carrying out any such works.

(3) Before embarking on the performance of its duty under subsection (1) with respect to any recommendations the CAA shall consult the airport operator in the case of any relevant airport as to the manner in which that duty is to be performed by the CAA.

(4) Without prejudice to the generality of section 11 of the 1982 Act, a scheme or regulations under that section may make provision for charges to be paid in respect of the performance by the CAA of its duty under subsection (1) above with respect to any recommendations, and for such charges to be paid by—

(a) the airport operator in the case of any relevant airport, and

(b) any person for whom assistance or advice has, at his request, been provided by the CAA in pursuance of that duty;

but if such provision is not by any such scheme or regulations the CAA shall be entitled to recover an amount or amounts in respect of any expenses reasonably incurred by it in performing that duty from such one or more persons falling within paragraphs *(a)* and *(b)* above as the CAA considers appropriate.

(5) An airport is a relevant airport for the purposes of subsection (3) or (4) if

(a) the recommendations referred to in that subsection relate to the airport, or

(b) the airport is subject to economic regulation under Part IV, and it and any new airport to which those recommendations relate would be airports serving the same area in the United Kingdom;

and the reference in paragraph *(b)* above to airports serving the same area in the United Kingdom shall be construed in accordance with section 29(6).

(6) Section 4 of the 1982 Act applies in relation to the performance by the CAA of its functions under this section."

Mr. Michael Spicer: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to consider Lords amendment No. 88.

Mr. Spicer: Under section 16 of the Civil Aviation Act 1982, the CAA already has a duty to consider the need for airport capacity and to make recommendations to the Secretary of State. Under the new clause which amendment 58 puts into the Airports Bill, The Secretary of State in receipt of such a recommendation is able to direct the CAA to take appropriate steps to encourage or facilitate the provision of such facilities and services as are necessary to give effect to its recommendations.

The Government regard this additional provision in the Bill as a useful extra stimulus to the clear economic incentive that airport operators already will have to provide adequate capacity. The matter was debated by several of my hon. Friends and was also raised by the hon. Member for the Isle of Wight (Mr. Ross) in Committee. Thus, we have found a way of accommodating the thrust of the argument put to us.

Mr. Robert Hughes: I have one question to ask in order to get things clear in my mind. Are we talking about not only runway facilities but terminal capacity? That is as important, as, and sometimes more important than, runway, capacity. Yesterday, I went to Gatwick and although I would not like to say that there was chaos and confusion, the terminal was jam-packed with people. I understand that it has been decided not to proceed with the second terminal at Gatwick in the meantime.

Mr. Spicer: The position is that there is no approval for a second runway but the BAA has almost completed a second terminal at Gatwick.

Mr. Hughes: In that case, I have my facts slightly mixed up. But on Tuesday, people certainly complained to me about the inadequacy of the terminal facilities at Gatwick. There is certainly a need for an extension. I have obviously got the second runway mixed up with the second terminal. I am glad that my hon. Friend the Member for Dundee,

[Mr. Hughes]

West (Mr. Ross) has gone, as otherwise he would not make flattering comments about how I would perform as Secretary of State for Transport.

Mr. Bill Walker: I welcome the amendments. They are encouraging after our long uphill struggle to find a form of words that would meet the wishes to those concerned about the problem of demand and capacity. I have read the words carefully, and I compliment my hon. Friend the Minister and his staff on what they have achieved. He will realise that coming from me, that is saying quite a lot after all our battles in Committee.

The new clause refers to

"an airport operator or any other person".

An airport operator may have a sound reason, such as wishing to maximise profits, for not putting forward the necessary plans and proposals to meet the demand in relation to terminals. Indeed, runways could fall into the same category. If that need was not met and the airlines, or anyone else, came forward with proposals to that end, I hope that the Department, the CAA and the Secretary of State would view that favourably. That is the assurance that all the airlines, and the passengers want.

Earlier we spoke about the problems of the airlines that had been working under a threat. But that threat would be substantially diminished if someone could say, "Of course we are prepared to invest in a new terminal wherever it is, or whatever facility is required." If that is what the new clause means, it will be very well received throughout the aviation industry. It was the uncertainty about no one being required to do that that worried people. However, the amendment represents a big improvement to the Bill. Of all the improvements and changes made, it is probably the one that the airline industry wanted most. I thank my hon. Friend for that.

11.30 pm

Mr. Steen: I thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for your tolerance, indulgence and good nature, which I shall not test further. I recognise the contribution of my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) in getting the clause in. He and I, along with Members of the House of Lords, battled to see the clause in the Bill. I pay tribute on the Floor of the House to my hon. Friend for his perserverance. Perhaps it is appropriate that he dresses as he does tonight to show what a fighter he has been for that clause. The House pays tribute both to him and to the Secretary of State for the fine job they have done in draftng the clause and getting it absolutely right. The airline industry has a great debt to pay.

Mr. Michael Spicer: In response to the question by the hon. Member for Aberdeen North (Mr. Hughes), terminals will be included in the definition of capacity. As my hon. Friend the Member for South Hams (Mr. Steen) said, my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) fought the issue strongly. We resisted making the concept "or anyone other than the operator" compulsorily in the Bill. My hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North was quite right to say that the phrase "or any other person" introduces a new concept—a concept which he espoused during the Committee stage. I thank him for the kind remarks he made. I think that we have seen the efficacy of the revising powers of the other place, because the other place has come up with a form of words which improves the Bill considerably.

Question put and agreed to.

New Clause

EXTENSION OF SHOPS (AIRPORTS) ACT 1962

Lords amendment: No. 59, after clause 61 insert—

" . Section 1 of the Shops (Airports) Act 1962 (exemption of traders at certain airports from restrictions under Part I of the Shops Act 1950 on hours of closing) shall have effect in relation to the provisions of Part IV of the Shops Act 1950 (Sunday trading) as well as in relation to the provisions of Part I of that Act; and accordingly, in subsection (1) of that section, after "hours of closing)" there shall be inserted "and of Part IV of that Act (which relates to Sunday trading)"."

Mr. Michael Spicer: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take Lords amendment No. 103.

Mr. Spicer: Shops at designated airports are already exempt from the restrictions on weekday opening hours imposed by the Shops Act 1950. This clause and the consequential amendment extend that exemption to cover the Sunday trading restrictions.

Mr. Robert Hughes: I wonder what the new clause means——

Mr. Spicer: They can carry on business at any time.

Mr. Hughes: It is said, from a sedentary position, that they can carry on business at any time. Is it a further extension of an exemption, or does it put right something which has been wrong for some time? If that is so, I would not accept it without question. I do not want to detain the House, but I ask the hon. Gentleman whether the new clause has been inserted because the Government had such a disastrous defeat on Sunday trading generally. Why has it been necessary to introduce the new clause? Is it a major extension? Why do we need it?

Mr. Michael Spicer: It simply confirms, in statute, the existing practice at the airports.

Question put and agreed to.

Subsequent Lords amendment agreed to.

Clause 64

FURNISHING OF INFORMATION ETC. TO CAA

Lords amendment: No. 61, in page 64, line 10, leave out "an airport operator" and insert "any person".

Mr. Michael Spicer: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take Lords amendments Nos. 62 to 67 and 97 to 99.

Mr. Spicer: The amendments are of a technical nature. Amendments Nos. 61 and 62 are consequential on the group of amendments which the House accepted starting with amendment No. 11.

Question put and agreed to.

Subsequent Lords amendments agreed to.

Clause 66

SUPPLEMENTARY PROVISION RELATING TO TRANSFER SCHEMES

Lords amendment: No. 68, in page 66, line 6, at end insert—

"(1A) A scheme under section 1 or 14 may—

(a) provide that any functions of the transferor under any statutory provision not contained in this Act shall, to the extent to which that provision relates —

(i) to property transferred by the scheme, or

(ii) to any undertaking of the transferor, or part of such an undertaking, so transferred,

be transferred to the transferee under the scheme; and

(b) define any such functions—

(i) by specifying the statutory provisions in question,

(ii) by referring to all the statutory provisions (not contained in this Act) which relates to the property, or to the undertaking or part of the undertakings, to be transferred by the scheme, or

(iii) by referring to all statutory provisions within sub-paragraph (ii), but specifying certain excepted provisions".

Mr. Michael Spicer: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take Lords amendments Nos. 69 to 71.

Mr. Spicer: Amendment No. 70 is principally a clarificatory amendment. When property is to be transferred under the provisions of clause 14, it is the Government's expectation that the freehold will be transferred where the freehold is owned. That is what we, on the whole, expect. There may, however, be exceptional cases where it would be appropriate to create and transfer the leasehold interest leaving the freehold interest with the parent authority. The amendment is designed to put it beyond doubt that in such exceptional cases the transfer of property might include the transfer of a leasehold interest.

Amendments Nos. 68, 69 and 71 are technical and ensure continuity in respect of the byelaws that apply at airports.

Question put and agreed to.

Subsequent Lords amendments agreed to, some with special entry.

Drug Trafficking Offences Bill

Lords amendments considered.

Title

Lords amendment: No. 1, in line 3, after "trafficking" insert

"to make provision about the supply of articles which may be used or adapted for use in the administration of controlled drugs or used to prepare a controlled drug for administration".

11.36 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. David Mellor): I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): With this it will be convenient to take Lords amendments Nos. 154 and 184.

Mr. Mellor: In introducing this stage of the Bill, I should like to express my appreciation to the other place for its careful consideration of this measure and the all-party spirit it showed, because very few Scotsmen were involved in consideration of the Bill.

It might be for the convenience of the House if I say that the opportunity was taken during consideration of the Bill in the other place to make certain technical changes to clarify some of its points and to improve its drafting. It might also be convenient if I move those amendments formally. Obviously, if an hon. Member wants to raise points, they could be dealt with. Some substantive changes are worthy of a sentence or two, and I know that some of my colleagues might want to comment on them. This group of amendments is certainly one of those.

The amendment makes it an offence to supply or to offer to supply articles which may be used in the administration of a controlled drug or to prepare a controlled drug for administration. The prosecution will, however, have to prove that the supplier believed that the article he sold would be used in connection with the unlawful administration of a controlled drug, and that will ensure that shopkeepers who innocently sell everyday items which are then used for drug taking have nothing to fear from the new offence. It is on that basis that, I am glad to say, the Retail Consortium supports this measure.

I should point out also, because of the legitimate concern about this aspect, that this new offence specifically excludes the sale of hypodermic syringes or needles because of the increased risks of AIDS and hepatitis, which would result from the re-use of those items.

The new offence will apply to Scotland—the shadow Secretary of State for Scotland, the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar), can prick up what he pleases to call his ears—and Northern Ireland as well as to England and Wales.

Mr. Robin Corbett (Birmingham, Erdington): I reaffirm and remind the Under-Secretary of State—I am sure that I do not have to—that this is one of these rare occasions on which the Bill has gone through not simply with all-party support but with enthusiastic all-party support, because we are wholly with the Government on the need to deal heavily wth the drug traffickers.

We specifically welcome these amendments which are in a narrow sense designed to deal with the problem of cocaine kits. The Under-Secretary of State needs no

[Mr. Robin Corbett]

reminding from me that probably one of the most important aspects of the campaign which we must wage against drug traffic abuse is that we must try to stop young people starting. These amendments are part of that process. There is no need for us to hound shopkeepers who innocently sell the individual items which go together to make up the kits but, at the same time, it does no harm, in fact it is probably good, to try to recruit them to our side in our national effort to try to get on top of this menace which literally threatens a generation of our young people.

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): I congratulate the Minister on the way in which he has ensured that the Bill has had a fair passage through the other place. Not only has it had a fair passage but it has come through the other place much improved, particularly by the groups of amendments we are considering now. The problem which can sometimes arise in dealing with drugs is that as we tackle the issues, even though we sometimes tackle them very quickly, as has happened here, we still find ourselves one step behind those wicked people who are determined to peddle dangerous drugs to the young.

I hope that the Minister will assure the House—I am sure that he will, because I know that his interest in this problem is deep and genuine—that the Government will lose no opportunity to tighten up the law to catch drug peddlers. I hope that he will confirm that these provisions are capable of dealing with people who might try to sell kits which would enable people to use crack, a heroin substitute, as I understand it, which has become rife in the United States and has now reached these shores and that he will continue to keep under review any further substitutes which become known to be prevalent in the streets of our towns and cities.

I share the view of the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) that the Bill has been improved in the other place and that there will be no need for any controversy tonight in dealing with these or any other amendments.

Mr. Mellor: I am grateful to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) and the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile), who speak for the official Opposition and the Liberal party, for what they have said and the consistent help they have given. The hon. Member for Erdington, in his work on the Select Committee and now as Front Bench spokesman for the Opposition, has been a tower of strength on this and other aspects of the drug problem and at several stages I have appreciated the legal expertise and prowess of the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery.

I can say to the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery that crack is a form of cocaine which is stronger than normal cocaine and is heated up and abused in that way. Any kit that facilitated that would be caught because we decided not to restrict the amendment to cocaine kits as such but to include any means of facilitating the unlawful use of controlled drugs. We thought that that was better and would help to avoid the point that the hon. and learned Gentleman rightly made, that we always seem to be one step behind. Perhaps in this case we are putting ourselves one step ahead.

Question put and agreed to.

Subsequent Lords amendments agreed to.

Clause 2

ASSESSING THE PROCEEDS OF DRUG TRAFFICKING

Lords amendment: No. 6, in page 3, leave out lines 14 to 16 and insert

"the values of the payments or other rewards"

Mr. Mellor: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to discuss Lords amendments Nos. 8, 14, 19, 20, 22, 25, 27 to 37, 39, 45, 47, 52, 55 to 57, 59, 60, 63, 66 to 72, 77, 79, 84, 86, 87, 96 and 143.

Mr. Mellor: When earlier considered by the House the Bill provided for a confiscation order to be satisfied from property available in respect of the defendant. That included property transferred to third parties for significantly less than full value, provided that the transfer had taken place during the previous six years or the property could be shown to represent the proceeds of drug trafficking. Where the third party has subsequently transformed that property into something else, however, we want to ensure that the courts will be able to order the confiscation of the substitute property or assets of equivalent value; that is why the change has been made and I think that it is substantial.

The second major change in the amendments is to meet a point raised by the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett), who was anxious that increases in value should be fully reflected in the confiscation order. We now provide that in assessing the value of any payment, reward or gift, the court will be able to take either its value at the time of receipt, adjusted for inflation, or, where the person concerned still holds the property or assets directly or indirectly acquired with it, its current value, whichever is the greater. That meets the hon. Gentleman's point.

11.45 pm

Mr. Corbett: I thank the Minister for responding to the points that we raised in earlier debates. Perhaps I can put it more colloquially. I have been heard to state that, when we catch and convict drug traffickers and then go into the business of trying to get hold of their assets, I want to strip them down to their underpants. If they then try to transfer their underpants to a third party, I want those as well.

Questions put and agreed to.

Subsequent Lords amendments agreed to.

Clause 5

CONFIRMATION ORDERS: DEFINITION OF TERMS

Lords amendments: No. 23, in page 6, line 15, leave out "or".

Mr. Mellor: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take Lords amendments Nos. 24, 41, 44, 53, 82, 93, 97 to 102, 119 to 125, 127 to 130, 138, 139, 162, 163, 180, 182, and 185.

Mr. Mellor: In deference to our friends from the north——

Mr. Corbett: Not just from the north, but from Scotland.

Mr. Mellor: Indeed, even Scotland.

I should like to make a few points in commendation of the amendments. Their main effect is to provide that restraint and confiscation orders made by courts in England and Wales can be registered in the Court of Session and be enforced by the court against assets held in Scotland. Receivers appointed under the Bill will be able to exercise their powers in Scotland. Scottish police and customs officers will have the same powers in relation to the investigation of drug trafficking as their colleagues in England and Wales. The amendments also regulate the relationship between drug trafficking proceedings and Scottish sequestrations in the same way as the amendments that we shall consider shortly, which deal with insolvency in England and Wales.

The provisions ensure that Scotland does not become a haven for the assets of drug traffickers operating south of the border in the period before its own separate legislation is introduced. That legislation, in its turn, will contain similar provisions for the enforcement of orders made by Scottish courts against assets held in England and Wales.

Mr. Keith Raffan (Delyn): As the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) will remember, we entered into an exchange during the Queen's Speech debate, when he said that Scots law was ahead of English law. He will be as concerned as I am now to ensure, particularly as he once represented part of the city in which I was born and was once my Member of Parliament, that Scots law does not lag behind English law. That is basically the point that I want to raise with the Minister.

Although, by the amendment, we are preventing Scotland from becoming a refuge for people trafficking in drugs in England, I am concerned that the other way round does not still apply and that effective cross-border co-operation is still only one way. I want my hon. Friend the Minister to confirm that cross-border co-operation will be both ways. I am sure that the hon. Member for Garscadden will endorse my second point wholeheartedly. It is also important that the separate legislation to be brought into Scots law is brought in as soon as possible in the next Session.

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): I do not know whether the hon. Member for Delyn (Mr. Raffan) is an asset that we have exported from Scotland, but, if so, I am prepared to put up with the prospect of permanent alienation.

I regret to say that I have not given much attention to the Bill, because it is largely English. The Minister has just confirmed that the clauses that affect Scotland, although they are formidably long and there are many references to them in the Lords amendments, cover the enforcement of English confiscation orders by the Scottish courts. It will ensure that there is no escape clause or refuge which would allow someone to shift into Scotland assets produced by this unfortunate and wicked trade and to escape orders that may be made against him south of the border. I presume that this thicket of amendments merely achieves that, and at this time of night — especially in the presence of the Deputy Chief Whip, who is looking distinctly tired at the sight of me at the Dispatch Box— I shall not discuss the Scots law of sequestration.

Perhaps the Minister can help us with the point made by the hon. Member for Delyn. As he no doubt knows, we are in a curious position in Scotland. He will have followed the debates on the Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Scotland) Act 1985, which introduced punitive fines based upon putative profits in drug trading, which was put on the statute book only a year or 18 months ago. In the long and difficult debate about the criteria which the courts should apply in deciding how to compute those fines, Scottish Ministers made it clear that confiscation orders would not be possible in Scots law for some time. They gave us many plausible explanations, including the long digestion period and the amount of research that would have to be done, for proceeding down the fines route.

Will the Minister give us an assurance that the Scottish Office has changed its mind on that point? If so, we can expect legislation parallel to this in Scotland. But it is a complete change of course, because we were told during proceedings on that Act that it would be impractical and impossible. It is important that the Minister clears up that point, so that we know where we stand.

Mr. Mellor: I am delighted that the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) should have intervened, in a brief cameo role, in our proceedings. It is as though Lord Olivier had wandered into a dog food commercial. His presence tonight is touching.

I must express momentary satisfaction, after three and a half years as a Home Office Minister always being told how perfect Scots law is, that for one brief flicker of time we are ahead of the Scots. That is at least something. But I understand that Scottish legislation will be introduced next Session. The hon. Gentleman would not expect me to put myself forward as an authority on precisely what it will contain, but I am given to understand that it will mirror the proposals contained in this Bill, and I shall draw the attention of my colleagues in the Scottish Office to the hon. Gentleman's points. They will wish to curb his loquacity next Session, and the best way to do that is for me to agree with him now.

Question put and agreed to.

Subsequent Lords amendments agreed to.

Clause 7

CASES IN WHICH RESTRAINT ORDERS AND CHARGING ORDERS MAY BE MADE

Lords amendment: No. 42, in page 10, line 2, leave out

"by virtue only of subsection (2) above"

and insert

"before proceedings have been instituted"

Mr. Mellor: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take Lords amendments Nos. 48, 61, 62, 64, 73 and 179.

Mr. Mellor: The amendments allow the prosecution as well as the holder of the property to seek a variation in a restraint or charging order. We think that this additional flexibility will be welcome to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Subsequent Lords amendments agreed to.

Clause 17

ASSISTING ANOTHER TO RETAIN THE BENEFIT OF DRUG TRAFFICKING

Lords amendment: No. 103, in page 17, line 37, at beginning insert

"Subject to subsection (2A) below".

Mr. Mellor: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take Lords amendments Nos. 106, 107, 109, 111 to 115 and 151.

Mr. Mellor: The amendments implement the recommendations of the Select Committee on Home Affairs. The new provisions will be of considerable assistance to the investigating authorities. I take the opportunity to thank the Select Committee for its detailed and useful reports, which have been invaluable in the development of the Bill.

The amendments provide also that the financial institution will be exempted from the laundering offence if it continues to handle the suspect's account after informing the police or Customs of its suspicions. Otherwise, the bank would have little option but to close the account, thus forewarning the client that he was under suspicion.

Another amendment arises out of a useful discussion in Committee about the constitution of the new offence. It was said that clause 17 as originally drafted could have had the effect of catching honest bank staff who might inadvertently handle the proceeds of drug trafficking. An amendment that was agreed in another place removes the objective test of having reasonable grounds to suspect. The prosecution will have to prove actual knowledge or suspicion on the part of the defendant that the person with whom he was dealing had been engaged in drug trafficking. I hope the amendments commend themselves to the House.

Mr. Corbett: May I join the Minister in half thanking myself for the advice of the Select Committee on Home Affairs?

The Minister referred to protecting bank staff who might inadvertently be caught up. The changes that have been proposed give the protection needed to those who work in banks and other financial institutions, although in no way debarring them from assisting us in the general purposes of the Bill.

12 midnight

Mr. Geoff Lawler (Bradford, North): Amendment No. 111 took up a lot of debate in the other place. It is an innovative amendment and a great improvement on what was before the purely reactive role of financial institutions. Two points can be made. First, rightly, the Government have sought to reject any idea of compulsion along the lines that appertain in America. I hope that the Minister will assure us that that will continue to be the case. Certainly, it would prove to be unworkable.

Secondly, one of the noble Lords in the other place said that the amendment would have little effect because bank managers or managers of other financial institutions would not know what to look for. He asked how their suspicions would be aroused that money that was being laundered which originated from drug trafficking. We cannot expect all bank managers suddenly to be budding Maigrets, but even a budding Clouseau would know what to look for if properly alerted. Therefore, to make the amendment effective, may we have the assurance of my hon. Friend the Minister that bank managers will have some proper brief and traning in order that their suspicions might be aroused where appropriate?

Mr. Raffan: I welcome the amendment. We are bound to welcome any way in which the controls in the Bill on the laundering of money are strengthened and that lies at the core of it. I am not sure that I agree entirely with my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, North (Mr. Lawler) with regard to further powers. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will be able to assure the House that he will keep a close eye on the effectiveness of this amendment and the way in which it is implemented to make sure that it works. If it does not we must consider taking further powers to require banks to disclose deposits and transactions above a certain amount. I am well aware of the burden that that would impose on British banks, compared with American banks, given the larger amount of cash transactions that take place in Britain compared with the United States, but, as I said on Second Reading and subsequently in Committee, anything that we can do to dramatically slow down this evil trade should be done.

Mr. Mellor: I am grateful to my hon. Friends the Members for Bradford, North (Mr. Lawler) and for Delyn (Mr. Raffan) and the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington, (Mr. Corbett). Yes, of course, as my hon. Friend the Member for Delyn says, we think that what we have done at the moment is adequate, but the matter will be kept under review, and, if necessary, further steps will certainly be taken. We are not attracted to the American disclosure arrangement which has been more honoured in the breach than anything else, and has caused enormous difficulties in the attempt to bring about compliance.

I can tell my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, North that there is certainly no question of compelling a bank to disclose. Training must be a matter for the banks. Given the enthusiasm with which they have sought to facilitate the introduction of the legislation — I pay tribute to them for that — I should have thought that they would want to include in their staff training the clearest warnings to staff as to how to behave when confronted with the kind of situation that is envisaged in these arrangements.

Question put and agreed to.

Subsequent Lords amendments agreed to.

New Clause

AUTHORISATION OF DELAY IN NOTIFYING ARREST

Lords amendment: No. 152, after clause 24 insert—

" .—(1) In section 56 of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (right to have someone informed when arrested), at the beginning of subsection (5) there is inserted "Subject to subsection (5A) below" and after that subsection there is inserted—

"(5A) An officer may also authorise delay where the serious arrestable offence is a drug trafficking offence and the officer has reasonable grounds for believing —

(a) that the detained person has benefited from drug trafficking, and

(b) that the recovery of the value of that person's proceeds of drug trafficking will be hindered by telling the named person of the arrest".

(2) In section 58 of that Act (access to legal advice) at the beginning of subsection (8) there is inserted "Subject to subsection (8A) below" and after that subsection there is inserted—

"(8A) An officer may also authorise delay where the serious arrestable offence is a drug trafficking offence and the officer has reasonable grounds for believing—

(*a*) that the detained person has benefited from drug trafficking, and

(*b*) that the recovery of the value of that person's proceeds of drug trafficking will be hindered by the exercise of the right conferred by subsection (1) above."

(3) In section 65 of that Act (interpretation)

(*a*) after the definition of "appropriate consent" there is inserted

""drug trafficking" and "drug trafficking offence" have the same meaning as in the Drug Trafficking Offences Act 1986", and

(*b*) at the end of that section there is inserted "and references in this Part to any person's proceeds of drug trafficking are to be construed in accordance with the Drug Trafficking Offences Act 1986".

(4) Without prejudice to section 20(2) of the Interpretation Act 1978, the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (Application to Customs and Excise) Order 1985 applies to sections 56 and 58 of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 as those sections have effect by virtue of this section".

Mr. Mellor: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Corbett: I have no wish to detain the House on amendment No. 152, but I wish to place on record the attitude of the Labour party to these and related provisions in The Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984. The powers proposed by this amendment are, in terms of civil liberties, quite draconian. The Bill gives the police power to delay notification of the arrest and detention of somebody for up to 36 hours for reasons which, I quickly add, are wholly justified in the circumstances.

When saying that in some circumstances this kind of intrusion into civil liberties is justified, we have to be careful. I know that the Minister understands that we are not looking for bouquets or roses, but I want to remind him again that the reason why we have gone along with this is that we are determined, as are the Government, to use every weapon in our armoury to deal effectively with people who not only make vast fortunes out of drug trafficking, which is bad enough, but do it by ruining young lives. Every hon. Member wants to try to protect and save those young lives.

Mr. Alex Carlile: Is the Minister satisfied that the powers contained in the new clause will make it virtually impossible for friends, relatives, dishonest professional advisors and others to dispose successfully of assets in the short period after arrest? I addressed that matter on Second Reading and it has been of considerable concern throughout the proceedings on the Bill. It seemed to be a lacuna in the original Bill and I hope that the Minister will give an undertaking that if the new clause does not work, new measures will be brought before the House.

Mr. Mellor: I admired the courage of the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) in stopping you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in full flow. You demonstrated to my satisfaction tonight once again that Phyllosan really works.

I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for recognising that this measure is necessary. It was equally proper for him to point out that this is a limited incursion into what was otherwise a major step forward in The Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984, allowing much wider access to professional advice. The hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) put his finger on it when he said that if we are to be successful in dealing with the problem of the large assets of drug traffickers we must be able to act peremptorily to prevent them from being shifted out of our jurisdiction. We cannot expect to make watertight arrangements with every country to which assets could be moved, so that they will be in reach of our courts. I am as satisfied as I can be that these arrangements make it possible to prevent leakage of information. Although ways can always be found, we make it difficult for traffickers and that is what we all want to do.

Question put and agreed to.

Subsequent Lords amendments agreed to.

Clause 28

INTERPRETATION

Lords amendment: No. 155, in page 26, leave out lines 29 to 32.

Mr. Mellor: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take Lords amendments Nos. 156, 157, 161, 164, 165, 166, 169, 170 to 174, 176 to 178 and 183.

Mr. Mellor: The amendments relate to the interpretation clause and I shall not speak at great length on their merits. Suffice it to say that this is the final moment of consideration of the Bill. As it moves on to the statute book, I am aware that it does so with the warm support of all who participated in debates in both Houses. I wish to express my gratitude for all the help and support I have received from many colleagues in all parties in trying to get the legislation right. We have not been afraid to make changes even at the last moment and to incorporate in the Bill new concepts as they appeared to be appropriate.

I hope that we can all take some pleasure in that we have joined together to bring on to the statute book legislation which has a tremendous amount of hope pinned on it. As we have discovered, it is not enough of a deterrent to drug traffickers merely to lock them up. It is absolutely crucial to find an effective way of depriving them of the massive profits they can make. While I do not make the claim for any piece of legislation that it can succeed in every case, we have taken a major step forward tonight and I am glad to have played my part in seeing the Bill on to the statute book.

Mr. Corbett: I thank the Minister for what he has just said. I wish to make clear the complete commitment of all sides of the House and millions beyond it to waging war as effectively as we can against the menace of drug abuse. No words can in any way exaggerate the extremely dangerous threat which drug abuse poses to a generation of our young people. Regrettably, sections of them seem at war with themselves, and others with society generally. We must try in whatever ways we can to deal with that. One way is the Bill, which makes it clear to those before our courts and those convicted of these vile offences that we shall do our best through this democratically elected assembly and through our courts to ensure that they will not enjoy the fruits of this vile, destructive trade.

[Mr. Corbett]

In many ways this is a historic Bill, and it is regrettable in the sense that there is a need for it. It signals to those who are engaged in those activities that we are collectively and nationally serious about tackling this problem in this way.

My final point is something that I have told the Minister before, and I now repeat it on behalf of the Opposition. We stand ready to co-operate in any ways open to us with the Minister and his colleagues to give any help that we can towards what should be a national campaign. This should not be a party political matter. We should be joining together — the parties represented in this House, parents, the majority of young people, who do not use drugs, community groups, trade unions, business, commerce and everyone. We all have a vested interest in getting on top of the problem and beating back this vile tide of drugs.

12.15 am

Mr. Lawler: I wish to make a brief point, without being churlish after such endorsements. It relates to Lords amendment No. 178. Perhaps some convicted traffickers would prefer to serve a further term of imprisonment and when they are released, enjoy the proceeds on which the courts have not been able to lay their hands. For example, someone could do another five years and have a nice bounty of just under £1 million to enjoy when he came out of retirement, but according to the clause no further action could be taken. In view of that, and the fact that some people might like to take that option — especially if their initial sentences were not that long — can the Minister give an undertaking that the Government will continue to review the deterrent effect of the clause?

Mr. Mellor: My hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, North (Mr. Lawler) has got it slightly wrong in the sense that the defendant has no option in this matter. If his assets lie within the jurisdiction, they can be seized and he cannot say that he would prefer to do the five years. The five years, and indeed, the maximum of 10 years applies to a situation where the assets are out of the jurisdiction and the defendant needs some incentive to be invited to bring them back within the jurisdiction. I look forward to the time when we are able to have the kind of agreements with other countries for mutual enforcement of court orders. After all, if we can do it in relation to maintenance matters in family cases, we ought to be able to do it in this regard. But until that time, people need an incentive. If the property lies in the jurisdiction, or if it is in the hands of third parties or others within the jurisdiction, the option is not available to the defendant. It will be enforced with the full machinery of the High Court masters and so on.

On that positive note, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I hope that we can let you get back to your Oxo.

Question put and agreed to.

Subsequent Lords amendments agreed to.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS &c.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 79(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.)

REHABILITATION OF OFFENDERS

That the draft Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exceptions) (Amendment) Order 1986, which was laid before this House on 13th June, be approved.—*[Mr. Neubert.]*

Question agreed to.

Disasters (Charitable Funds)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Neubert.]*

12.17 am

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): I am grateful for the opportunity to debate on the Adjournment the subject of Government policy towards support of charitable funds established following disasters. I am particularly grateful for that selection as in one way or another I have sought to have this matter debated since at least the autumn of last year.

I am also grateful that in his place is the Minister for Housing, Urban Affairs and Construction, because the Government know that one of the most recent and important examples of this issue has been manifested in connection with the Abbeystead water pumping station disaster that happened just over two years ago and for which the Minister's predecessor was in some respects the accountable Minister. I also welcome the hon. Member for Lancaster (Mrs. Kellett-Bowman), whose constituency was the most severely affected by that disaster.

When there is a disaster in Britain, or if it affects British citizens, what should the Government do by way of compensating them in an ex gratia way from taxpayers' money from the contingency fund when their only other remedy, if at all, may lie down a long and tortuous legal road involving much cost, risk and hardship, with no certainty of satisfaction? In that context, there have, tragically, been four recent occasions when this issue has come to the public's attention. I will mention these incidents and then consider in greater detail the particular incident which has caused me to ask when the Government will recognise that it is appropriate, in cases where they have not yet done so, that they, on behalf of the nation, should make a contribution? When will they pay some money to support and compensate the victims, the bereaved or injured, following a disaster?

On 23 May 1984 there was a horrendous methane gas explosion in the valve house of the Abbeystead pumping station in Lancashire, which was opened only four years before. As a result of that explosion, 16 people were killed, three of whom were employees of the North-West water authority, and 28 people were severely injured. Most of the people who were killed or injured came from the village of Saint Michael's on Wyre in Lancashire. They had been visiting the pumping station that evening.

Since then there have been three other occasions when there has been a comparable national tragedy to which the Government have been asked to respond. On 11 May 1985 in Bradford there was—as hon. Members will recall—a horrifying fire which enveloped the stadium causing death, destruction and injury. Only a fortnight later in Brussels on 29 May 1985 in the Heysel stadium, on the occasion of the Juventus versus Liverpool football match, there was a savage set of events dramatically witnessed also by people on television from afar, which resulted in death and many injuries.

On the two occasions to which I have just referred, the Government made contributions to the charitable funds that were set up. In Bradford, a sum of £250,000 was paid from the Contingency Reserve Fund. A sum of £230,000 was contributed in response to the Brussels disaster via the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to the victims. It appears that a response was also contemplated on a third occasion on 27 August 1985 when there was an air disaster at Manchester airport. In the event, that was resolved in a legal manner in a matter of weeks by way of a "mid-Atlantic" settlement and there was therefore no need for a Government response. A substantial sum in the order of millions of pounds was paid in compensation.

However, as of tonight, nearly two years and two months after the Abbeystead disaster, there has been no public recognition on behalf of the nation to compensate those who feel that they have been forgotten. Why have these people been treated differently? What is it about policy that prevents those people from benefiting from a donation from the Government? Will the Government now, by virtue of the Minister's response, consider whether it is possible for these people to receive some compensation?

A charitable fund was set up and £85,000 of public money was raised including a contribution which was received from the North-West water authority. That money has been spent almost entirely on helping with hospital visits and immediate concerns. It has effectively been exhausted and it has not covered any of the legal costs of those seeking legal remedies and has not compensated them for the personal suffering and experience that they have had since then. There has been no Government contribution.

Why has there been no Government contribution? The Government's reason for that—certainly since early last year—is that there is a court case in progress. However, I believe that there is no principle of law or equity which should, as a direct consequence, mean that once a court has begun there can be no Government contribution to these matters. It is wrong in law to say that that is not possible. As I understand both law and practice, any ex gratia contribution, in the hands of the recipient, whether it is later taken into account for other purposes, does not preclude or interfere with the issue of liability, which is the matter being litigated.

When the response to the disaster was made on 24 May 1984, the then Minister of State, Department of Employment, said that an inquiry would commence under the Health and Safety Executive, as indeed it did. He then indicated, as he and his colleagues did by their visits to Lancashire, that the Government would respond in as sympathetic a way as possible. Only a week later, on 30 May, the Minister responsible went to Abbeystead to look at the pumping station, then to a meeting with villagers at St. Michael's on Wyre and then to visit the victims in hospital.

It is true that the verdict of the inquest in October 1984 was accidental death, but in February 1985 the Health and Safety Executive report made it clear that there were severe criticisms of what had happened at Abbeystead and that several factors had contributed to the fatal explosion. The most severe was the design of the ventilation system which, for environmental reasons, had no direct outlet but an outlet back into the valve house. That was, in effect, the cause of the explosion. There were also unauthorised decisions—for example, to leave a valve partly open so that the tunnel was not kept full of water as intended, and not to follow the code of practice in the manual, in any event inadequate, which meant that there had been no inspection of the tunnel at all since it had been built.

The following comment was made at the end of the report on behalf of the Health and Safety Executive:

[Mr. Simon Hughes]

"We have decided not to press charges of criminal negligence against the water authority. It is for the authority to consider the extent of its responsibility morally, humanly and civilly."

Since then, a court action was begun in June 1985 against the water authority, Binnie and Partners the consulting engineers and Edmund Nuttall the civil engineering contractors. In July 1985 a defence was put in. In the same month, the then Minister for Housing and Construction said that the Government could take no further steps. As the Minister knows, I have always accepted that the Government quite properly cannot interfere in the litigation. There have been articles in the *New Scientist* and the *New Statesman* and the hon. Member for Lancaster sought to pursue matters in the autumn of 1985. Again, the Leader of the House told her that no steps could be taken. There was then correspondence between my right hon. Friend the leader of the Liberal party and the water authority and between me and the Minister who is replying to today's debate, the Government again saying ultimately that they felt unable to intervene.

I especially ask the Government to reconsider their decision, not only because I believe that the principle is wrong, but in the light of two other factors that make this a special case. First, whatever the exact words used, when in May 1984 the then Minister went on behalf of the Government to meet people in St. Michael's on Wyre, some of whom I have now met, the local people came away with the distinct impression—the words used led them to this conclusion—that they had been assured that the Government would do all that they could. That was a specific and additional commitment.

It is also clear from the Health and Safety Executive report that, although the events did not lead the HSE to the conclusion that it should proceed legally to prosecute, none the less there were things that had gone badly wrong. Even if there were no formal requirement for a response on behalf of the Government, it was implied that somebody should take responsibility for compensating the people concerned. I do not suggest that any particular Minister is responsible—it is a matter for the nation and for the Government of the day — but the Minister charged said that he could give no specific undertaking that the Government would be able to find specific funds, although I believe that it was accepted that funds exist for payment of compensation of this kind if the Government choose to use them.

The people of Abbeystead and St. Michael's on Wyre have come to feel especially aggrieved when they read this year, for example, that £100,000 was paid to a horse injured by the North-Eastern electricity board, while they had still received nothing. They have had no help through legal aid. They are pursuing together their legal remedies. But all the time they are doing without the money that they need to make their lives more tolerable. Many of the people who were bereaved are coping with children and relatives in a difficult position. Many people were very badly injured and were lucky to survive.

I hope the Government will accept that there is an enormous feeling which goes well beyond the village of St. Michael's and across the boundaries of the county of Lancashire that it would be appropriate now for the Government to consider making a payment on behalf of the nation that in no way would preclude other rights that the individuals might be able to enforce.

I do not wish to end by paying any tribute to individuals who were affected. It would be invidious to name one or some but not others. Many people have, however, sought to take up the case of these tragically affected families and individuals. I pay tribute in general to the members of the press in Lancashire who have campaigned consistently and honourably on behalf of the people in the area that they represent in their profession. The local newspapers—the Lancaster *Guardian*, the Garstang *Courier*, the *Lancashire Evening Post* and the Blackpool *Gazette* — have done consistently good work in arguing the case.

I want to end with a quote from one of those newspapers because it puts the case far more cogently than perhaps any words from a parliamentarian can do. The editorial in the *Lancashire Evening Post* of 29 October last year, which was headed:

"Time to end this cruel waiting game"

said:

"The Abbeystead case seems more unfair because there could soon be settlements of both the Manchester air disaster and Bradford football fire claims.

There has been tremendous pressure to settle these because they happened in very public places rather than a waterworks in the middle of nowhere.

But surely the principle is the same. The injuries were the same; the burns the same . . . the agony is the same. They should all have their compensation without having to engage in legal chess."

I hope that the Government can say that they will respond in a similar way to alleviate the misery of these poor individuals who have suffered enough already.

12.32 am

Mrs. Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): I should like to make one or two points as my constituents were so tragically involved. One cannot visit any event in the villages around St. Michael', as I was doing last weekend and shall be doing again this weekend — and as I do most weekends—without seeing people who have been tragically scarred physically by the awful event at Abbeystead at 7.30 pm on the evening of Wednesday 23 May 1984. Indeed, had it not been a Wednesday it is likely that I should have been there myself.

But those physical scars are, if anything, the least important. It is the mental and psychological scars that are harder to bear and to heal, and to see in those one loves, and the loss of loved ones the terrifying memories that do not go away. Those scars cannot begin to heal until the question of compensation for the victims has been settled. It is now over two years since the accident, and the end is not yet in sight.

Eager though my constituents are to have an end to this agonising waiting, they know that they have a just and cast iron case for compensation, and they will pursue it to a successful conclusion. Anything that the Government can do to expedite that successful conclusion would be gratefully welcomed by my constituents.

12.33 am

The Minister for Housing, Urban Affairs and Construction (Mr. John Patten): Mr. Deputy Speaker, it must be a twelve month or more since I stood under your stern eye at the Dispatch Box during an Adjournment debate. I do it tonight for two reasons. The first is to give the Parliamentary Under-Secretary, my hon. Friend the

Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young), a well-deserved night off from replying to Adjournment debates. In any event, he is so far ahead of the field that his place in the "Guinness Book of Records" as the all-time speaker in Adjournment debates is completely safe and sound. The second reason is that I have taken a particular interest in the tragic event at Abbeystead since it was first drawn to my attention by my hon. Friend the Member for Lancaster (Mrs. Kellett-Bowman). It is clear that all of us share a deep concern for the victims of the explosion, and their dependants. They have our deepest sympathy. My hon. Friend the Member for Lancaster has been particularly active in bringing to my attention their problems and in striving to find ways of easing them, and of speeding up the difficult processes that they must go through in pursuit of their claims in the courts of law. She has used her regional contacts with the chairman and chief executive of the water authority with equal vigour to ensure that they do not forget the urgent need for as quick a settlement as possible. She has corresponded with me regularly, as well as with the Lord Chancellor and with some of my other colleagues. This is one of those issues that cuts across Governments and Departments.

My hon. Friend the Member for Lancaster also led a delegation of some of those injured at Abbeystead to see me around last Christmas time. That gave me the opportunity to hear at first hand about their feelings and frustrations, and to see the injuries that they have suffered. Thus, I have a slight knowledge of what they have gone through. But all of us are constrained by the current proceedings in the High court, and none of us can or should seek to do or say anything that might affect their natural outcome.

I turn to the tragic accident. The Abbeystead valve chamber is part of the major water supply project by which water can be transferred by tunnel at times of need from the river Lune to the river Wyre. The works were commissioned in 1980 when the chamber was inspected by the Health and Safety Executive—it is important to put this on the record again—which rated it as a low risk installation. The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) has already recounted that on the night of 23 May 1984, when 36 local residents from St. Michael's on Wyre were on a visit of inspection, together with eight employees of the North-West water authority, there was an explosion which all but demolished the valve chamber. Sixteen of the 44 persons present lost their lives and all the others were injured, some very seriously. Indeed, I have met one or two of them.

As the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey said, the circumstances of the accident were thoroughly investigated by the Health and Safety Executive, whose report was published in February 1985 after consideration by the Health and Safety Commission. The report concluded that the explosion had been caused by the ignition of a mixture of methane gas and air carried into the valve chamber by the flow of water from the tunnel when the pumps were switched on after a period of inaction during which the tunnel had partly emptied.

In effect, the methane gas had entered the tunnel in solution in water from the surrounding rock and had been released in gaseous form into the air spaces in the tunnel. But I must stress in response to the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey that the executive did not attribute any blame for the accident, although with hindsight — I stress that — it considered that the explosion could have been avoided. Of course, no criminal proceedings have been instituted or are, I understand, presently being considered.

In June 1985, actions in the civil courts for damages were started by those bereaved or injured by the explosion. There are three separate defendants: the water authority, the consulting engineers who designed the scheme, and the construction company which built it. The water authority, its insurers, solicitors and counsel have, I understand, made every effort to ensure that there has been no delay on their part in this case. I have stressed to the chairman of the water authority that there should be no delay on the part of the water authority. I believe that it has moved as swiftly as may be on all occasions in order to ensure that there has been no delay. I should be surprised and appalled to be told that there was any evidence to the contrary. There is some news, in that I understand that an application will be made by solicitors for the water authority to Mr. Justice Christopher Rose in the High Court on Wednesday 9 July for an order that the case be set down for hearing on Monday 6 October.

For the benefit of my hon. Friend the Member for Lancaster, I repeat that an application will be made by solicitors for the water authority to Mr. Justice Christopher Rose in the High Court on Wednesday 9 July so that the case may be set down for hearing on Monday 6 October 1986. In the circumstances, we can say nothing more about the legal proceedings. Certainly, I could not make any comment as to blame.

Having given that piece of news to the House, I turn to more general principles. I am pleased to note that there has been positive action by neighbours and others in the region to give some solace to those bereaved or injured by the accident by means of contributions to the disaster fund organised by the *Lancashire Evening Post* immediately after the accident. I understand that the fund collected about £100,000, of which one fifth — £20,000 — was donated by the water authority. About one fifth of the money has come from public funds. I have been advised that all the moneys have been distributed equally to the 44 families affected by the tragedy. That is a small consolation in the circumstances, but it is an indication of the traditional response of the British public in times of tragedy, especially those who live in Lancashire.

The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey, understandably, compared the position of the victims of Abbeystead with that of the victims of the equally tragic Bradford football fire — I visited the scene shortly after the fire, when I was the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security — and the Heysel stadium disaster. The Government made donations to relief funds on both those occasions. It was stressed at the time that the contributions were not just significant but were exceptional.

The Government felt — I know that the hon. Gentleman will not agree — that the tragedies were so exceptional in their public impact as to warrant such an unusual departure from the general rule that the Government do not contribute to relief funds. Generally speaking, Governments of all political colours have followed that course.

It would be painful for me and for those who may read the debate in *Hansard* to begin to say where scale should be taken into account when we consider the pain suffered by individuals and when we try to make some recompense from public funds. Governments would always be in a

[Mr. John Patten]

difficult position if they were faced with demands for compensation on every occasion a disaster occurred, however few people were affected. Where does one draw the line? The hon. Gentleman is well known in the House for being fair-minded in his approach to issues. It is a question which I cannot answer. All I know is that one could turn to an individual person harmed in a disaster. The position of that one person is just as bad as the terrible deaths of the 16 people in Abbeystead, and the pain caused to their relatives as well as those involved in the Bradford fire and the Heysel stadium disaster.

I do not think that it would be appropriate for the Government to make donations at taxpayers' expense to the legal costs of a plaintiff pursuing an action for damages in the courts. A plaintiff would not commence proceedings in the courts unless he had been professionally advised that there was a reasonable chance of success. For such a plaintiff, the net result of any successful action would be the damages which he secures, less the legal fees that he has had to pay, assuming that they are not recovered in whole or part from his opponent. The legal aid scheme is to assist the plaintiff of more modest means. If such a plaintiff recovers any money or property as a result of legally aided proceedings, the legal aid fund will be recouped from his winnings to that extent.

Where one of a number of plaintiffs is legally aided and wishes to bring a test case — this is important in the context of those who suffered so much in these sad circumstances — contributions can be obtained under the scheme for all the interested joint plaintiffs. All those interested joint plaintiffs can obtain legal aid under the scheme. That may have a considerable bearing in this case.

The debate highlights the difficulties — I would be foolish to try to hide them — of any Government who seek to meet the public response to disasters which are brought before us on our television screens or in our newspapers, regionally and nationally. It highlights the difficulties of deciding where and when Government could and should contribute to a disaster fund. It highlights how important it is for those people who have been or who feel that they have been harmed to pursue their cases as vigorously as possible, helped by all the normal means available. It is important to everyone involved in cases such as this — I speak generally, not about Abbeystead itself — that we ensure that those cases are expedited.

I thank the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey for raising this matter. I thank also my hon. Friend the Member for Lancaster for her presence and her unstinting efforts on her constituents' behalf in their present difficult position.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at fourteen minutes to One o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 3 July 1986

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

SOUTH YORKSHIRE PASSENGER TRANSPORT BILL
Lords Amendments agreed to.

PLYMOUTH CITY COUNCIL BILL [*Lords*]
Order for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time upon Tuesday 8 July.

BOURNEMOUTH AND SWANAGE MOTOR ROAD AND FERRY BILL [*Lords*]
Read a Second time and committed.

FELIXSTOWE DOCK AND RAILWAY BILL *(By Order)*
Order for consideration, as amended, read.
To be considered upon Thursday 10 July.

TEIGNMOUTH QUAY COMPANY BILL *(By Order)*
Order for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time upon Thursday 10 July.

SOUTH YORKSHIRE LIGHT RAIL TRANSIT BILL *(By Order)*
Read a Second time and committed.

BEXLEY LONDON BOROUGH COUNCIL BILL *(By Order)*

SHOREHAM PORT AUTHORITY BILL *(By Order)*
Orders for Second reading read.
To be read a Second time upon Thursday 10 July.

BLYTH HARBOUR BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*
Order for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time upon Tuesday 8 July.

Oral Answers to Questions

NORTHERN IRELAND

Assembly (Costs)

1. **Mr. Stephen Ross** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish the cost of the Northern Ireland Assembly from its inception to its suspension.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Nicholas Scott): The cost of the Northern Ireland Assembly for the period November 1982 to 31 May 1986 was £9,317,000. There will be additional costs in respect of Members' salaries and allowances payably from 1 June up to the date of dissolution.

Mr. Ross: I thank the Minister for his reply. Does he agree that, whatever else may be said, that is a sizeable sum, which shows the strength of our commitment to try to restore local democracy in Northern Ireland? Is it not tragic that it has not been taken that way? Will Stormont now be put on a care-and-maintenance basis?

Mr. Scott: Various activities take place inside the Parliament buildings on the Stormont estate other than the activities conducted by the Assembly. I share the hon. Gentleman's view. The establishment of the Assembly was amply justified. I am sorry that better use was not made of the opportunity that it provided for local parties in Northern Ireland. I hope that, as soon as possible, the circumstances will be created under which it can be restored.

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson: In the absence of the Assembly, what plans do the Government have to create some form of scrutinising body for Northern Ireland within the House?

Mr. Scott: Those are matters about which my right hon. Friends the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State made it clear they would be anxious to talk to hon. Members of all parties to find out what they think would be most suitable. In the meantime, we shall continue to send to party leaders and others in Northern Ireland proposals for legislation affecting the Province.

Mr. Bill Walker: Does my hon. Friend agree that this experiment, sadly, has not worked, that it has not exactly been inexpensive to the taxpayer and that before we continue with experiments that can be, and are, expensive we should consider whether there are other ways in which we can continue to have the Province governed in the same way as the rest of the United Kingdom?

Mr. Scott: For the time being, direct rule will be the vehicle, as it were, by which Northern Ireland is governed. I hold firmly to the view, as does my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, that the restoration of devolved government provides the best hope for the future government of Northern Ireland. To suggest, as some have, that this means that Northern Ireland is being treated unequally compared with the rest of the United Kingdom is not a sustainable argument. In the meantime, however, if elected representatives wish to come and talk to my right hon. Friend and other Ministers about these matters, we shall listen to what they have to say.

Mr. Meadowcroft: Will the Minister consider enhancing the powers of local government within Northern Ireland and perhaps introducing an elected element into the boards which have been appointed and which administer so many of the functions?

Mr. Scott: There are elected representatives on the boards who have been appointed by the local authorities. The single most important criterion for any change in the way in which Northern Ireland is governed is that there should be widespread acceptance of it throughout the community there. I do not believe that the restoration of increased powers to local government would achieve that sort of consent at the moment.

Security

2. **Mr. Peter Bruinvels** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the current law and order situation in Northern Ireland.

7. **Mr. Spencer** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the latest security situation in Northern Ireland.

8. **Mrs. Virginia Bottomley** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the security situation in Northern Ireland.

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Tom King): Since I last answered questions in the House on 5 June, two people, a part-time member of the Ulster Defence Regiment and a Catholic business man, have been killed in incidents arising from the security situation. The Provisional IRA has claimed responsibility for both these brutal murders.

The efforts of the security forces are continuing to yield results. During 1985 a total of 522 people were charged with serious offences, including 24 with murder. So far this year, 330 people have been charged with serious offences, and 125 weapons, 15,000 rounds of ammunition and 1,200 lb of explosives have been recovered.

Mr. Bruinvels: I join in congratulating my right hon. Friend and the members of the RUC on the success of their clear-up rate. However, does my right hon. Friend agree that it is bad enough leading Members of the Democratic Unionist party threatening the lives of members of the RUC? Does he agree that the clear-up rate for crimes that has been achieved by the RUC makes Northern Ireland the safest part of the United Kingdom, with about 42·8 indictable offences per 100,000, compared with massive figures for the rest of the United Kingdom? Can my right hon. Friend reassure the House that every possible financial aid and means will be given to help the RUC, to give it that protection and to ensure that Northern Ireland remains virtually the safest part of the United Kingdom?

Mr. King: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for the tribute that he has paid to the RUC. In the light of certain difficult charges that have been made and the inquiry, with which the House is familiar, it is important to put on record the outstanding performance of the RUC in impartially seeking to enforce law and order and to protect people while they go about their daily lives. It is worth remembering that the hon. Member of this House who made that disgraceful remark about the police force was then safely protected by members of the same police force as he went home.

Mr. Spencer: The sons of Leicester who are serving in two battalions of the Royal Anglian Regiment in Northern Ireland are daily showing their commitment to the security of the Province. Does my right hon. Friend not feel that their efforts would be helped if those who at present are obstructing the Anglo-Irish agreement withdrew that obstruction?

Mr. King: I take the point that my hon. and learned Friend has made and I pay tribute to the Royal Anglian Regiment and those who serve in it. My hon. and learned Friend will know that, sadly, a major in that regiment lost his life as part of the total commitment of this House and this country to seeking to defeat terrorism in Northern Ireland. I wish that there were greater recognition by some of those who describe themselves as Loyalists of the commitment of us all to the defeat of terrorism and of the support that we give to that commitment.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Will my right hon. Friend continue to emphasise that it is the overwhelming wish of the House that the Government should maintain their commitment to the Anglo-Irish agreement, providing as it does for further cross-border co-operation? Does he agree that the IRA's wholehearted opposition to the agreement stems from its recognition that it is likely to be the true loser from this agreement, and not others?

Mr. King: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for what she has said. It is true that the IRA greatly fears the agreement, because it provides the best hope that we have had of the start of the co-operation that will be the only effective and lasting way to deal with terrorism. Perhaps I should add in reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels) that when one refers to Northern Ireland as being basically a law-abiding place, one should not underestimate the continuing threat that terrorism poses. That is why we need to use every endeavour, particularly in co-operation with the Government of the Republic of Ireland, to defeat this curse.

Ms. Clare Short: Does the Secretary of State remember that one of the reasons that we were given for the Anglo-Irish agreement was the need to reduce the alienation of the Nationalist population of Northern Ireland? We know that supergrass trials are one of the factors that alienate that community from any belief in justice in the criminal justice system. We in Britain now face the horrifying reality that probably the wrong people have been locked up for the Birmingham and Guildford bombings. Does this not make the Secretary of State worry more about the use of supergrass trials without even juries in Northern Ireland? When will he give us some progress on this issue?

Mr. King: The hon. Lady may recognise that concern about supergrass trials has not been exclusive to the Nationalist minority community. There is concern because of the real problems that are posed in a society where terrorist intimidation is rife. There are problems in having jury trials, including the problems that they pose for an extremely brave and committed judiciary in Northern Ireland, the members of which have discharged their responsibilities with amazing courage and dedication. It is right that the House should recognise that. We are aware of some of these concerns and these are some of the matters that we are considering.

Mr. Bellingham: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the conduct of the UDR men who have recently been

convicted was appalling and a disgrace to that fine regiment? Does he agree also that that outrage should be seen in the light of the fact that tens of thousands of first-class men and officers have served in the UDR since the troubles began? Will he confirm to the House that he still has complete confidence in the regiment?

Mr. King: I can give that assurance absolutely unequivocally to my hon. Friend. I am glad that he has put matters in perspective. The charges were serious on which members of the UDR were found guilty, but that must be put in the context that 33,000 men have served in the UDR. Some of the bravest people in the whole of the United Kingdom are part-time members of the UDR. The House will have noted that, sadly, one of the murders that occurred only this week was of a part-time member of the regiment. The part-time members serve with great courage and dedication. It is particularly because of their courage and dedication that one so much regrets the occasional incidents, such as we have had, that involve UDR men. If such incidents occur, those concerned will be brought to justice.

Policing Policy

3. **Mr. Maclennan** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what recent discussions he has had with representatives of the Royal Ulster Constabulary concerning policing in the Province.

Mr. Scott: My right hon. Friend and I have regular meetings with the Chief Constable and the General Officer Commanding in Northern Ireland to discuss security policy issues.

Mr. Maclennan: Will the Minister accept that a prolonged period of government of Northern Ireland without the consent of the people of Northern Ireland, which is apparently what we face, puts intolerable pressures on the police, who see themselves having to fulfil more than their proper role of upholding the rule of law? They see themselves, in addition, as the defenders of an unpopular Government. Is the Minister conscious of the criticisms that are now being made within the police force of this role?

Mr. Scott: I believe that the Government's policies in Northern Ireland are correct. The job of Ministers is to win the consent of the majority of the population there for these policies. I am well aware of the pressures that are faced by the RUC. I am probably more aware than anyone in the House of the pressures on the RUC and its members and of some of the disgraceful attacks that have been launched against them and their families. The Government, the Police Authority for Northern Ireland and the Chief Constable have been at pains to ensure that the pressures are ameliorated in so far as that is possible. I am confident that the RUC will do its job on behalf of the entire community in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Gow: Does my hon. Friend consider that the degree of consent of the people of Northern Ireland to be governed under the terms of the Anglo-Irish agreement is greater on 3 July 1986 than it was on 15 November 1985?

Mr. Scott: I do not accept the terms of my hon. Friend's question. Northern Ireland has been governed in exactly the same way since 15 November 1985. All that has happened is that institutional arrangements have been made so that Irish Ministers can reflect the views of the Nationalist community in Northern Ireland. The government of the Province is on precisely the same terms now as it was before 15 November 1985.

Stalker Inquiry

4. **Mr. Meadowcroft** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if there has been any change in the terms of reference of the Stalker inquiry following the appointment of Mr. Sampson.

Mr. Tom King: The terms of reference of the inquiry are a matter for the Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary. I understand, however, that there has been no change following the appointment of Mr. Sampson.

Mr. Meadowcroft: The Secretary of State will be aware of the exceptionally high regard in which Mr. Colin Sampson is held in West Yorkshire and that no involvement of his could ever be regarded as malign. Can the Secretary of State tell the House what the thinking was behind appointing Mr. Sampson to carry out both inquiries simultaneously? Is it possible to hold up the continuation of the Stalker inquiry pending the resolution of the inquiry into Mr. Stalker's involvement in Manchester? Is it possible that Mr. Stalker could be put back on to the inquiry in Northern Ireland once the question of the disciplinary action in Manchester is resolved?

Mr. King: I note the hon. Gentleman's tribute to Mr. Sampson. I think the House is aware that the decision to appoint Mr. Sampson was taken by the Chief Constable of the RUC, but only after consultation with Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary and the Attorney-General. Part of the answer may lie in the further question that the hon. Gentleman asked, which is that he was advocating delay. My concern is that the matter should be pursued as vigorously as possible, the facts established, and if charges are to be brought, they should be brought at the earliest possible date.

The innuendo and rumour about matters that happened in 1982—four years ago—are undoubtedly doing great damage to a force—to which I paid tribute earlier—of outstandingly brave men who seek to uphold law and order in the Province. Many Nationalists have recognised the brave way in which, in recent months and years, RUC officers have sought impartially to uphold law and order. I am anxious to see the inquiry pursued at the earliest possible date. Although it is not a matter for me—it is a matter for the Chief Constable—I am anxious to see no delay.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Does my right hon. Friend agree that we should be making inquiries to ascertain whether anybody in the Province was in any-way responsible for the lodging of complaints against Mr. Stalker? If my right hon. Friend agrees that inquiries should be made, what steps is he taking to ascertain the facts?

Mr. King: I have no evidence to suggest that that is the case. The inquiry conducted by Mr. Stalker relating to the RUC is a matter not for me, but for the Chief Constable, as is Mr. Sampson's appointment. As I said in reply to the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Meadowcroft), the matter will be pursued diligently and vigorously.

Any evidence regarding the appointment and any other matters that may be investigated would, presumably, come to light in the further inquiry that is being conducted at the request of the Police Authority.

Mr. Mallon: As inquests into the deaths of six people in Northern Ireland in 1982 have not been held, four years after their deaths, does the Secretary of State accept that the appointment of Mr. Sampson to continue the Stalker inquiry in Northern Ireland, and to inquire into the Stalker affair in Britain, must inevitably cause further delay? Will the Secretary of State accede to the request by the Greater Manchester police authority to meet it so he can hear the authority express its views and disquiet about these delays?

Mr. King: The House may be aware that Mr. Stalker was not acting alone. He had a team working with him. The whole team has remained in place and is now reporting to Mr. Sampson. The matter is being carried forward by the same investigating team, without delay. As I said to the hon. Member for Leeds, West it is unsatisfactory to suggest that the inquiry should be delayed. I believe that it is necessary for the matter to be carried through as promptly as possible.

Mr. Franks: Does my right hon. Friend accept that it is just not possible to isolate the Stalker inquiry in Northern Ireland from the current inquiry into Mr. Stalker himself, and that the current inquiry inevitably inhibits comment on the Stalker inquiry and what is supposed to be contained in the interim report? Does my right hon. Friend have any indication from the West Yorkshire police of how long its inquiries into Mr. Stalker will continue? Does he share with me, and I am sure all hon. Members, the desire that the inquiry into Mr. Stalker should be concluded before the House begins the summer recess?

Mr. King: I cannot comment on the interim report that Mr. Stalker submitted to the Chief Constable and which is now in the hands of the Director of Public Prosecutions of Northern Ireland with a view to considering whether charges should be brought. As my hon. Friend knows, the matters affecting Mr. Stalker in respect of the Manchester situation are not matters for me.

Mr. Archer: Does the right hon. Gentleman recall that I have written to him asking a number of questions about this subject which are being widely canvassed? I appreciate that he has not yet had time to reply. However, has the right hon. Gentleman not agreed that there has been widespread and damaging speculation? If no answers are given to those questions, are not people bound to guess at the answers? In particular, why was it announced that Mr. Stalker had been removed from the RUC inquiry,, before the complaints against him had been investigated, and presumably irrespective of the outcome?

I wish to repeat a question that has already been put to the right hon. Gentleman today: was not the appointment of Mr. Sampson, both to inquire into the conduct of Mr. Stalker and to complete the RUC inquiry bound to delay one or the other?

Mr. King: The right hon. and learned Gentleman has returned to the interesting point put by the hon. Member for Leeds, West, who suggested that the Stalker inquiry should be suspended while investigations were carried out. It is important that the matter is pursued, for reasons which the House understands. Everyone has paid tribute to the independence and quality of Mr. Sampson. I think that the House can be confident that he will seek to pursue the matter in a vigorous and effective manner.

The House may know that Mr. Sampson had a full meeting yesterday with the Chief Constable of the RUC, at which I understand satisfactory progress was made, ensuring continuing co-operation in the inquiry. I hope that I have made my position clear. I feel that it is sensible to proceed. However, the matter was decided by the Chief Constable in consultation with the Chief Inspector of Constabulary and the Attorney-General.

On the question about the decision that Mr. Stalker should not continue with the inquiry, I understand that the Chief Constable was advised that as Mr. Stalker had been invited to take leave, he was therefore no longer available for the inquiry at that time.

Security

5. **Mr. Bell** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on cross-border security.

Mr. Scott: Cross-border security co-operation plays a vital part in combating terrorist activity. The last meeting of the Anglo-Irish Inter governmental Conference welcomed the completion of a report by a joint Royal Ulster Constabulary-Garda working party on measures to improve arrangements for the exchange of information and the development of liaison structures. I look forward to receiving progress reports on the implementation of the proposed measures and to seeing the results of other joint Royal Ulster Constabulary-Garda studies which have been commissioned.

Mr. Bell: Will the Minister take this opportunity to pay tribute to the Garda for its success this year in seizing large quantities of arms, ammunition and explosives on its side of the border? While noting with interest the Minister's comments on the report, may I ask whether he is confident that the report will lead to a real and continuing improvement in cross-border security?

Mr. Scott: I certainly pay tribute to the Garda for its success with a number of operations on the other side of the border. I also pay the warmest possible tribute to members of the RUC serving on the northern side of the border, to whose bravery and commitment my right hon. Friend has already paid tribute.

The hon. Gentleman asked whether the report would produce an improvement in cross-border security co-operation. It will, but it is the implementation of the report, not its production, that will be the proof of the pudding. We look forward to that implementation.

USA (Extradiction)

6. **Mr Adley** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on his Department's most recent discussions in the United States of America on the position concerning the extradition of Irish Republican Army terrorists from the United States of America.

Mr. Tom King: As I told the House on 5 June, this was one of a number of topics which I discussed in the United States in May with leading Americans who take a close interest in Northern Ireland affairs.

I am sure that the House will join me in welcoming the approval of the supplementary extradition treaty by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on 12 June. If, as we expect, the treaty receives the necessary majority on the Floor of the Senate, those accused or convicted of a wide range of offences will no longer be able to avoid extradition by claiming that their crimes were politically motivated.

Mr. Adley: I thank my right hon. Friend for that reply. While having just minor reservations about the tendency towards ethnic politics in the way in which the matter has been handled, may I nevertheless offer my right hon. Friend congratulations on the skilful way in which he has handled a difficult situation?

Will my right hon. Friend continue to press upon the American public, through their representatives, the fact that citizens in the north and the south of Ireland have full access to democratic rights, and that Americans should be persuaded in every way possible to desist from contributing to NORAID?

Mr. King: I am grateful for those remarks. It was not possible for me to say very much after my return from Washington. I felt that there was a real commitment in America to get the treaty established on a sensible basis. This is an encouraging start and yet another demonstration of the United States' willingness now to stand against terrorism. In the context of Northern Ireland, the United States is an important ally.

Mr. J. Enoch Powell: Will it be necessary for the original agreement between the British and American Governments to be altered?

Mr. King: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Stanbrook: Is not a great weakness of the revised draft extradition treaty the fact that it no longer includes the offence of conspiracy to commit murder and other violent crimes? As the people we are after are often the godfathers of crime in Northern Ireland, should not that weakness be remedied?

Mr. King: I think that people who look fairly at this matter recognise that it is a great improvement on the previous arrangements. People who have committed crimes will now find, as I said in my original answer, that they no longer have the political defence open to them. One problem is that crimes in this country, such as crimes of intent — carrying a weapon with intent or or possession with intent, but where a crime is not actually commited — are not crimes in the United States. It is therefore difficult to have such aspects incorporated in the treaty. I am concerned that people who commit murder or other crimes should find that they cannot use the political defence. That is what we sought to achieve and what has been achieved.

Mr. Skinner: Does the right hon. Gentleman accept that another point of view prevails, which suggests that the only reason why the treaty was accepted was that many Senators and others were able to put an altogether different construction on it? As far as they were concerned, the small print of this new so-called extradition policy is about as worthless as a Slater Walker unit trust policy of the early 1970s.

Mr. King: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman is thrilled with the cleverness of that supplementary question. Recent Sinn Fein literature makes it clear that Sinn Fein regards it as a major setback.

Mr. Proctor: What progress is my right hon. Friend making with the extradition of IRA terrorists from countries other than the United States of America, for example, the Netherlands?

Mr. King: My hon. Friend will have seen the recent judgments on this matter, which may have to go through one further stage. I should like to put on record our gratitude to the Netherlands authorities for the thorough way in which these matters have been investigated. Obviously they are matters for the courts, but we have sought to give all possible evidence to the Dutch authorities. We are grateful for their approach in this matter.

Mr. Archer: Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that one factor in the debate has been the fairness of the legal system in Northern Ireland? Has he grasped that it would greatly help those in the United States who argue for effective extradition if the Government were at least seen to be implementing the Baker recommendations with enthusiasm and if the supergrass trials were discontinued?

Mr. King: I think that the right hon. and learned Gentleman will be aware that there has been one hearing in connection with extradition, in which, under the previous rules, the Government were not successful. The fairness of the courts in Northern Ireland came under judicial review. The right hon. and learned gentleman may be aware that Judge Sprizzo made it absolutely clear in his finding that, in his judgment and to the satisfaction of the court, there was no question but that if the gentleman concerned had been extradited he would have received a fair trial in Northern Ireland.

Community Relations

9. **Mr. Alton** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps he proposes to take to seek to improve relations between the Royal Ulster Constabulary and the Nationalist community in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Scott: The Chief Constable, Police Authority and Government give a high priority to the improvement of relations between the RUC and the community in Northern Ireland. The Chief Constable has taken various measures designed to improve relations between the police and all sections of the community. The Government have put forward proposals for changes to the police complaints system.

Mr. Alton: How many of the three senior assistant chief constables, the eight assistant senior chief constables and the officers of the RUC are members of the Catholic community? Does the hon. Gentleman agree that it is more difficult to attract people from the minority community into the RUC because of the Government's handling of the Stalker inquiry?

Mr. Scott: I cannot produce the precise figures. It is more important that we have good policemen in the higher ranks of the RUC than a balance between the communities. However, a disproportionately high level of the senior ranks are Catholics compared with lower down the force. The real threat and inhibition to the recruitment

of Catholics to the RUC is the threat that they would be murdered by the IRA, which could then claim that the RUC is a sectarian force, which it is not. It is manifestly a professional police force.

Mr. Hirst: Does my hon. Friend agree that the past few months have confirmed that the RUC carries out its duties under difficult circumstances in a thoroughly impartial way, which should reassure all communities in Northern Ireland? Will he take this opportunity of expressing to the Chief Constable of the RUC the esteem in which the British people hold the RUC on account of the way in which it carries out its job?

Mr. Scott: I can do nothing but say that I will draw the attention of the Chief Constable to the remarks of my hon. Friend, which are wholeheartedly endorsed by all the Ministers in the Northern Ireland Office.

Mr. Flannery: Will the Minister explain why the minority Catholic community so widely distrusts the RUC? Has he done any research into that, and can he give us any reasons why members of the Catholic community do not want to join the RUC? In fact it is very similar to black people in certain sections — *[Interruption.]* The Minister will notice where the noise is coming from. It is similar, is it not?

Mr. Scott: Having been responsible for policing matters in Northern Ireland for rather more than three years, I have been struck by the increasing confidence of the Nationalist community which has been won by the RUC. The Chief Constable is determined to work and develop that work in the future, but the RUC is making good progress and I have already drawn the attention of the House to the real inhibition to the recruitment of Catholics to the RUC.

Mr. Dickens: Does my hon. Friend agree that the extravagant language recently used by the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) has undermined the authority of the Royal Ulster Constabulary, the British Army and jobs and investment in Northern Ireland? Does the Minister feel that the very good and sterling work undertaken by the Northern Ireland Office has been completely undermined by one hon. Member who should be in his place today to answer for his call to mobilise the Loyalists in Northern Ireland?

Mr. Scott: I share my hon. Friend's view that the utterances of the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) and some other Unionist Members have damaged job prospects in Northern Ireland in a severe way. However, it is not within the capacity of the hon. Member for Antrim, North to damage or undermine the morale of the Royal Ulster Constabulary.

Equal Opportunities

10. **Mr. Mallon** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps have been taken during the past three months to promote religious equality of opportunity in promotion and employment within Government training centres in Northern Ireland.

The Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office (Dr. Rhodes Boyson): Having collected figures for the religious composition of the existing staff of Government training centres, the results have been collated over the past three months and will be published very shortly in the first report of the Equal Opportunities Unit. Monitoring has been introduced for recruitment and promotion procedures in order to confirm that appointments are made on merit alone.

Mr. Mallon: I thank the Minister for that reply. May I ask that he pays special attention to the figures produced by the Fair Employment Agency some three months ago in the case brought by Mr. Sloan against his own Department? Will he assure, not just me, but the House and everybody concerned, that the absolute imbalance which exists within the Government training centres will be put right at the earliest possible opportunity?

Dr. Boyson: I have read the report on Mr. Sloan to which the hon. Gentleman referred. I assure him that our concern in government is that recruitment to the Government training centres and to any form of Government employment in Northern Ireland should be based on merit alone and not on which community someone comes from. I would welcome a discussion with the hon. Gentleman soon after the figures are published, as they will be within a month.

Security

11. **Mr. Dubs** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he will next meet the Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary to discuss security in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Tom King: While it is not my practice to give details of timing or content, I can confirm that I do have regular meetings both with the Chief Constable and the General Officer Commanding on security matters.

Mr. Dubs: At the forthcoming meeting with the police in Northern Ireland, will the Secretary of State discuss the problems caused by so-called Loyalist marches, which deliberately and provocatively seek to go through Nationalist areas? Will he comment on the implication of those marches in the forthcoming months?

Mr. King: The hon. Gentleman will know that marches are taking place at this very moment. Marches called the "mini-12th" took place on Tuesday. The vast majority of those marches passed off peacefully. There are further marches, such as one on Sunday in Portadown, and others. Those are matters for the Chief Constable. Obviously they are matters to which he gives careful consideration. In that regard, I am absolutely satisfied that he will seek to exercise his responsibilities, as he has over the years, in the interests of law and order.

Mr. Gow: Does my right hon. Friend think that it is wise to continue to arrange for the Chief Constable of the RUC to be present at meetings of the Intergovernmental Conference at ministerial level? Is it not possible to secure that excellent co-operation that we all seek between the Garda and the RUC without the attendance of the Chief Constable of the RUC at meetings of the conference?

Mr. King: I think that my hon. Friend is aware that the Chief Constable has a particular interest in closer co-operation on cross-border security. I do not think that it is any secret that the RUC sees, in the structure that we have now established, of conference and discussion on cross-border security, the best opportunity yet for tackling

the problem of terrorism, so much of which is closely border-related. The Chief Constable is very keen to play his part, and does not want not to play any part in that important co-operation.

Pollution

12. **Mr. Wallace** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what recent studies his Department has made into the pollution of the Northern Ireland coastline by Sellafield.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Richard Needham): There has been regular monitoring since 1977 and the levels found have been of negligible radiological significance to the Northern Ireland public. Since October 1985 Northern Ireland has been included in a United Kingdom-wide research programme, which will also provide information on the levels of radioactivity along the Northern Ireland coastline.

Mr. Wallace: I am grateful to the Minister for that response. I am pleased to hear that monitoring has taken place. He will be aware that in the Republic of Ireland there is considerable anxiety and concern about pollution caused by discharges from Sellafield. Now that Sellafield has an open house policy, will the Minister take the opportunity at the next meeting of Anglo-Irish Ministers to invite politicians from the Republic of Ireland to visit Sellafield and see the reprocessing plant for themselves?

Mr. Needham: No, Sir. The problems of Sellafield have nothing whatsoever to do with me. However, I shall bring the hon. Gentleman's points to the attention of the responsible Minister. As I said, we have three different ways of going about monitoring in Northern Ireland. There is no significant pollution of any sort.

Security

13. **Sir John Farr** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the current security situation.

Mr. Tom King: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave to a question by my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels) earlier today.

Sir John Farr: I thank my right hon. Friend for that reply. In that connection, will he confirm that the brutal attacks on the homes and families of RUC members in the north are being curbed?

Mr. King: The scale of attacks is much less, but there have been further isolated incidents. I know that the whole House will join me in deploring the way in which people have sought to intimidate both members of the RUC and prison officers in their own homes.

Energy Efficiency Year

14. **Mr. Galley** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what measures have been taken to promote Energy Efficiency Year in Northern Ireland.

Dr. Boyson: Northern Ireland is playing its full part in Energy Efficiency Year through intensive advertising campaigns, seminars, exhibitions, domestic competitions, presentations to schoolchildren and energy saving demonstrations for both the domestic and industrial consumer.

Mr. Galley: What is the total level of energy efficiency savings from specific measures run by my hon. Friend's Department? How far does he expect those savings to increase during Energy Efficiency Year? Perhaps my hon. Friend can also comment on the development of lignite as a contribution to energy efficiency.

Dr. Boyson: Figures show that the investment on energy saving is repaid within three or four years. That is one of the best investments that can be made. Similarly, Government money is helping with insulation in domestic housing. There is no doubt that if we can get lignite at the right price and generate electricity from it, we should be able to reduce the price of electricity in Northern Ireland, to the benefit of domestic consumers. It would also lower the cost of industrial production.

Inward Investment

15. **Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement about inward investment into the Province.

Dr. Boyson: In the year ended 31 March 1986 the Industrial Development Board promoted 1,482 new jobs in Northern Ireland in companies owned outside the Province. This represents just over 50 per cent. of the total number of new jobs promoted in Northern Ireland in that year, and total investment of £98 million.

Mr. McNair-Wilson: Can my hon. Friend comment on the package of financial assistance which the United States Government is proposing to give to Northern Ireland? Will he agree with me that there should be more companies such as Hughes and Dupont, rather than financial assistance?

Dr. Boyson: We would welcome both. We do not mind money coming into the Province which can be used for infrastructure and other purposes. We would also welcome more American investment. I remind my hon. Friend that some 27,000 people in Northern Ireland are employed in 27 firms already owned by American industrialists.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Mr. Dormand asked the Prime Minister, if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 3 July.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House I shall be having further meetings later today. This evening I shall attend a dinner given by the President of the Federal Republic of Germany.

Mr. Dormand: How does the Prime Minister account for the massive gap between what she says her Government are doing for education and the National Health Service and what the public say is really happening?

The Prime Minister: It is up to us to get the facts over more effectively than we have. I shall try to do that now. As the hon. Gentleman knows, more in real terms is being spent per pupil in the education system than ever before and there is a bigger proportion of teachers to pupils

[HON. MEMBERS: "Answer the question."] I am answering the question. Hon Gentlemen might not like the answer. More money is being spent than ever before. That also applies to the National Health Service. That has resulted in more patients being treated, and being treated better than before.

Mr. J. Enoch Powell: In view of the outcome of the referendum last Sunday in the Irish Republic, does the Prime Minister recognise that the Irish Prime Minister is no longer in a position to deliver any commitment that he may have made or suggested to secure an amendment of articles 2 and 3 of the constitution of the Republic?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman will know that a referendum in the Irish Republic is not a matter for me. He will also be the first to know that agreements are made between the Government of the United Kingdom and the Government of the Republic of Ireland, and not between persons.

Q2. **Mr. Proctor** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 3 July.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Proctor: While regretting the necessity, is my right hon. Friend aware that all law-abiding citizens who live and work in London, especially those who live in Tottenham and Brixton and who were subjected to tyranny last year, will support the measures announced by the Home Secretary last night?

The Prime Minister: I agree that all on the Government side will support the measures proposed by the Home Secretary. The Government have consistently given the police the extra support that they need, whether in manpower, resources or equipment. That has been our policy, and it will continue to be our policy.

Mr. Ashton: Will the Prime Minister make a statement today on the fact that one of her Cabinet Ministers has asked all members of the Conservative party to complain continually about Left-wing bias on the BBC? Does she think that the BBC is there simply as a propaganda tool of the Government, or does she believe in its impartiality and integrity?

The Prime Minister: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster has asked for a monitoring system to find out the facts. I believe that that is the right way to go about it.

Q3. **Mr. Adley** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 3 July.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Adley: In the light of the Peacock report, and notwithstanding that a statement is to be made shortly, will my right hon. Friend, especially in view of chapter 8, please give a categorical assurance that her Government have no intention of seeking to introduce any legislation to put advertising on the BBC?

The Prime Minister: I give a categorical assurance that the Government which I lead will study very thoroughly the plan, about which we shall hear later this afternoon.

Mr. Frank Cook: The Prime Minister has recently received most readily rings of roses and sycophantic posies from her Republican puppet-masters. Will she call to mind today the efforts of the same paymasters to foster destabilisation in areas such as Chile, Nicaragua, Libya, Cuba and more recently the United Nations, from which they are withholding financial support? Bearing that in mind and putting it together with her recent standing in the opinion polls, will she tell the House what she knows of the activities in this country of certain individuals anonymously – that is, C for certain, I for individuals and A for anonymously who seek to foster and foment the organisation, the financing

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is not an Adjournment debate, come on.

Mr. Cook: and the political direction of some destabilised pseudo-politicians. That is, S for some, D for destabilised, P for pseudo-politicians

Mr. Speaker: Order. It is unfair to take as long as that.

The Prime Minister: I answer for this Government, and in terms of Nicaragua we note that the International Court of Justice called on both parties to co-operate with the efforts of the Contadora Group and to seek a lasting peace in Central America. That is our policy. On Chile, we deeply regret the deaths that have recently occurred and condemn violence from whatever quarter. We take every opportunity to urge the Chilean Government to take early steps to ensure the orderly and peaceful restoration of democracy in Chile.

Mr. Higgins: Has the First Lord of the Treasury seen today's judgment of the European Court of Justice? That judgment has just been published and holds that the European Community's 1986 budget is not legal but that payments have been made under it. Will my right hon. Friend take steps to claw back this amount through reduced expenditure by the Community in future? More fundamentally, will she take steps to ensure that in future the amount of revenue that is approved restricts expenditure rather than allows profligate expenditure to go on unabated?

The Prime Minister: We wholeheartedly welcome the judgment of the European Court of Justice. It vindicates the Council's contention that the European Assembly's President acted illegally in adopting the 1986 budget without the Council's agreement. As my right hon. Friend knows, there are certain provisions under which payments to the Community go on, in accordance with the due proportion of last year's budget, which, I believe, is legal. Of course we will look at the full implications of the judgment and find a way to let my right hon. Friend know our decisions.

Dr. Owen: Is not the real lesson of the CPSA ballot that workplace balloting is always open to serious objection? Would not the Prime Minister have been better advised to put the onus of proof on those who wished to depart from postal balloting? Does she agree that the norm should be postal balloting?

The Prime Minister: As the right hon. Gentleman is aware, there are two arguments about ballots. One is the argument that he has effectively advanced, that it is argued by some that postal ballots seem to provide the least scope for manipulation. That is why we enourage unions to make use of them through our ballot fund scheme, and unions can always do that if they wish. The other argument is that the number of people voting tends to be

higher in ballots held at the workplace, and that is an important factor to consider. It is not easy to come down on one side or the other, but all unions that wish to have postal ballots can have finance for them.

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 3 July.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Oppenheim: Will my right hon. Friend take time later today to consider the depressing news that most of our so-called EEC partners have decided against following our lead and against effective liberalisation of the European airline market? Will this not result in unnecessary extra costs on both consumers and businesses, and is it not ironic that those who are often fastest in deploying European rhetoric are often the slowest to act when the interests of their inefficient, state-run airlines are at stake?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend has made his point very effectively. It is, of course, quite true that the European Council is a long way short of agreement on worthwhile liberalisation of European air services. Britain and the Netherlands have led the way. We hope to pursue this very much more during our presidency and the Commission has said that, in the absence of agreement in the Council, it may begin independent action under article 89 of the treaty against airline cartels. In the meantime, we shall do our best to take the matter forward. Our record is excellent.

Mr. Kinnock: Has the Prime Minister seen the admission made yesterday by the Secretary of State for Employment that shortages of specialist teachers are the major constraint on technical education? Is she aware that the shortage of specialist teachers in mathematics, science and technology subjects and languages is serious and widespread in secondary schools? What will she do to ensure that the shortages in those vital subjects are overcome by the beginning of the new term in September?

The Prime Minister: As the right hon. Gentleman is aware, this is one matter that is being considered by ACAS in the discussions that it is having on teachers' pay and on much wider matters. May I point out that specialist teaching is also being studied in an inquiry in Scotland as part of the wider matter of teachers' pay and the possible new structures for teachers' pay. The Government would like, if need be, to get the extra teachers by paying them extra on the grounds that we cannot get mathematics and physics teachers at the present rates of pay, because the demand for them in industry is so great. We have a duty to children to try to obtain those teachers, but the objections to that come not from the Government but from the National Union of Teachers.

Mr. Kinnock: Does the Prime Minister imagine for one moment, as a former Secretary of State for Education and Science, that the allocation of premiums to teachers in shortage subjects would be satisfactory as a way of rewarding teachers, with the present general feeling among teachers in all subjects, and in primary schools, that they are undervalued and underpaid in our society?

The Prime Minister: What the right hon. Gentleman is saying is that he absolutely refuses to give permission to the way to get extra mathematics and physics teachers to teach our children. Children, too, have rights.

Mr. Kinnock: May I ask the right hon. Lady to take the advice of Her Majesty's inspectors, who have a non-partisan interest in these matters, and to inquire of them whether they believe that the way to repair the grave shortages in the education system is to pay premiums to some teachers, with all the consequences of demoralisation that will occur *[Interruption.]* that is the reality. I give fair warning in other areas of the curriculum that are vital, although not so subject to shortages at present?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman asked about getting specialist teachers in mathematics and physics. Therefore, he accepts that children need extra teachers. I am saying that one way of getting them possibly the only effective way is to pay a premium. He is saying that he would rather we did not have teachers and that the children did not get them.

Q5. **Mr. Wood** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 3 July.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Wood: Is my right hon. Friend aware of the concern felt by Conservative Members about the allegations concerning the election of a Militant supporter to the leadership of a Civil Service union? Is it not true that, despite the words of the Leader of the Opposition, neither Militant nor its methods have been brought to an end?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is right in the conclusions that he reaches. The elections in that union are a matter for the union itself, or, if any member is aggrieved, for the courts to resolve.

Mr. Dubs: What action does the Prime Minister intend to take in the light of the clear evidence that racial discrimination is practised in the British Army?

The Prime Minister: I know of no such evidence and no such practice. I believe it is totally untrue.

Dunchurch

Q6. **Mr. Pawsey** asked the Prime Minister if she has any plans to make an official visit to Dunchurch near Rugby.

The Prime Minister: At present I have no plans to do so.

Mr. Pawsey: My right hon. Friend will understand that my constituents living in Dunchurch and Rugby will naturally be disappointed at that reply. Will she consider a question which they would have asked her, had she visited Dunchurch, about the effect that Greek dumping of cheap cement would have on Rugby Portland Cement? Is she aware that the dumping of that cheap cement will undermine the cement industry in the United Kingdom? Will she bear in mind that that cement is cheap because it enjoys a subsidy from the Greek Government of some 18 per cent.? Will she say what action her Administration will take to repair matters?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for giving me notice of a matter which is of considerable importance to his constituents. My hon. Friend is right. The silo of Greek cement arrived at Tilbury on 18 June, and the United Kingdom industry fears that it will be the

start of regular shipments. It has made representations about the fact that the cement is subsidised by the Greek Government. My hon. Friend the Minister of State, Department of the Environment, will be discussing the matter with the industry's representatives shortly, but I am not over-optimistic about the result because, as my hon. Friend knows, the subsidy has been approved by the European Commission until 31 December 1986 as part of the transitional arrangements for Greece joining the Community. However, we shall do everything we can to help my hon. Friend and his constituents.

Business of the House

3.31 pm

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn): May I ask the Leader of the House whether he will state the business for next week?

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen): Yes, Sir. The business for next week will be as follows:

MONDAY 7 JULY — Until seven o'clock, private Members' motions.

Debate on the tin industry on a Government motion.

Remaining stages of the Latent Damage Bill *[Lords]* and the Education (No. 2) Bill.

TUESDAY 8 JULY—Progress on remaining stages of the Finance Bill.

Remaining stages of the Patents, Designs and Marks Bill *[Lords]*.

There will be a debate on a motion on EC documents relating to agricultural structures. Details will be given in the *Official Report*.

WEDNESDAY 9 JULY—Completion of remaining stages of the Finance Bill.

Motions on the Housing (Northern Ireland) Order and the Criminal Justice (Northern Ireland) Order.

THURSDAY 10 JULY — Until seven o'clock, Estimates Day (1st Allotted Day, 2nd part). The Estimates due to be debated relate to the budget of the European Communities. Details will be given in the *Official Report*.

Remaining stages of the European Communities (Amendment) Bill.

FRIDAY 11 JULY — There will be a debate on policing the metropolis on a motion for the Adjournment of the House.

MONDAY 14 JULY — Until seven o'clock, private Members' motions.

It is expected that the Chairman of Ways and Means will name opposed private business for consideration at seven o'clock.

Debate on Tuesday 8 July:

Relevant European documents

(a) 6466/86 Socio-structural reforms in agriculture

(b) 7126/86 Agricultural structures in Spain

Relevant Reports of European Legislation Committee

(a) HC-21-xx (1985-86) paragraph 2

(b) HC 21-xx (1985-86) paragraph 3]

[Estimates due to be debated Thursday 10 July 1986

Supplementary Estimate 1986-87

Class III, Vote 1 (Budget of the European Communities)]

Mr. Kinnock: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman. It is obvious from next week's business that the Government have got themselves into a hopeless muddle over the remaining stages of the European Communities (Amendment) Bill. The short time allotted next Thursday for this major constitutional issue means that there will be hardly any time for debates between votes on amendments. The Government have made a fool of themselves over the way in which they have dealt with the legislation and now they are trying to treat the House with further contempt. Even at this late stage, will the right hon. Gentleman, out of respect for his office, the House of Commons and his previous record, ensure that there is time for a proper debate on this vital issue of major constitutional significance?

Will there be statements on the rate support grants for different parts of Britain before the summer recess? Later this afternoon we are to have a statement on the Peacock report. Will the right hon. Gentleman ensure that the House can debate the report as soon as possible and preferably before we rise for the recess?

On Tuesday I asked the Prime Minister whether she would accept the defeats inflicted on her Social Security Bill in the other place. She said in her reply:

"Events in the other place are matters for consideration later."—[*Official Report*, 1 July 1986; Vol. 100, c. 815.]

Does that mean that the Government are going to do the decent thing and not make changes that will disadvantage the poor and the elderly, or does the right hon. Gentleman have plans to bring back the measure to the House of Commons and use his majority to prevail in place of the reason and right that prevailed in the House of Lords?

Can the right hon. Gentleman ensure that the Foreign Secretary, who we understand will leave for southern Africa next week, will make statements to the House before and after his visit so that, first, he can outline purposes and, secondly, on his return report progress, if any, to the House of Commons?

The return to London today of Mr. Richard Branson reminds us of reports a few weeks ago of the anti-litter crusade that he was said to be going to lead. Can the Leader of the House now respond to my earlier request for a statement on the matter, or was the whole affair just a spasm of enthusiasm of the Prime Minister on her return from Israel that now turns out to be a load of rubbish?

Mr. Biffen: May I take the points in the sequence in which they were presented by the right hon. Gentleman the Leader of the Opposition? Of course I recognise the general interest in the House about debating the European Communities (Amendment) Bill, but he will recognise that the business for Thursday is governed by a motion that the House passed a few days ago, and I hope that that will ensure a reasonable balance of time.

Secondly, the right hon. Gentleman asked about the possibility of statements upon the rate support grant in the component parts of Great Britain. I am happy to tell him that we hope that statements will be made before the House goes into recess.

The right hon. Gentleman also asked whether there would be a debate on the Peacock report. I am sure that the House will wish to have such a debate after there has been an appropriate period for reflection following the statement that will be made later this afternoon by my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary. I do not think that it would be helpful at this stage to speculate exactly when such a debate would take place. Certainly I would not wish to impede a reasonable recess by making a commitment to hold such a debate before we go away for the summer.

I take note of what the right hon. Gentleman says about the Social Security Bill. My right hon. Friend will be following the normal conventions and will be making his own recommendations to the House on how the Lords amendments should be considered.

As to the question about my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary making statements to the House in relation to his proposed visit to South Africa, I am sure that the House will wish to take a very constructive stance in these matters and assist in what is undoubtedly a matter of considerable delicacy. It is perhaps something that we can discuss through the usual channels.

[Mr. Biffen]

Finally, of course, I take account of the Prime Minister's statement on the anti-litter crusade, and will be happy again to discuss that with the right hon. Gentleman through the usual channels.

Sir Fergus Montgomery (Altrincham and Sale): Is there any prospect of our having next week a debate or a statement on the plight of my constituent, Mr. John Stalker, the deputy chief constable of Greater Manchester? As I am sure my right hon. Friend is aware, since the end of May this man has been the subject of innuendo and rumour. Now he has been suspended by the police authority, a decision that was endorsed by the Police Complaints Authority — and a decision, incidentally, that was made public before it had the courtesy to tell Mr. Stalker. Does not my right hon. Friend not think that it is about time that the agony of his family should be brought to an end and could he please talk to the relevant Ministers to see whether the matter could be easily disposed of?

Mr. Biffen: My hon. Friend understandably and very effectively puts the problem that concerns his distinguished constituent. He will understand, I am sure, that there are problems that arise when there are matters still under investigation and consideration, but I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary will have heard what has been said.

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): The points raised by my hon. Friends yesterday call for an inquiry into the abuse of the housing benefits system. Given the widespread concern on both sides of the House that much of the £4·6 billion paid out in housing benefits last year found its way illicitly into the pockets of private landlords who are racketeering, will the right hon. Gentleman arrange for a statement to be made in the House next week? Can he say also when he expects to be able to make a statement about when the House will rise for the summer recess?

Mr. Biffen: The hon. Gentleman will realise that although those two points may seem to be quite far apart, they are not entirely unrelated, in that the more business that I am requested to undertake, the further away becomes the mirage of buckets and spades. However, I heard the hon. Gentleman's first point, and I shall draw his remarks to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services.

Mr. John Stokes (Halesowen and Stourbridge): Is my right hon. Friend aware that the General Synod of the Church of England meets tomorrow? Is he further aware that one of the motions before it recommends effective economic sanctions against the South African Government and the disengagement of all British companies operating there? Are we to have an opportunity next week to debate that motion, or at least to hear what the Government's opinion of it is?

Mr. Biffen: As a very distinguished member of the Church Assembly, my hon. Friend will be able to make his views known perfectly well either within that body or by using all the other avenues of publicity available to a Member of Parliament. I appreciate that there is a proper and legitimate concern in the House to be involved in the political situation relating to this country and South Africa, but we must also be a little sparing in our insistence on debates and statements on the matter.

Mr. Merlyn Rees (Morley and Leeds, South): The Leader of the House has announced a debate next week on the Metropolitan police, because the Home Secretary is directly responsible for policing in London and there are problems. But is he aware that we also have problems in west Yorkshire? Following the disbandment of West Yorkshire county council, there has been a court case involving the Department of the Environment, and the chief constable, whom we all respect, is talking about 1,000 policemen having to go. Can the Home Secretary, who is responsible for the efficiency of the police in the provinces, make a statement next week? Law and order is a great issue in west Yorkshire and we should like to know what is going on.

Mr. Biffen: My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary is literally at my left elbow, and he will have heard the right hon. Gentleman's point.

Mr. Michael Latham (Rutland and Melton): Has my right hon. Friend noticed early-day motion 1039 which stands in my name and that of other hon. Members, and which calls for the bank holiday weekend to be designated "cone free" throughout our motorway system?

[That this House urges the Secretaries of State for Transport and for Wales to declare Friday 22nd to Monday 25th August, inclusive, to be a cone-free weekend, by ordering that all road works be suspended on every motorway in England and Wales, and all cones removed, thus having one weekend for the first time in a generation when motorists could take their families to and from their holidays without fuming helplessly for hours in hot and immobile queues of traffic.]

In the interest of the perhaps millions of motorists and their families who will be driving over the bank holiday, will my right hon. Friend ask the Secretary of State to take this issue seriously and do his very best to ensure the free flow of traffic during that weekend?

Mr. Biffen: In view of the difficulties faced by the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East (Mr. Freud) the other day, I must congratulate my hon. Friend on having got an early-day motion bearing that designation past the Table Office. I understand that it is already Government policy to minimise the amount of coning on bank holidays, but that is just one more example of where the good work of the Government has not yet been fully recognised.

Mr. Jack Dormand (Easington): Does the Leader of the House intend to make a statement or to arrange for a debate on hon. Members' salaries and allowances next week, or at least before the summer recess?

Mr. Biffen: No, I have no plans for a debate on that subject.

Mr. Michael Shersby (Uxbridge): When does my right hon. Friend think that there will be a debate on the conclusions and recommendations made following the review of legal aid? Should not early steps be taken to limit that non-cash-limited, demand-led vote?

Mr. Biffen: My hon. Friend has raised a valid point that is of growing public concern. However, the more I am pressed to give time for debates during the next few weeks, the less likely it is that we shall be able to rise for the recess at a civilised time.

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): The right hon. Gentleman will know how much we in Britain welcome distinguished visitors to this country, and their public display along the streets of London, but will he get the House authorities to approach both the Metropolitan police and the local authority to see whether the roads can be cleared more quickly for public transport, the coming and going of Londoners in general, and of Members of Parliament in particular, because there was considerable delay last Tuesday in reopening the streets? Does the right hon. Gentleman realise that the hon. Member for Warley, East was half an hour late for a luncheon with Czechoslovak parliamentarians and suffered from severe dyspeptic indigestion for the rest of the day?

Mr. Biffen: I am sure that gastronomy has played its part in international ill will, and I shall take full account of what the hon. Gentleman has said.

Sir John Farr (Harborough): In view of the serious collapse in exports of textiles and clothing in the first quarter of the year, for which the figures were announced a couple of days ago, and the rapid surge in imports of textiles and clothing at the same time, will my right hon. Friend arrange, before the recess, another debate on the MFA so that hon. Members can express the concern of constituents for their jobs and have action taken?

Mr. Biffen: I very much understand the anxieties of my hon. Friend and his concern that he should be able to inform the House of his constituency difficulty. Perhaps he would like to consider applying for an Adjournment debate as one way of doing that.

Mr. Stuart Holland (Vauxhall): Was it not wrong for the Home Secretary not to make a statement on the Metropolitan police review on the disorders in Brixton and Tottenham before giving his consent yesterday to the measures that it contains? Does he also agree that it is scandalous that the hon. Members most directly affected by those disorders received copies of the review only after Sir Kenneth Newman had given a press release with his version of the events? Will he ensure that in the debate on the police next Friday the Home Secretary is able to give commitments from other members of the Government that resources will be put into inner city areas to offset the deprivation that underlies such disorders?

Mr. Biffen: I cannot accept the strictures directed at my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary, but I am sure that the points of substantial policy that the hon. Gentleman has made will be included in the debate on Friday.

Mr. Roger Sims (Chislehurst): My right hon. Friend will be aware that many individuals and organisations are interested in the Government's consultation paper on family courts. Submissions on it are invited by 31 October, and, as the House will be sitting on only a limited number of days between now and then, can my right hon. Friend earmark one of those days for a debate on those proposals so that the House can play its part in the consultation process?

Mr. Biffen: I hope that we shall be sitting for only a limited number of days between now and the date that my hon. Friend mentioned. Clearly I shall have to take account of his representation and all others when judging when it will be appropriate for the House to go into recess.

Mr. James Hamilton (Motherwell, North): Bearing in mind the disquiet and worry in Scotland, and in Lanarkshire in particular, about the lack of investment in the steel industry in Scotland, will the right hon. Gentleman get the Secretary of State for Scotland, who met the chairman of the British Steel Corporation on Tuesday, to make a statement to allay the fears that prevail in Lanarkshire?

Mr. Biffen: I shall draw the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland to those anxieties.

Mr. Nigel Forman (Carshalton and Wallington): In view of recent press reports that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment intends to proceed rather more rapidly than hitherto has been envisaged on the reform of local government finance, can my right hon. Friend ensure that the House gets an early opportunity, if not before the summer recess then early in the autumn, to have a full debate on this important matter because of its implications for wider aspects of Government policies?

Mr. Biffen: I am sure that my hon. Friend, who is a most sophisticated politician, will not be seduced by every newspaper article that he reads.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): The right hon. Gentleman is being patronising.

Mr. Biffen: No, I am not. I am being adroit and accurate. I take account of the interest in such a debate, and I am grateful for the fact that my hon. Friend does not think that it will happen any earlier than the autumn.

Mr. Terry Davis (Birmingham, Hodge Hill): Why have the Government insisted on taking the Report stage of the Finance Bill next week, although they have not yet tabled all their new clauses and amendments to this important Bill, and in spite of representations that they have received on this matter through the usual channels?

Mr. Biffen: This state of housekeeping is not entirely unknown on Finance Bills throughout the decades. I understand the hon. Gentleman's point, and I shall look into it.

Mr. Neil Thorne (Ilford, South): I draw my right hon. Friend's attention to early-day motion 974 on the proposed takeover of Plessey that has been signed by no fewer than 117 hon. Members from all parts of the House and by one other hon. Member who has tabled an amendment, which I believe he intends to be helpful.

[That this House believes the GEC's proposed takeover of the Plessey Company would be against the public interest in view of: (a) the resulting damage to competition in the domestic market in the fields of private telecommunications, defence electronic equipment and other sectors including traffic signal systems, (b) the serious implications for employment prospects in Plessey and within their small firm suppliers, (c) the erosion of the country's technological base following the inevitable reduction in the variety of approaches to British research and development in a number of highly specialised applications and (d) the danger of increased opportunities for foreign suppliers as a result of the Government's policy of competitive tendering in the defence field; and calls upon the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to give due weight to these factors when he considers the report of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission on this matter in due course.]

In view of the large measure of concern about this matter, will my right hon. Friend consider the possibility

[Mr. Neil Thorne]

of holding a debate in the near future on the important implications, both to defence and employment, of the predatory nature of some firms that have far too much money standing idle and that seem to want to benefit from other extremely efficient companies that have put up a very creditable performance?

Mr. Biffen: My hon. Friend makes a point which will have touched on a quite widely held anxiety. However, he will appreciate that it will be much more appropriate if the House were to wait until the findings of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission are reported, which I understand will not be until, at the earliest, later this month.

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): In view of the continued erosion of the rights of employees who are fortunate enough to have jobs and the Government's apparent belief that the way to create more jobs is to remove the rights of those who are in work, may we have a debate soon on the proposals that are contained in the Government's consultative document that are designed to promote the further reduction of employees' rights, particularly of part-timers?

Mr. Biffen: That is a most tendentious interpretation of some extremely progressive proposals that have been mooted by this Government. But, leaving that aside, and curbing all that I would otherwise wish to say, I must observe that very little time is at the Government's disposal which would allow such a debate to take place this month.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): As it has now been disclosed that the Leader of the House could not bear to put his name on the European Communities (Amendment) Bill, despite the fact that the names on that Bill are headed by that of the Prime Minister and various other biased members of the Cabinet, including Dumpling —[HON. MEMBERS: "Who is he?"] Agriculture.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think that we should refer to the constituencies of hon. Members rather than to nicknames, however friendly.

Mr. Skinner: I was only taking the micky. Think about it! Why does the Leader of the House not do the decent thing? Why does he not do as he did a decade ago and back those of us who realise that the Common Market has now blown its full course, that it is bankrupt and that, if it were a coal mine, the Prime Minister would shut it? Why will he not decide to take the Bill off next Thurday's business and instead let us have a debate about the six months' old industrial dispute at Wapping? Is it not a scandal that, although a major industrial dispute in Britain has already lasted for more than six months, it has never been properly debated in this House? There's a challenge for the Leader of the House!

Mr. Biffen: I am always flattered and touched to receive the fraternal interest and good will of the hon. Gentleman; but, as he said, he was taking the micky.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): Although we have only recently had a very interesting and important debate on defence, I wonder whether it would be possible to have a specific debate on the very interesting proposal of the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) on the European deterrent — particularly as the French take the view that any nuclear deterrent involving France should have only one finger on the button, and that that finger should be a French one. It would give the right hon. Gentleman a very good opportunity to explain that he is not actually in favour of fudge and mudge.

Mr. Biffen: And, of course, there would be the related interest as to only one finger being on the alliance button. However, we have just concluded a two-day debate on the Defence Estimates and I am afraid that there is no immediate prospect of returning to that topic in parliamentary time.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): Bearing in mind his expressed understanding of the impending chaos in the cereals market last week, is the Leader of the House able to say why he has not made arrangements for a debate to be held on the introduction of the co-responsibility levy before the scheme becomes operative?

Mr. Biffen: As the hon. Gentleman has said, there is no provision for a debate. However, I am sure that he would not expect a great use of parliamentary time on those topics at this stage of the year if, at the same time, he had any regard for his Scottish colleagues who would like to recess earlier rather than later in July.

I understand that my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food will be laying a statutory instrument before the House shortly, which should provide an opportunity for debate.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels (Leicester, East): When will the House debate the Widdicombe report so that I may have the opportunity to reveal further Left-wing excesses by the Labour-controlled city council in giving money to Nelson Mandela, Nicaragua and the inner-area programme? Does not my right hon. Friend agree that local authorities should be debating local matters, not the privatisation of water authorities, social security reviews and anything to do with South Africa? They should not interfere in national affairs.

Mr. Biffen: It is an interesting proposition — *[Interruption.]* Well, it is an interesting proposition for the purpose of this answer. I hope that my hon. Friend will reflect seriously before suggesting that by statute we should limit the subjects to be without legitimate discussion by local authorities.

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): Leaving aside the need for a debate on South Africa before the recess, will the Leader of the House give an assurance that if the threat to Commonwealth unity worsens, especially after the events of 2 August, he will not hesitate to recommend that the House be recalled?

An Hon. Member: It is the first cuckoo.

Mr Biffen: That is an ominous contribution to these exchanges. I have no wish to exacerbate feelings between Opposition Members.

The hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) made a very proper observation, but I suggest that we wait for that difficulty to arise.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Will my right hon. Friend note that the pupil-teacher ratio announced two days ago is the highest ever? Will he also note that the

Government are paying teachers 15 per cent. more than the last Labour Government, and that before the current ACAS discussions are concluded?

Will my right hon. Friend ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science to consider the problem of the shortage of teachers in specialist subjects such as maths and science, and perhaps to introduce in-service training or retraining schemes for some of the large number of teachers in this country?

Mr. Biffen: I think that my hon. Friend will have been encouraged by the exchanges during Prime Minister's Question Time this afternoon. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science will be top for questions on Tuesday, and I hope that my hon. Friend will have the opportunity to make his point then.

Mr. Ray Powell (Ogmore): Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that, although Opposition Members are concerned about teachers' pay, we would also like to have a debate on the decline of competitive sport in schools and the loss of school playing fields as a result of the cuts in local authority finance? May we also have a debate on the sale of open spaces by local authorities? Those are pressing problems in some areas, and it is high time that the House debated them.

Mr. Biffen: There are times when I think that English cricket is an example of mixed ability sport. The hon. Gentleman raised a fair point, but I am sure that he realises that there will be a number of private Member opportunities for debate before we recess, and I hope that he will consider using those occasions to pursue the matter further.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): Is my right hon. Friend aware that the Scottish Grand Committee debate in Scotland on Monday on the subject of devolution was notable for the poor attendance of Labour Members and for the extravagant claims about what would happen in any separate assembly with regard to tax-raising and other powers?

As later next week we will debate the Single European Act, which my right hon. Friend has acknowledged has serious constitutional implications for the United Kingdom Parliament, may we have an early debate on the implications of those two matters together with the problem of rolling devolution in Ireland, their impact on our unitary Parliament and the effect on this House?

Mr. Biffen: That is an interesting point. I think that the House more generally may wish to return to the subject of devolution as we approach a general election. I am looking for a topic to hand to the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) so that he can take up anew what he once championed with such success after his current and passing interests have evaporated.

Mr. Tony Lloyd (Stretford): Is the Leader of the House aware of the decision last week in the International Court of Justice which condemned the United States both for mining the ports of Nicaragua and aiding the Contras? As the Prime Minister has been robust this year in condemning state-supported terrorism, may we have a debate on American action in Nicaragua so that the Prime Minister can express her views on this particular state-supported terrorism?

Mr. Biffen: I must say in all candour to the hon. Gentleman that I do not think there is the prospect of the sort of debate that he seeks. As a good alternative, perhaps he will consider that on Wednesday next week my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary is top of the list for questions.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Is the Leader of the House aware of the great concern felt by the staff of the Palace of Westminster about the date of the summer recess? Can he tell the House whether we shall go into recess on 18 or 25 July?

Mr. Biffen: I have nothing to add to the opaque words I have just spoken. I have already noted, however, that one hon. Member thinks that we should be around in early August to see what is happening at the Commonwealth Conference.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): I noted the concern for Scottish Members which the Leader of the House showed in his response to my hon. Friend the Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan). I hope that his concern will be translated into action. Bearing in mind that we shall be sitting next week, and the decision of the House of Lords Appellate Committee in dismissing the appeal of depositors of the Trustee Savings Bank, can he arrange next week for a Treasury Minister to make a statement on the Government's future proposals, and to give an undertaking that the bank will not go ahead with flotation until such time as their Lordships' detailed judgment on the ownership of the bank has been considered?

Secondly, in anticipation of the statement that is to be made by the Home Secretary, may I ask whether the Government intend that there should be a full-day debate on the Peacock report in good time?

Mr. Biffen: One thing is certain: if we have a debate on the Peacock report in good time, which would be during this month, it will make it more difficult — *[Interruption.]* I am glad that the hon. Gentleman is being corrected by his hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East (Mr. Freud). There will be a debate on the Peacock report after there has been proper time for the House to consider these matters some weeks hence. I shall most certainly look into the House of Lords decision and draw the attention of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer to the hon. Gentleman's anxieties.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Has the Leader of the House seen early-day motions Nos. 1040, 1044 and 1049?

[That this House believes that the decision of the United States Congress to vote money to the Contra for their attack against Nicaragua constitutes a further act of aggression; believes that the Government of Nicaragua is democratically elected and has suffered continued destabilisation by the United States of America; lends its full support to President Ortega and the people of Nicaragua in their legitimate defence of their country; and calls upon the British Government to denounce the United States policy at the United Nations to support the World Court decision and to offer aid to the Government of Nicaragua.]

[That this House notes the judgment of the International Court of Justice concerning military and paramilitary activities against Nicaragua; notes further that the Court found against the United States of America on various charges, including the mining of Nicaraguan ports and the

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financing of terrorism through aid to the Contra forces; is conscious that the Court found no merit in the United States counter-claim of self-defence; supports the decision of the Court in ordering reparations to Nicaragua; and looks forward to Her Majesty's Government condemning this state-supported terrorism and insisting that the United States of America recognises and acts on the Court's decision.]

[That this House supports the objectives of the National Civil Assembly of Chile, which is calling for a return to democracy and an end to military dictatorship in that country; and deplores the repression of political opposition and dissent being carried out by the military rulers of Chile.]

Does the Leader of the House agree that there should be an expression of opinion in the House concerning the differences in Government policy when they allow the United States to destroy a democractically elected Government in Nicaragua by sponsoring state terrorism against that country while at the same time they are prepared to sell arms to and provide military equipment for Chile and use Chilean military bases as a means of supporting the most vile fascist dictatorship seen anywhere in Latin America? Do not these matters merit urgent debate in the House?

Mr. Biffen: I am sure that the House would not expect me to endorse the hon. Gentleman's terminology. The point that he is making is not dissimilar to the one made by his hon. Friend the Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd). I have to say to him that my answer must be substantially the same.

Mr. Clive Soley (Hammersmith): Will the Leader of the House expand on his answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Easington (Mr. Dormand)? Was he really saying that there is not to be a debate on Member's secretarial allowances, or was he trying to tell the House that the allowances are not to be increased? Alternatively, was he trying to tell us that he is going to try to reduce the allowances?

Mr. Biffen: As I said to the hon. Member for Easington (Mr. Dormand), there is as I judge it no Government time available to debate Members' pay. The hon. Gentleman is right to draw specific attention to secretarial allowances. I said some weeks ago that the matter would be remitted for the four-yearly consideration. That is exactly what will happen, and before we go into recess.

BBC Financing (Peacock Report)

4.5 pm

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Douglas Hurd): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement on the report of the committee on financing the BBC, under the chairmanship of Professor Alan Peacock, which was published today. I should like to record my deep gratitude to Professor Peacock and his colleagues for their industry in pursuing their inquiries and for their efficiency in completing their work and producing this report in 12 months.

The committee puts forward a number of interesting and constructive proposals for replacing the present system of financing the BBC in a few years' time. However, it rejects the proposal that the BBC should at present be funded wholly or in part by advertising and concludes that at this stage the licence fee, with some modifications, should remain as the principal source of funding for the BBC. The committee argues that, since spectrum is still scarce, and there is as yet no way in which the consumer can pay direct for the programme of his choice, the introduction of advertising would reduce the effective range of choice open to viewers and listeners. Given the original work which the committee undertook and commissioned on the economics of the advertising market and on the relationship between advertising and broadcasting services, we cannot lightly put aside its assessment of this point. However, before reaching any conclusions the Government would welcome comments on the committee's analysis.

The committee's view is that our present system of public service broadcasting has provided the best means of securing diversity of choice and programmes of quality under the prevailing market conditions. The committee sees a need for this system to remain in being for some years, though with important modifications, but argues that, under pressure for inevitable technological change, it must and should give way to arrangements where, as channels multiply and customers find means to register their own preferences directly, a genuinely competitive broadcasting market develops. The committee believes that this will take time, but in a few years, in preparation for this, payment for BBC services should be made through subscription, leading to the end of the licence fee system. In the longer term, perhaps through the provision of a national cable grid, a genuinely competitive market in television services could be brought about so that the current arrangements, dependent on the duopoly, would no longer be needed. There would be scope for greater diversity of programmes and a wider choice for consumers, who would have much greater freedom than is now possible to decide which programme services they would like and at what price. Special arrangements are envisaged to ensure that public service programmes are available which, though needed, the market might not produce unaided.

The Government see much merit in this approach, which fits well with our general philosophy. All the committee's proposals, which have profound implications for all broadcast services, and the institutions which provide them, deserve and will receive careful study. We shall reach final views on the report only in the light of parliamentary and public reaction; and we would welcome

any comments from the public and other interested parties. However, there are four matters on which I should like to make some comment now.

First, there is the proposal by four members of the committee that IBA contracts should be awarded by a competitive tender, with the IBA required to make a full public and detailed statement of its reasons if it decided to award a franchise to a contractor other than the one making the highest bid. The Government have reached no conclusion on this recommendation. However, they are anxious that the option for change should remain open. This would not be the case if the IBA proceeds to arrange new ITV contracts to take effect from the beginning of 1990 for eight years. Accordingly, we are considering with the IBA the relationship between this timetable and the committee's recommendation. We do not propose to disturb the work that the IBA has in hand to make a contract for the provision of direct broadcasting by satellite services.

Secondly, there is the question of the regulation of the content of broadcast programmes. The committee suggests that broadcast services should be subject only to such regulation as is provided for all material in the general law of the land, as is the case for the print media, and that in the long term there should be no pre-publication censorship or vetting of any kind of broadcasting. Our present arrangements reflect the view that the peculiarly intrusive nature of broadcasting, and in particular television, continue to require special regulatory arrangements to ensure certain standards in broadcast services. For this reason we have broadcasting authorities to enforce controls on such matters as taste and decency in broadcasting, which are much stricter than applying to the print media, or than could easily be accommodated in the criminal law. The present regulatory regime, and the institutions to give effect to it, are certainly not sacrosanct, but the Government believe that any future arrangements should be no less effective than those now in place.

Thirdly, there are the recommendations on radio. Professor Peacock's committee recommends that the BBC should have the option to privatise radios 1, 2 and local radio in whole or in part and that the IBA regulation of radio should be replaced by a looser regime. Five of the committee's members went further and said that Radio 1 and Radio 2 should be privatised and financed by advertising and that further radio frequencies becoming available should be auctioned to the highest bidder. I have already announced my intention to publish a Green Paper looking at the existing framework for the provision and regulation of radio broadcasting as a whole. I believe that it would be helpful for this consultative document to examine further services at national, local and community level, and that the future of BBC radio services and of those provided by the IBA should be looked at in the light of the Peacock's committee's recommendations.

Fourthly, we see merit in a number of the committee's shorter-term proposals designed to pave the way for the free broadcasting market which it wishes to create, including, for example, the recommendation to increase the proportion of television programmes supplied by independent producers. The best way of achieving this will need careful consideration.

I welcome the committee's report and the many stimulating ideas that it contains. It is a challenging piece of work, as hon. Members will find when they read it. We look forward to the constructive public debate about the future of broadcasting which I am sure it will encourage.

Mr. Gerald Kaufman (Manchester, Gorton): In the jumble of evasive verbiage, one thing that the Home Secretary might have spared the House was his ritual tribute to Professor Peacock. For the past couple of weeks Mr. Bernard Ingham's character assassination machine has so single-mindedly devoted its attention to Professor Peacock that one might have thought the poor man was a member of the Cabinet. This is a particularly ungrateful attitude, considering that Professor Peacock was vice-chancellor of a university that awarded an honorary degree to the Prime Minister.

The report is a classic example of "ask a silly question and one gets a silly answer"; except that the silly answer does not even answer the silly question. The massive report cost the taxpayer £268,000. As it is a complete waste of that money, I suggest that the right hon. and learned Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Brittan) — the man who brought us not only this disaster, but those of Westland, British Leyland and the Shops Bill — should be surcharged for that amount.

Fifteen months after the Peacock committee was set up, the problem of financing the BBC remains precisely as it was on 27 March 1985. Even the Prime Minister's pet solution of advertising on the BBC has been turned down. A collection of trusties, handpicked to give the required answer, have failed to oblige. There will be a few empty places in the next honours list.

The report, in most of its recommendations, goes wildly beyond its terms of reference and seeks, arrogantly and impertinently, to restructure the whole of broadcasting — television and radio, BBC, ITV and IBA. Let me make clear the attitude of the Labour party to the main proposals. We reject the plan for BBC TV as a subscription service. That would either turn the BBC into the television equivalent of junk food, or drive it into a cultural ghetto with no guaranteed income to make plans for even the minority audiences to which it would be limited. In the end, such a system would destroy the BBC.

We reject the proposal to privatise TV during night time hours. This could introduce a completely unregulated system of television which could become a playground for pornography and violence. We reject throwing ITV franchises on to the market to go to the highest bidder. That would be to cast away the high standards achieved by many ITV companies and replace the present unsatisfactory system of awarding franchises by one that would be completely unacceptable. We reject the proposed new status for Channel 4. Why meddle with something that works brilliantly as it is?

We reject the plans for privatising and commercialising BBC, Radio 1 and Radio 2. Such a scheme would prevent the BBC from providing a full range of services catering for a wide spectrum of tastes. It would threaten the viability of many local commercial radio stations. It would, for one year only, bring in only a fraction of the revenue that the BBC needs every year.

We reject the indexing of the licence fee. Such a system would be unrelated to the BBC's financial needs, while perpetuating the present licence system as a regressive tax that bears most heavily on those on the lowest incomes. We reject the proposal for a £10 licence for car radios. Such a system would be hard to enforce, would

[Mr. Gerald Kaufman]

discriminate for no good reason against one group of radio users, and would bring in little more than a quarter of the present licence income. We are dissatisfied with the proposal for free TV licences only for pensioners on supplementary benefit. That is completely inadequate.

The report is a mess. We warned against the setting up of the committee. Our warning has been vindicated. I tell the Home Secretary plainly that it would be unacceptable for the proposals to be implemented at the tail end of the Parliament. I make it clear to the House that the forthcoming Labour Government will phase out the licence fee for all pensioners. The forthcoming Labour Government will re-examine the financing of the BBC in a way that seeks to address itself to the problem of the licence as a regressive poll tax. The forthcoming Labour Government will ensure that the BBC, as a great national institution, internationally respected, is not only preserved, but is protected from interference by Governments of any party. Meanwhile, the proper place for the report is not a pigeon hole, but a wastepaper basket.

Mr. Hurd: It will not take me long to answer the right hon. Gentleman's questions. It is not the first time that he has read too many newspapers. His analysis of the Government's reaction to the Peacock report is wide of the mark. As I have said, the analysis fits well into our philosophy. It is odd that, having attempted to protect the committee, the right hon. Gentleman piled a number of wholly unfair epithets upon it.

The announcement of policy which the right hon. Gentleman has just made, after some hours of consideration of a report which took 12 months to complete, show a deeply depressing and backward-looking approach. It shows no sign of understanding the immense range of choice which technical change will open up to the customer or the effect that it is bound to have on broadcasting. I thought that the right hon. Gentleman's approach was deeply reactionary. It will be a bleak future for broadcasting, and all the talent that it contains in this country if the right hon. Gentleman's blind and blinkered approach were ever in control.

Mr. Leon Brittan (Richmond, Yorks): Does my right hon. Friend agree that, in spite of the characteristically trivial and dinosaur-like nonsense emanating from the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman), the report amply justifies the hope that looking at the finances of the BBC would lead to radical and imaginative proposals for the future of broadcasting generally? Does my right hon. Friend also agree that although nobody would accept all the recommendations, especially some of the short-term ones, the central thrust of the proposals putting forward the concept of a BBC funded by subscription, but supplemented by an Arts Council-like body funding those programmes whose ratings alone would not keep them going, combines the highest possible degree of choice for the consumer with the central features of public service broadcasting as we have known it? Will my right hon. Friend therefore conclude that, although of course there should be full discussion of the report's details, far from being something that should be pigeonholed, the report provides a springboard for action and should not be a pretext for delay?

Mr. Hurd: My right hon. and learned Friend did a good job for British broadcasting when he set up the committee. The quality of its work justifies his faith in it. I am interested to note that my right hon. and learned Friend, like me, is personally attracted by the general philosophy that comes through in the report. Of course, we shall need time, and in some cases a good deal of time, to weigh the detailed recommendations that flow from the analysis. I hope that, despite the Opposition's dispiriting initial reaction, they will play some part — at least as individuals — in that constructive debate. We shall then be able to reach decisions on the detailed points arising from the analysis.

Mr. Clement Freud (Cambridgeshire, North-East): Does the Home Secretary accept that my right hon. and hon. Friends will thank Professor Peacock for a well-documented and well-presented report that shows that one cannot take financial considerations in isolation? Does the right hon. Gentleman accept that we welcome the rejection of advertising, that we are alarmed at the possibility of splitting Radio 1 and Radio 2 from Radio 3 and Radio 4, which might well turn the BBC into a cultural ghetto, that we are as relaxed as he is about bringing in extra controls, of which clearly there are already enough, and that we would be bemused by Professor Peacock's recognition of a Government commitment to community radio? Will the right hon. Gentleman accept that there is no connection between broadcasting costs and the retail prices index? Will he look again carefully at his decision to index the television licence in accordance with the RPI?

On the subject of free licences, which we welcome, does this mean that the Government now accept the concept of poverty or need based on cultural deprivation or need for communication? Will this be applied more generally by the Government to anti-poverty policies?

Mr. Hurd: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his comments, which I shall note with care. He is momentarily inaccurate in saying that there is some decision about the indexation of the licence fee. This is a proposal which Professor Peacock put forward. One should always be a little chary of organisations that argue that, for some God-given reason, their costs are always bound to rise substantially faster than costs as a whole. One must regard such special arguments carefully, as we know from other examples.

I should like to study the philosophical question in the last part of the hon. Gentleman's question, because I do not entirely at the moment capture its full wisdom.

Sir Paul Bryan (Boothferry): Having wisely rejected advertising on BBC, presumably on the ground that it would lead British broadcasting down the road towards the American model, is my right hon. Friend surprised that the Peacock committee advocates the auctioning of television franchises, which really leads in much the same direction? Is my right hon. Friend aware that over the next two years there will be tremendous international developments on satellites, cable television and the like, and that the ITV and BBC are already deeply involved in this? Does he agree that in the next few years they will have plenty of opportunities, and plenty of competition too?

Mr. Hurd: My hon. Friend is right on both points. I think that the committee had a bit of a tussle on its recommendation on the auctioning of future IBA contracts. A good deal of care will have to be taken. I have announced that we are in touch with the IBA, with a view

to ensuring that we do not become effectively locked into the existing system until 1998. The Government may wish to put forward changes on that front. We do not want to be debarred from taking action because the machinery has rolled on and therefore not have flexibility in 1998.

My hon. Friend is perfectly right on his second point. It is precisely the internationalisation of broadcasting through technical change that makes the next decades in broadcasting so important and exciting.

Mr. Merlyn Rees (Morley and Leeds, South): Of course there will be great changes in radio and television in the next five, 10, 15 or 20 years, and no one can deny that. Does the right hon. Gentleman understand that the committee's terms of reference were far too narrow to generate a philosophy that could encompass all those changes? I should like to follow the point raised by the hon. Member who used to represent the constituency of Howden. I am afraid that I have forgotten which constituency he now represents.

I should like a clear answer from the Home Secretary to this question. Competitive tendering will cause great changes in the IBA's role. What does the right hon. Gentleman have in mind? It is not a matter of just reading the report. The issue of competitive tendering has been around for five, 10 or 20 years, so this is not a first thought. It is worrying that the Government look with approval on this. We should like to know what the Government have in mind. What will happen to the IBA next year? The advertisements were to start next October. Is the right hon. Gentleman now saying that that will be slowed down? This will happen at the time of the general election. The IBA's role must be made clear to it. The Home Secretary gave only a brief summary of what he had in mind, and this is worrying.

Mr. Hurd: The right hon. Gentleman need not be worried. This is not the first time that an intelligent committee has leapt a little outside its terms of reference. I do not think that we should complain about that, because the result is stimulating. The right hon. Gentleman has much experience of the IBA franchise and knows that the IBA has ideas on changing the present system. There is a good deal of criticism — some of it technical and some of it more philosophical — of the way in which the present system operates. I have said that we are in touch with the IBA; that we want to avoid being locked into the existing timetable. We do not want to find that we cannot make any changes which are effective before 1998 because as the right hon. Gentleman accurately said, the machinery begins to roll in the autumn of next year. Under the existing system, new franchises will be in place by 1990 and sacrosanct until 1998. I chose my words carefully, because we have not worked out with the IBA how the timing problem will be solved. Obviously I shall need to keep the House informed.

Mr. Tim Brinton (Gravesham): Has my right hon. Friend noted that the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman), in his attempt to rubbish and deride the excellent and thoughtfully drawn up report, managed to offer a free television licence to Lord Grade? We should consider that carefully. Will my right hon. Friend consider two points of paramount importance? First, will he consider the urgent need to decide the method of allocating franchises next time, especially bearing in mind the remark by the IBA chairman that there must be a better way? Secondly, will thought, care and adequate time be given to considering television broadcasting? Will there perhaps be a Green Paper on television, as my right hon. Friend has announced a Green Paper on radio broadcasting? Does my right hon. Friend agree that we must consider the whole scope of television as well as of radio?

Mr. Hurd: I agree with my hon. Friend's first point. The Peacock committee, although admirably unpartisan in almost all its utterances, goes out of its way specifically to reject the Labour party's policy of giving £325 million to unspecified persons — that bribe to pensioners, which the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) has again confirmed today. That is specifically rejected by the committee, which offers an alternative proposal.

My hon. Friend is right to remind us of the urgent need to clarify the position of ITV franchises. Clearly that must be one of the first decisions to be made.

I note my hon. Friend's point about having a general review of television as well as of radio. I am reluctant to say yes to that today. Let us see how we get on with examining the television aspects of the Peacock report. On radio, many proposals are coming together — the IBA's proposal for an independent radio, the concern of the independent local radio about its present position, the prospect of community radio and Professor Peacock's proposals for Radio 1 and Radio 2 — and they need to be looked at together, not decided piecemeal.

Mr. Joseph Ashton (Bassetlaw): Is the Home Secretary aware that, despite the scathing criticism of the report, there is one excellent recommendation, which is that pensioners on social security — not all pensioners, who may be MPs or affluent pensioners — should get a free television licence paid for by a £10 tax on the car radio, which would mean the affluent members of society contributing to the less affluent? In my mind that is a good recommendation. Is there any chance of the Government introducing it?

Mr. Hurd: We will consider both wings of the Peacock committee's recommendations on that point. The hon. Gentleman will have to sort out his differences with his own Front Bench. I am not rejecting that line of approach totally today. However, it is costly and will require much thought to see whether anything worth while can be done.

Mr. Tim Rathbone (Lewes): Will my right hon. Friend accept that the absolute rejection of this report by the Opposition Front Bench must add credibility to the recommendations of the report, remembering, as we all do, the way in which the Labour party stood against commercial television and radio before they were launched?

My right hon. Friend will have noted that it says in the report that radio is

"'in a different category from television'. The problem of spectrum shortage is less acute and this lessens the need for detailed regulation."

Therefore, will my right hon. Friend reconsider his plans for a Green Paper on radio and turn that into a White Paper, in order to allow consumer sovereignty on radio, free speech and consumer choice locally as well as nationally and internationally, especially in community radio, which has sadly now been postponed?

Mr. Hurd: My hon. Friend is right on his first point. I fear that all those who are genuinely involved with and interested in the future of British broadcasting will have been temporarily dismayed by the outburst of the right hon. Member for Gorton and his negative tone. I note that my hon. Friend would like us to get on with the radio aspect rather more quickly, but there are different strands, which I listed in a previous answer. They have not been looked at together. One must proceed fairly steadily and with some caution, even on radio. We will try to produce a Green Paper in the autumn, and there should be a period for some discussion after that.

Mr. Jack Ashley (Stoke-on-Trent, South): Does the Home Secretary agree that the political independence of the BBC, in addition to its financial independence, is of cardinal importance for its future? Will he make a big effort to avoid being contaminated by the prejudice and hysteria that characterise the Prime Minister and the chairman of the Conservative party in their dealings with the BBC? His own reputation, no less than that of the BBC, will be on the line in the way that he deals with this report. Will he also bear in mind that the suggestion of privatising BBC1, BBC2 and local radio is fatuous and damaging to the BBC and public broadcasting as a whole?

Mr. Hurd: I note the right hon. Gentleman's second point. On his first point, when individuals or groups feel that they are aggrieved or unfairly treated on television, it is reasonable that they should make a protest. It has nothing to do with the Home Secretary or the Home Office, but it is a legitimate activity.

Mr. Ivan Lawrence (Burton): Is my right hon. Friend aware that many people are apprehensive that these changes in broadcasting could open the floodgates to even more vulgarity and morally offensive material than can be checked merely by an extension of the existing laws of obscenity? Can my right hon. Friend be a little more resolute and a little more reassuring about that aspect of the matter?

Mr. Hurd: I thought that I had been particularly resolute on that, because it was one of the four points which I thought needed to be tackled today in a statement which is, on the whole, a holding statement. I specifically said that we did not accept the analysis of the Peacock committee that there is no need for regulation going beyond the law of the land. The nature of broadcasting is such that, perhaps not indefinitely, but for the time being, such additional protection for the public is needed.

Mr. Don Dixon (Jarrow): While studying the report, will the right hon. Gentleman bear in mind that since his party was elected in 1979, 7,561 pensioners in the south Tyneside district, which I represent, have had their concessionary television licences stolen from them by his Department? Will he accept that recommendation 6 does not go far enough in exempting certain pensioners? what is required, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman), said, is a phasing out of television licences for all pensioners.

Mr. Hurd: During the lifetime of this Government we have somewhat extended the scope of the concessionary 5p licence. I am not in the least bit happy about the state of the concession. There are all sorts of borderline cases and grievances that arise out of it. I accept that. It has proved much easier to identify the difficulties than to make improvements. However, I do not think that the answer is to open the floodgates as the hon. Gentleman suggests.

Sir David Price (Eastleigh): Does my right hon. Friend accept that there is simply not enough advertising to finance the BBC, the IBA and the press? Will he also accept that direct broadcasting by satellite will become a feature of television broadcasting and that at that point we must think of our arrangements for financing television broadcasting, not purely in United Kingdom terms, but in wider international terms?

Mr. Hurd: I have always felt a little reluctant to be absolute about the total volume of advertising. Free newspapers without any particular Government encouragement or policy have sprung up and gained a great deal of advertising, which perhaps the experts would not have supposed existed. Therefore, one has to be a little cautious about that argument. My hon. Friend will notice the careful analysis of the Peacock committee on the question of advertising, not so much the volume, as the relationship between advertising and consumer choice. I entirely agree with my hon. Friend's second point and it is something that we must never forget.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): Will the Secretary of State recognise that those who are concerned to see that the new technologies allow greater choice and the retention of high standards of public service broadcasting will be dismayed by the attitude expressed by the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman), which betrayed nothing but a deep conservatism and commitment to the status quo? Will he also recognise that there is a need for a Government response to these far-reaching and imaginative proposals and that although there are some matters that need to be debated, and some that are unacceptable, it would be unacceptable if the matter were kicked into touch until after the next election. It has been widely suggested in the press that that is the Home Secretary's intention. Will the right hon. Gentleman say something about the rolling review of television franchises, which he has not mentioned, which is one of the suggestions that have been referred to?

Mr. Hurd: The Peacock report is an analysis on which is festooned a whole series of practical recommendations which have different times for decision on them — different opening times, if one can put it that way. Some of them need speedy decisions, and one of them, as the hon. Gentleman and one of my hon. Friends pointed out, is the next round of ITV licences. I accept that. How that is handled is not a matter that can be postponed indefinitely. There are other matters on which the Peacock committee puts a longer time scale, as it divides its recommendations into three stages. Therefore, I do not think that there will be a moment when the Government take decisions on the whole range of recommendations simultaneously. That is not what will happen. There will be a series of decisions. Some of them will be needed fairly soon, and some will not be needed for several years. We will take those decisions after listening to the views expressed.

Mr. Anthony Nelson (Chichester): Is it not apparent that the Peacock committee, which was set up largely because the licence fee was high and rising, has totally failed to grasp the nettle? In fact, it has recommended an

increased licence fee through indexation and significant conversion costs for every television in the land. As the licence fee is expensive, costs over £50 million a year to collect, and is inequitable, will my right hon. Friend leave open the door to introducing advertising? If there is a shortfall in the financing of the BBC, will he ensure that the cost comes from the general body of taxation, so enabling, in the course of time, the licence fee to be abolished for everybody?

Mr. Hurd: I note my hon. Friend's views. The Peacock committee looks forward to the eventual abolition of the licence fee, but not through its replacement by advertising, let alone as a call on general taxation, which I doubt any Chancellor of the Exchequer is likely to smile on as an idea. My hon. Friend's views, which I note, come out of considerable study of the matter. I am sure that he will find opportunities to develop them further when the House debates the report.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Is it not a fact that the Peacock committee, rather like the Widdicombe inquiry before it, was set up by the Government to produce evidence to support the Government's own prejudices, and that both have failed, which is why both are effectively being sidelined? Will the Home Secretary tell the House whether the Conservative party intends to drop its politically vindicative and malicious campaign against the BBC a campaign now being spearheaded by the gauleiter for Chingford? Does not the Home Secretary want to defend public service broadcasting, which is one of the finest things that we have in this country, or is he intent on still trying to get the same level of objectivity on the BBC as we see in *The Sun*, the *Daily Mail* and the *Daily Express*?

Mr. John Stokes (Halesowen and Stourbridge): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Is it in order to refer to an hon. Member as a gauleiter?

Mr. Speaker: It is an inelegant phrase.

Mr. Hurd: The BBC will not bless the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) for defending it in those terms. He does the cause in which he believes no good by acting in that way. If one appoints people of that quality to a committee, one does not do so because one knows the answers that they will come up with. That would be absurd. My right hon. and learned Friend the previous Home Secretary did not do that. The committee has not come up with an answer that will cause delight to any established interests or institutions, and probably all the better for that. It is in the good tradition of public service committees and investigations in this country.

Mr. Nigel Forman (Carshalton and Wallington): As one who has not yet had an opportunity to read the Peacock report, may I ask my right hon. Friend to summarise briefly, for the benefit of the House, the reason why the report came down against advertising? I have a feeling that I shall share that conclusion. Furthermore, does my right hon. Friend agree that if there were to be competition in future between a BBC financed by subscription and independent television financed by advertising, that would not be fair to the BBC?

Mr. Hurd: On the first point, on the whole the report agreed with the point of view of my hon. Friend the Member for Eastleigh (Sir D. Price) about the total volume of advertising. It went on to make a philosophical point, that if one were looking carefully at the way to get consumer choice, one would probably not do it through advertising, but through ways in which the consumer can directly choose and pay for what he wants. I am sorry, but I missed my hon. Friend's second point.

Mr. Forman: It was about subscription, and the unfair competition between subscription finance for the BBC and advertising finance for independent television.

Mr. Hurd: When my hon. Friend reads the report, he will see that that is treated as part of its investigation further into the future. We shall have to look carefully at the question of subscriptions and also at the sorts of measures that might be needed fairly soon to make it possible to move towards subscription; for example, the sorts of fittings that might be needed on sets.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): Is the Home Secretary aware that he has looked and sounded a very sad and forlorn figure at the Dispatch Box this afternoon? Could it be that, as the Peacock committee has not said things that the Prime Minister wanted to hear, he recognises that the Government have no broadcasting policy? Are not the Government's problems vividly illustrated by yesterday's announcement that the chairman of the Conservative party is in a bunker monitoring the broadcasting media for bias, which he defines as anything against the Conservative party, against the Government or against the Prime Minister? As the report is destined for the wastepaper basket, will the right hon. Gentleman salvage one good thing from it and give a free television licence to all pensioner households, which at least would be some compensation for the paltry way in which the Government have treated pensioners over the past few years?

Mr. Hurd: In fact, I was made considerably cheerful by the Peacock report. Any momentary gloom that may have settled on me was as a result of the ignorant and blinkered reaction that it received from the Opposition Benches. It is an excellent report. I believe that for many years to come people will look back on it as the necessary stimulus to the next stage in British broadcasting. I have already answered the other two points that the hon. Gentleman made. Individuals in groups are perfectly entitled to muster their complaints against broadcasting authorities. Many people do that. If my right hon. Friend the Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit), in his other capacity, set that in hand, there could be no possible objection to it.

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): Does my right hon. Friend not think it strange that the Labour party should so comprehensively reject the choice that subscription should bring? Does he also not think it strange that the Labour party should favour a poll tax on the poor and elderly, which is what the licence fee is? Has my right hon. Friend noticed the finding on page 87 of the report, that an overwhelming majority—69 per cent.—think that the introduction of advertising would not reduce the standards of the BBC, as well as the finding, a few pages later, that the introduction of advertising on the radio would allow radio to take a quantum leap in terms of expenditure? Does all that not add up to a substantial case for advertising to be brought in, at least on local radio, and Radio 1 and Radio 2, which are only popular programmes?

Mr. Hurd: The committee accepted that case with regard to Radio 1 and Radio 2 and, to some extent, local radio. That is one of the points that the Government and the House will want to consider.

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): Instead of setting up a limited inquiry, which was expected and supposed to pursue the Prime Minister's whims, is it not the case that what the BBC needs is the appointment of another son of a manse with the standards of Lord Reith, to jettison the competitive nonsense of breakfast television and the rubbish of local radio, and to return to the BBC's prime purpose of cultural excellence and political independence?

Mr. Tony Banks: And jobs for Andrew Faulds.

Mr. Hurd: If the hon. Gentleman is making the suggestion that I think he is, and suggesting a candidate for that post, he has many of the necessary qualifications, but I am not sure whether he has all of them.

Mr. Stokes: Is my right hon. Friend aware that our discussions this afternoon will scarcely be understood by most people in this country, whose main concern about the BBC is its utter lack of patriotism and continuing Left-wing bias? Is my right hon. Friend aware that producers are entirely out of hand and are trying to brainwash much of the population, and that no other nation or Government in the world would put up with that except ours? My right hon. Friend should do something about that.

Mr. Hurd: Parliament and the law, fortunately, have given the Home Secretary no power to intervene in the sorts of matters that disturb my hon. Friend and many of my right hon. and hon. Friends. The remedy for the aggrieved citizen or group is to gather together the facts and evidence and present them to those to whom Parliament has given responsibility — the governors of the BBC and the Independent Broadcasting Authority. My view is that the more that is done, the better.

Mr. Chris Smith (Islington, South and Finsbury): Is it not the case that the main drive of the report, despite its welcome rejection of the principle of advertising on the BBC, is to undermine the fundamental principles of public service broadcasting, with the possible introduction of large elements of commercialism, scope for deregulation and bringing in the philosophies of the market economy to BBC broadcasting? Would that not be a sad day for the principles of public broadcasting, which have served this country so well for decades?

Mr. Hurd: The report has got behind the established familiar and rather weary battle lines between public service broadcasting as the BBC knows it and those who believe that it should be done with advertising. It has moved beyond those battle lines and tried to tease out a way in which the individual can make a choice of programmes. The committee has done a good job in making that analysis.

Viscount Cranborne (Dorset, South): Does my right hon. Friend accept that many people will accept his summary of the report's recommendations and welcome them on the ground that they will strike a blow against the smugness and arrogance of so much of the BBC's domestic broadcasting, born as it is of an organisation that has its foundations in the old-fashioned 1940s corporatism, which is no doubt why the Labour Front Bench admires it so much?

Mr. Hurd: I note my hon. Friend's analysis. I had better be cautious in endorsing it.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Is the Home Secretary aware that we have got his drift that the controversial decisions in the report will be left to one side until the votes have been counted? Is he further aware that if, in the pursuit of untrammelled market forces applying to the BBC and the media generally, an ex-Home Secretary had written some serious drama in that environment, he would not have a cat in hell's chance of getting it in that media if it was subjected to those market forces, because the media would be searching for the lowest common denominator?

Mr. Hurd: If the hon. Gentleman is referring to me, I can tell him that I have already had substantial difficulty under the existing system in getting my works in the media. The hon. Gentleman will not tempt me in that way.

Mr. Roger King (Birmingham, Northfield): I congratulate the committee on producing a substantial report, which of course one cannot fully digest in the short time that it has been available. Does my right hon. Friend express any immediate regret at the fact that a more courageous step has not been taken in relation to sponsorship of many of the existing television programmes? I can see no reason why sport should not be sponsored. We would then solve the ludicrous problem that arises when we switch on television during the World Cup and see commercials and state organisations vying with each other to bring us the same pictures.

Mr. Hurd: That was certainly a mess. I agree with my hon. Friend on that point and it may lead to more interest in the line of thought that he has developed.

Mr. John Powley (Norwich, South): There are many important points in the recommendations which I welcome. However, may I draw my right hon. Friend's attention to recommendation 5 and the rather dubious recommendation of imposing a tax on those who buy motor cars, simply to subsidise the licence fee? The retail trade, of which I was a member, welcomed the abolition some years ago of the car radio licence fee, for good reasons. It would be a retrograde step to bring it back in any form. If we applied the logic of the imposition of a tax on motor vehicle purchases, why not impose a tax on the purchase of other commodities to subsidise the television licence fee?

Mr. Hurd: I note my hon. Friend's point. I am sure that many people will share that view. We will have to examine carefully the section of the report which covers the twin proposals to which my hon. Friend has referred.

Mr. Peter Griffiths (Portsmouth, North): Does my right hon. Friend agree that, whatever the merits of the long-term proposals for television, the great disappointment is that the essentially negative and blinkered attitude of the BBC has meant that there is no prospect of any early relief for my constituents and the constituents of other hon. Members who find the TV licence fee a burden? Does my right hon. Friend accept that that is evidence that those of us who divided the House over the last rise in the television licence were correct to do so and that we may be called upon to do so again?

Mr. Hurd: The report obviously does not conceal the view that the days of the BBC licence fee system are

numbered. We must all consider the analysis of the report carefully and see whether we agree with the conclusions. If we do, we should work out what steps should be taken in that direction. I am not sure how my hon. Friend would tread that path, and the Government have taken no decisions on that. However, we must first consider the analysis and then the recommendations.

Mr. Christopher Chope (Southampton, Itchen): Will my right hon. Friend thank Professor Peacock for producing a report that is far more radical than many of us had thought possible? Will he also confirm that the Labour Opposition's attitude confirms how hostile that party is to any consumer interest? Will my right hon. Friend, since he has so warmly endorsed the report's goal of making the consumer king, say when he intends to implement recommendation 1[4] for peritelevision sockets in all new television sets?

Mr. Hurd: That is one of the technical decisions to which I referred earlier. We must decide whether the technical argument is correct and whether a change in the law is needed, as the report suggests. However, my hon. Friend's basic point is correct. Over recent decades the Opposition have fallen into a trap in their contempt for the principle of consumer choice. They have shown that contempt again today.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels (Leicester, East): Does my right hon. Friend accept that £58 is far too much for what is offered on the BBC? Will he accept that we should be hearing today not that the fee will be reduced over the next two or three years, but that it will be reduced immediately? Any delay will be seen as a victory for the BBC. The programmes offered on the BBC at the moment are pretty boring, to say the least.

Encouragement should be given to promote BBC local radio. If "pay as you view" comes in—and that sounds like a good idea—very few people will want to pay anything for what the BBC is offering in the current schedules.

Mr. Hurd: My hon. Friend has given us the benefit of a wide range of his reactions to the report. He will leave the House to pick and choose among these reactions and no doubt we shall hear more about them.

Scottish Power Stations (Coalburn)

4.56 pm

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 10, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the immediate threat to the Lothian coalfield arising from the agreement between British Coal and the South of Scotland Electricity Board to cut the annual coalburn at Scottish power stations by 1·4 million tonnes."

It was announced yesterday that British Coal and the SSEB have agreed to slash the coalburn in Scottish power stations from 6·25 million tonnes last year to 3·6 million tonnes in 1987. That massive reduction in the use of coal seems likely to have disastrous consequences for Scottish mining communities, including several towns and villages in my constituency.

This situation together, with the aggravating conduct of the colliery manager at Monktonhall, means that morale in the Lothian coalfield is at an all-time low. It is worth mentioning that only a few months ago the manager at Monktonhall said that his work force was at an irreducible minimum of 950. However, this week he appears to be offering voluntary redundancies to all comers. That must raise serious doubts about the future of that pit.

The matter is specific because it relates to yesterday's agreement. It is important not only because of the threat to employment in the Lothian area, but because of the need to maintain the viability of the Scottish coalfield. There are massive coal reserves around Monktonhall and Bilston Glen, including the Musselburgh bay reserves, which are as large as those in the Selby coalfield. It would be criminal to abandon such a coalfield because of the short-term impact of cut-price oil and excess nuclear capacity in Scotland.

This matter should have urgent consideration in the House because of the refusal of the Secretary of State for Scotland yesterday to accept his responsibility to intervene to protect the long-term interests of the Scottish economy and to safeguard the employment of hundreds of miners from East Lothian, Midlothian and Edinburgh.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he thinks should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the immediate threat to the Lothian coalfield arising from the agreement between British Coal and the South of Scotland Electricity Board to cut the annual coalburn at Scottish power stations by 1·4 million tonnes."

I have listened with care to what the hon. Gentleman has said. He knows that my sole duty in considering an application under Standing Order No. 10 is to decide whether it should be given priority over the business already set down for today or for Monday. I regret that I cannot find that the matter he has raised meets all the criteria laid down in the Standing Order, and I cannot therefore submit his application to the House.

Design Drawings (AOR1)

4.58 pm

Mr. Nicholas Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, East): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 10, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the continuing delay on the part of the Ministry of Defence in sending design drawings of AOR1 to Swan Hunter."

The matter is urgent and immediate, Mr. Speaker. It was only this morning that I learnt or could have learnt that the Ministry of Defence will not release these crucial design studies until August or September. The implications of this are very serious indeed.

On 24 April the Prime Minister wrote to me about the AOR1 order and gave me an assurance that Harland's bid had been "comprehensively costed" by the Government. That "comprehensive" costing could only be based on the Harland designs. In the same letter the Prime Minister said that the Secretary of State for Defence

"prefers the Harland's tender on grounds of design."

Thus, the Prime Minister assures me that the Harland designs are being "comprehensively" reviewed prior to the placement of the AOR contract.

I learnt today from a letter sent to me by the Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement that, according to Mr. Peter Levene, these designs are still being reviewed by the MOD prior to issue to Swan Hunter. What on earth can there be to review? Surely the review was "comprehensively" carried out before the contract was placed? Certainly, Mr. Levene gave the Select Committee on Defence the clear impression that these designs were already with Swan Hunter when he gave evidence before that Committee on 15 May. He led any reader of the published minutes to believe that Swan Hunter had been given a definite price – and the designs – to enable it to bid for the AOR2. That is not the case, and Mr. Levene now admits that it is not the case. His own interpretation and apology are published today by the Select Committee.

The implications of all this are serious. Why can Harland and Wolff's designs not be made available to Swan Hunter? The Ministry of Defence must state its reasons or leave us to conclude that there is something to conceal. Are the designs incomplete or faulty in some way, or is scrutiny incomplete? The implication is obvious: whatever is incomplete now was incomplete when the AOR1 was ordered. Some 1,000 men on Tyneside have already lost their jobs because that order was placed with Harland and Wolff, and there are more redundancies to come.

The sense of injustice in the north-east is considerable. If the House is unable to discuss this matter now, may I urge the Select Committee on Defence to send for the designs and designers – in confidence, if necessary – to discover exactly what was completed and when, what remains in Harland's designs to be reviewed by the Ministry of Defence, and why?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he thinks should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the continuing delay on the part of the Ministry of Defence in sending design drawings of AOR1 to Swan Hunter."

I have listened with the greatest care to what the hon. Gentleman has said and I well understand his concern about this matter. I regret that I have to give him the same reply as I gave to his hon. Friend. I cannot say that this matter is appropriate for discussion under standing Order No. 10.

Radiation

5.2 pm

Mr. Frank Cook (Stockton, North): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 10, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the current availability of information, hitherto unpublished, which indicates high levels of radiation in grass, vegetables, animals and milk in areas of the country other than those in which animal movements and slaughter have recently been restricted."

My time is short so I shall be brief. The subject is complex, but I shall try to be clear and to the point. The statistics displayed in this copious report of 50 closely typed pages are almost guaranteed to create anxiety, but I seek merely to alert, rather than to alarm, the House generally and the country at large.

The matter is specific because it relates to the publication by the Welsh Office of statistics relating to grass, cauliflower, cabbage and other vegetables and to yogurt, milk and meat from cows, sheep and goats which display levels of radiation in some areas of England that are far higher than the radiation levels displayed in similar commodities during the same period in Scotland, Wales and Cumbria where controls have been imposed on slaughter and movement of animals.

The matter is important because these statistics display a situation — admittedly over a limited period — which must be improved. Although the sampling was random, indications in sheeps' milk should have provoked a much more searching investigation over that time.

The matter is urgent because the statistics clearly display our lack of readiness for events caused by Chernobyl and its aftermath and show the need for a much more careful programme of preparation for the public.

We readily prepare for death and sickness in war. Surely, for pity's sake, we should be allowed the opportunity to discuss the preparations for life and health during peace.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he thinks should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the current availability of information, hitherto unpublished, which indicates high levels of radiation in grass, vegetables, animals and milk in areas of the country other than those in which animal movements and slaughter have recently been restricted."

Again, I have to give the hon. Member the same answer as I have given to other hon. Members. I regret that I do not consider the matter that he has raised as appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 10, and I cannot submit his application to the House.

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY DOCUMENTS

Ordered,

That the draft proposals by the Commission of the European Communities on sugar from French Overseas Departments and on sugar from African, Caribbean and Pacific States described in the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food's unnumbered Explanatory Memoranda dated 24th June 1986 and 14th May 1986 be referred to a Standing Committee on European Community Documents. —*[Mr. Sainsbury.]*

Public Accounts

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That this House takes note of the 26th to 38th Reports from the Committee of Public Accounts of Session 1984-85, of the 1st to 14th and 16th to 18th Reports of Session 1985-86 and of the Treasury Minutes on those Reports (Cmnd. 9696, 9743, 9755, 9776 and 9808), with particular reference to the following Reports:

1984-85:	28th	The torpedo programme
1985-86:	1st	Role and responsibilities of nominee directors
	3rd	Sale of Government shareholding in British Telecommunications plc
	8th	Nexos
	11th	Proposed Defence School of Music
	14th	Nursing Manpower — *[Mr. Norman Lamont.]*

5.6 pm

Mr. Robert Sheldon (Ashton-under-Lyne): The last debate that we had on the Public Accounts Committee report was in October 1985. It was unusual to have that debate so late in the year. The reason was that we had an extra report that merited special consideration, the De Lorean report, on which we took evidence at much greater length than we normally do.

We come to this debate with fewer reports before us — only 30 as opposed to 51 last time. I assure the House that our enthusiasm has not abated; it is just that the time interval has changed. We had seven replies from the Treasury and we have put before the House six special reports for consideration. Those should form the basis of our debate; but, of course, that does not preclude any hon. Member — and it certainly does not preclude me — from dealing with any of the other matters that we have debated during the year and which form the basis of our further reports.

My first pleasant duty is to thank my fellow members of the Committee. Their assiduity is quite remarkable. I note the presence of the hon. Member for Scarborough (Sir M. Shaw), my hon. Friends the Members for Walthamstow (Mr. Deakins), and for Coventry, North-East (Mr. Park), the hon. Members for Horsham (Sir P. Hordern) and for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Latham) and other members of the committee. They all played a prominent part in the work of the Committee during the year. The task used to be largely delegated to the Chairman, who did all the work while the other members used to come in from time to time. I am happy to say that that no longer applies. The members of the Committee do an immense amount of reading and put many questions to the witnesses that no one person would find it within his capacity to ask.

We had an increasingly busy programme with much hard work and good questioning. I have great pleasure in welcoming to the Committee the Financial Secretary to the Treasury. He has a standing invitation to come to the Committee when he has the time. We do not expect him to be a regular attender, but he is welcome to come before us. We also welcome him to his new post. We were pleased to hear of his appointment.

The Financial Secretary and the Committee have many things in common. It is for all of us to make sure that we get value for money in Government expenditure. Our duty is to ensure that when Parliament votes money for any purpose, that money goes to the persons and to the projects for which it is intended, and that the work is

[Mr. Robert Sheldon]

carried out in an economic, efficient and effective manner. There have been a number of instances of that scrutiny, and I shall speak about them in due course.

It is a great pleasure to offer the thanks and gratitude of the Committee to the Comptroller and Auditor General and to the National Audit Office. Their role continues to develop and expand, and the Knight report dealt with some of those matters. We note that the move to the new premises will take place later this year, and we look forward to seeing the development and work of the Comptroller and Auditor General and the National Audit Office.

Before speaking about one or two aspects of that, I should like to thank the Treasury Officer of Accounts, Mr. Judd, the Clerk to the Committee, Mr. Rose, and the Accounting Officers and other witnesses who come before us. We know full well the enormous demands on their time that attendance before the Committee necessitates. We are aware that they devote themselves to briefing sessions before coming before us to enable them to answer most of our questions — some of which surprise even us. The questions are relevant and important and it is right that the Accounting Officers should treat them seriously.

We have expressed concern about the wastage rates at the National Audit Office. It costs a lot of money to train the accountants who work in that office. There are some difficulties in recruiting the correct number of staff of the right quality. The recruitment policy has altered. Many of the staff are recruited directly into the office rather than through the Civil Service machinery. That was a good move and there has been a marked improvement in the quality of the staff. Wastage also concerns the relationship between the certification procedures and getting value for money.

Certification work ensures that money goes to the right places and that it is properly accounted for. That is important. There are many countries in which fraud and corruption are regarded as inevitable. The detection of such fraud must be the first call upon the work of the National Audit Office. Once a number of people in a particular Department regard it as normal to undertake certain actions and procedures, whereby some of the money disappears, demoralisation subsequently occurs and it is difficult to reassert the standards and procedures of incorruptibility. It has been our great privilege to enjoy and take almost for granted that incorruptibility. However, we can never take that for granted, and neither can the National Audit Office. We are rightly proud of our standards, but we recognise that there is a greater challenge to them now than in the past because of problems within the Civil Service relating to pay and so on. Indeed, there is a certain amount of demoralisation. We must not underestimate that; but neither should we exaggerate it. Such demoralisation can have an influence upon incorruptibility.

Mr. Michael Latham (Rutland and Melton): Will the right hon. Gentleman confirm that the work that is undertaken by the Public Accounts Committee is by no means theoretical or inherited from Gladstone? Within this Parliament we have had to address ourselves to and report upon specific examples of corruption.

Mr. Sheldon: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman, because his work is notorious in the Committee. He does his work with great assiduity, and I express my indebtedness to him. The hon. Gentleman is correct. There were one or two cases, especially in the Property Services Agency, where incorruptibility had not been accorded the importance that we attach to it. We have made it clear that public money is not the same as private money. If a certain amount of corruption occurs in the private sector we may deplore and condemn it as much as we like, but it is different when it occurs in the public sector. When we raise money through taxation, taxpayers have a right to expect that that money will be used for the purposes that Parliament intends. The money may not go efficiently or effectively, but at least it should go for those purposes and not be used to line someone's pocket. That must always be our highest priority.

We aim to get value for money, and that is also an important priority. We hoped that there would be a 50:50 split between the work of the National Audit Office in getting value for money and the undertaking of certification procedures. We thought it was possible to get such a split. Unfortunately, because resources have not been available and because the expansion in the work and staffing of the National Audit Office has not occurred as quickly as we hoped, there is now a one third to two thirds relationship. Two thirds of the work ensures that the money goes for the purposes intended by Parliament and one third of the work ensures that value for money is achieved. We must get a 50:50 basis. To do that we must have the staff we require, and we must retain them.

That brings me to the question of pay. The National Audit Office must have pay scales to enable it to compete successfully with other employers. There is a great deal of wastage. We are aware that a number of people in the National Audit Office have been tempted to the private sector. In a sense, that is a tribute to the work of the office. It is within the recollection of the hon. Members for Scarborough and for Horsham and my hon. Friend the Member for Walthamstow that, at one time, there was no such wastage because the staff were not required by private accountancy firms. It is a mark of the quality of the people in the National Audit Office that they are actively sought by private firms. We discussed all these matters in our report and concluded that the estimates for the National Audit Office were realistic and we believe strongly that they represent good value for taxpayers' money. That is vital.

The Committee has a considerable impact upon those Departments which are called before it. We do not throw our weight around and our task is to improve the standards of administration and the effectiveness of operations. We do not study the policies—it is not for us to decide that — but once a policy has been announced it is for us to ensure that the money goes for the right purposes and that that is done in an economic, effective and efficient manner. Frequently a concession is made to our expected line of questioning even before the Department's accounting officer comes to Room 16 in the Upper Committee Corridor, where we meet every Monday and Wednesday.

An example of such a concession occurred when the Committee decided to examine the charges to private patients in National Health Service hospitals. The Department of Health and Social Security stated that it was commissioning a report to examine these charges and that it would present it to the Committee. The Department had dealt with the matter before our investigations began.

We do not complain of that. To a certain extent, the Department has shot our fox. However, we are not in the business of chasing particular Departments but we are interested in results. We look forward to that report meeting some of the criticisms that we have made in our examination of the matter.

How should we evaluate the effectiveness of the work which is carried out by the Departments we investigate? We have a very simple procedure—it is the easiest task in the world: we ask the Department what it is trying to achieve and whether, at the end, it has achieved it. We compare expectation with the outcome; but the work of producing that outcome is more complicated. At the beginning of any programme we want the objectives—the estimates and the financial expectations—set out in some detail. At the same time, we want to ensure that a monitoring exercise is established so the Department can judge how a programme is proceeding. If matters do not turn out as planned, we have the earliest possible warning. As a result of this method, the Committee should be able to compare the performance with the objective. In that way we are able to evaluate the success or otherwise of the programme.

In some cases none of that was implemented for schemes costing many millions of pounds. The classic case is of premature retirement in the National Health Service which we debated last year. There was no clear objective for the number of people who were expected to retire prematurely, and no means of monitoring the number of those retiring. At the end of the day we could not establish how many people had retired prematurely and at what cost. That is a case history of how not to proceed. In the effective grapevine that operates throughout Whitehall the message about these types of assessments and an understanding about what we are seeking to achieve gets through. We are grateful that people with responsibilities understand how we operate and try to accommodate us accordingly.

We have 30 reports and seven replies, and we have selected six because they show some of the more interesting and important lessons that we can best learn and some of the things that went seriously wrong. I shall deal first with the 28th report of the Committee in the 1984-85 Session on the torpedo programme. Some hon. Members, including the hon. Members for Horsham and for Scarborough—indeed, they are my hon. Friends—have lived with this problem for many years. There is also my hon. Friend the Member for Fife, Central (Mr. Hamilton), who is no longer a member of the Committee but who has had long experience of these matters and is as dissatisfied and disgruntled as anybody can be at the progress of this weapon system.

Mr. Peter Griffiths (Portsmouth, North): The right hon. Gentleman turned away as he made the last part of his comment, but I understood him to say that the hon. Member for Fife, Central (Mr. Hamilton) was "as disgruntled as we are." If that is so, I take the strongest exception. The report refers to historical circumstances, and other hon. Members have had long and close associations with the torpedo programme and would take a different view of the present position from that of the report.

Mr. Sheldon: It would be difficult to deny my feelings of disgruntlement at the expenditure of £5,000 million over the past 20 years. I shall come later to the fact that there are signs of some improvement.

Mr. George Park (Coventry, North-East): The hon. Member for Portsmouth, North (Mr. Griffiths) talked about disgruntlement. Why should we not be disgruntled, having spent millions on torpedoes which do not work?

Mr. Sheldon: I shall deal with some of these points later.

The torpedo programme is one of the most important matters that has come before the Committee this year. There are three types of torpedo. The heavyweight torpedo is the major armament of our submarine forces, and it is important for their effectiveness that the weapon be successfully brought into use and integrated into the total underwater weapon system. The lightweight torpedo is the main anti-submarine weapon of ships, aircraft and helicopters, and substantial resources are involved in its development and production. The total estimated costs to the middle of the 1990s of the present three major programmes—the Mark 24 Tigerfish, Sting Ray and Spearfish torpedoes—is more than £5,000 million at constant 1984 prices. We are spending about double that on Trident. Great claims are being made for Trident. Can anything remotely like those claims be made for torpedoes? What do we get for the expenditure of these large sums? The Committee and previous Committees over many years have been concerned about problems associated with torpedo development. They were last considered by our predecessors in 1980, and we welcomed their report as a basis for taking evidence from the Ministry of Defence on the report of the Comptroller and Auditor General.

The Mark 24 Tigerfish development began in 1959 and was eventually taken over by Marconi. When it first began it was expected that it would come into service in 1967, but due to development and engineering problems a limited version with much less capability than that which had been anticipated came into service in 1974 and received fleet weapon acceptance only in 1979, 20 years after the development began. The improved version has been developed since 1972 by Marconi, acting as the principal contractor for production, and it, too, has encountered technical and managerial problems. There were four Ministry of Defence investigations between 1969 and 1982 into the problems. At that time no one person was in charge of the total weapon system. There was no prime contractor to draw the weapon system together in the industry and there were problems in the relationships between the different authorities in the Ministry of Defence, the Navy and industry.

The lightweight Sting Ray was unsuccessful and abandoned by the MOD. Subsequently, they have placed contracts with Marconi for the development and production of a Sting Ray lightweight torpedo. It successfully entered service with the Royal Navy and the Royal Air Force in 1983 on time and within costs. The project is now in the difficult transitional stage between development and production. We questioned the Ministry of Defence about the sense of proceeding with a substantial main production order before all the problems had been solved. The MOD told us that the problems were not serious, that comparatively simple and cheap solutions had been identified, that the problems could be overcome,

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and that the contract work was to be at a fixed price, so that it would not pay for the contractor's problems. The Committee welcomed the initiative on the Sting Ray. If there are any problems in introducing that weapon, the MOD will not pay for them, but the contractor.

The Spearfish is a heavyweight torpedo which is to supersede the Tigerfish. Its development was authorised in February 1980. The MOD told the Comptroller and Auditor General that current progress on development was generally on schedule, although there had been problems. It did not feel able to assure us that it would arrive on time.

We are happier now that there is to be some competition at sub-contractor level and that there is to be prime contractorship. When Mr. Levene told us about that, we welcomed it and found it encouraging. However, we must set out the context in which this has developed. Paragraph 10 of our report states:

"We note MOD's assurances concerning the progress made with Sting Ray and Spearfish including the use of fixed price contracts to contain costs, and that Tigerfish is now expected to be a usable weapon. However Tigerfish has been under development for more than 25 years and has cost about £1 billion at constant 1984 prices; further sums in excess of £800 million had been spent up to 31 March 1984 on Sting Ray and Spearfish, neither of which is yet in full production. Taking into account also the earlier torpedo development failures, we are dismayed"—

that is about as strong as the PAC gets—

"at the poor value for money which has been obtained in the past from the surprisingly large resources invested in torpedo development."

We thought it right to put our feelings about the matter clearly on the record.

We know about the improvements in prime contractorship where one person and one firm will be responsible. The Ministry of Defence told us that many of the past problems with torpedo development had stemmed from the lack of a prime contractor with responsibility for the entire weapons system rather than the committees and the interchange of views which took place before. The Ministry said that in future it intended to deal with industry on a commercial basis and that it must try to ensure that the monopoly supplier acted as the prime contractor with the sort of responsibility which should have been established from the beginning of this sorry tale.

The Ministry of Defence also told us that, although there was no alternative to a monopoly supplier, its intention was that competition should be exercised at the sub-contractor level. That is sensible and it impressed us. We still await the results of that decision, but the way in which it was set out made sense to the Committee. We look forward to examining the progress of those matters in due course.

No one can doubt that the money we spent on that weapons system has been wholly disproportionate to the value even if it had been successful. We considered the possibility of international collaboration on components and modifications, on partial systems, and on a complete new weapons system. We also considered the United States in this context. We are disappointed at the lack of progress on international collaboration and on overseas sales and we look forward to improvements.

Mr. Nicholas Soames (Crawley): In congratulating the right hon. Gentleman and his Committee on the extraordinarily great service that they have rendered to the House in drawing its attention to what is, by anyone's standards, one of the greatest procurement scandals of the century, may I ask him whether he believes that, as it is so difficult for the House properly to supervise the spending of public funds in the Ministry of Defence, bearing in mind the £8·5 billion that is being spent on procurement this year and the 100,000 extant contracts, an annual procurement report in the fullest detail should be made available to his Committee and then to the House so that he and, later other hon. Members, may have a better chance of supervising the stewardship of those funds?

Mr. Sheldon: The Committee in the previous Parliament did not have the benefit of the National Audit Office which we now have. The standards of the reports that it produces have improved enormously. The report used to be based upon the appropriations accounts. It was necessarily rather brief and did not go into all the details. It was compiled by a body which did not have the confidence of possessing the expertise of the National Audit Office. It is now generally recognised throughout Whitehall, London and the United Kingdom that the National Audit Office has an understanding of those problems which is generally accepted in the auditing world. It deals with the problems with much greater confidence. Our relationship with the National Audit Office is close and continuing. We are building confidences across those areas. The hon. Gentleman is right. We shall be returning to those problems regularly. We have the procedures to do that.

Mr. Eric Deakins (Walthamstow): Is not the answer to the important point made by the hon. Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames) that by picking out, through the National Audit Office, some substantial contracts where things have gone wrong we and the Ministry together could learn lessons which could be applied over the entire range of much smaller contracts? We are concerned about principles rather than with analysing every contract in detail. There, the National Audit Office and the Public Accounts Committee could do a valuable job for the Ministry of Defence and possibly for other Departments which procure resources from outside.

Mr. Sheldon: My hon. Friend is right. Lessons in procurement have been learnt by the National Audit Office and the PAC and they are being learnt by the Ministry of Defence. The relationship between a body which meets twice a week to discuss and examine those matters will bring to bear upon those responsible the outcome which we seek.

We take keenly and strongly our responsibilities in those matters. We shall pursue them not only in this area but, as my hon. Friend the Member for Walthamstow suggested, in other areas.

The first report of the Public Accounts Committee in 1985-86 examined the role and responsibilities of nominee directors. The report stemmed from our report and examination of the De Lorean fiasco. We discovered that the nominee directors of De Lorean were by no means mainly responsible for its disaster. We also discovered that this area had not been examined sufficiently. We considered how the monitoring of the De Lorean venture had proceeded.

Paragraph 72 of our 25th report in Session 1983-84 which dealt with financial assistance to De Lorean Motor Cars Limited, stated:

"The objective of monitoring was to see that the public funds invested in the project were applied prudently and in accordance with the master agreement and the nominee directors . . . were one important means of achieving this. NIDA therefore had a responsibility to ensure that its nominees were of the calibre necessary to discharge, amongst other duties, the task of representing the taxpayers' interests to highly professional directors, who were unlikely to be accustomed to the constraints of public accountability."

Of course, we had De Lorean himself in mind.

The report continued by saying that the Northern Ireland Development Agency had a responsibility to insist that the De Lorean companies

"briefed the nominees so that they would be able to participate fully in decision-making. It is our view that NIDA did not effectively meet these responsibilities in that the nominee directors failed to recognise that certain courses of action proposed by Mr. De Lorean and his colleagues were not in the best interests of either DMCL or the taxpayer. The acquiescence of the nominee directors in DMCL's funding of the total cost of development of the car, and in the making of interest-free loans to DMC"—

the American branch of the De Lorean company—

"are examples of this. NIDA also failed to secure for its nominees the service which they were entitled to expect as members of the Board. The habit of changing the dates of Board meetings and the failure to supply papers in advance are examples of what has been described to us as 'absolutely unacceptable practice'."

That was the start of it. We started to consider how many nominee directors we have. How many do we appoint? What are their terms of reference and what is their purpose? In the public sector, we discovered that the term "nominee director" is confined to those cases where the appointment of a director is arranged by a Government Department or a non-departmental public body. That is how they are defined in the Treasury memorandum for which we asked, once we decided that there was a person such as a nominee director about whose tasks and responsibilities we were unclear.

We received a Treasury memorandum which stated that nominee directors were appointed to help Departments. The definition of their work was

"to safeguard strategic interests, to protect the Government's financial interest in a company, and to provide an independent view of the quality and performance of the company's Board."

We were disturbed to learn that no written guidance was available for nominee directors before August 1984 when we took up the matter. However, we were not satisfied that the written guidance issued by the Treasury took full account of our concern about nominee directors, as expressed in our report on the De Lorean venture:

"The main problem is that the August 1984 guidance note was expressed in such general terms."

Today, I received the latest guidance note, which I have not had time to read. It contains an elaboration, and is a recognition, of the importance of the point that we made in the report.

The report continues to discuss the tasks of the nominee directors:

"We consider it important for regular reports to be made on the progress and financial position of investee companies"—

companies in which the Government and the company have invested—

"including the security of the public funds invested. We were therefore surprised to learn of the relaxed, informal arrangements for nominee directors to report back to Departments and NDPBs — with only WDA apparently requiring their appointees to submit written reports."

Of course, there can be advantages in informal talks with nominee directors, but these should be supplemented by written reports which provide an accurate basis for understanding how the company is proceeding, and how the interests of the Government and taxpayer are being protected.

The four non-departmental public bodies — the Scottish Development Agency, the Highlands and Islands Development Board, the Welsh Development Agency and the British Technology Group — have appointed more than 100 nominee directors. We examined their purpose. They did not do their work in the De Lorean case, and until the De Lorean report there was no written guidance.

There will now be much more developed written guidance, and I look forward to seeing how far it meets the points and the criticisms that we raised in our report. For example, we recommended audit committees, wholly or mainly non-executive, which are required under Canadian law, and for companies listed on the New York stock exchange.

We recognise the helpful attitude of the Treasury in the formation of the new guidance rules, although the answer to our third report was not quite so helpful.

Mr. Deakins: Does my right hon. Friend agree that an important issue of principle has not yet been resolved, and, I suspect, it has not been resolved in the new guidance? It is the conflict of loyalty of nominee directors between the firm to which he or she has been appointed and the agency which has nominated them. It is not only a conflict of loyalty; it is a legal conflict. The advice that we received in our earlier investigations from the Treasury, the Solicitor-General and the Attorney-General was that nominee directors are under a legal obligation to the firms on whose boards they sit. Confidential information is sometimes presented to a board of directors, and the organisation that appointed the nominee directors may feel that their legal obligation as directors prevents them from adequately fulfilling their monitoring functions. The Committee may need to reconsider that point later.

Mr. Sheldon: We examined the issue and understood that there could be a conflict in some cases. We also understood that there may be a problem as to how far nominee directors deal with a supporting body. But within those limitations, much more could be done, as the Treasury note suggested. We look forward to the written reports, bearing in mind the limitations, but if some of the limitations seem excessive we shall not have an opportunity to see that until we have read the new guidance notes. We may wish to return to them because they are very important.

I was about to discuss our third report, entitled "Sale of Government Shareholding in British Telecommunications plc" in Session 1985-86. Our concern was the way in which BT had been privatised. In our 17th report of 1983-84, we recommended a review of the arrangements to minimise the risk of future sales which have allowed large profits to be made at taxpayers' expense. We suggested that the need for underwriting the new issues should be kept under review, especially in cases where the share price was set at a level intended to offer a firm prospect of full take-up of the shares. We accepted the measures that were taken to get proper advice on the

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price at which the shares would be put on the market, but we warned against the exceptionally heavy reliance on merchant bank advisers who would have an underwriting interest in the sale. This was a serious matter as so much of the advice came from underwriters who were involved in the sale and who had specific interests in it.

In 1981, the telecommunications business of the Post Office was transferred to the new British Telecommunications. It was considered that the management of BT's business could be conducted more efficiently outside the public sector. The sale of the shares was to be undertaken in accordance with the Government's policy to reduce the size of the public sector. The Department of Trade and Industry had three main objectives in organising the sale: successfully transferring the company to the private sector, maximising the net sale proceeds, and achieving wider share ownership.

In preparing for the sale, the corporation's main accounts up to 31 March 1983 were prepared under the historic cost convention. The auditors had informed the Department of Trade and Industry that they agreed that the changes in the basis of the valuation of the company were necessary to reflect fairly the state of the business and its results. The corporation's accounts stated that if the revised accounting bases had been effective in 1982-83 the profits for that year would not have been £365 million, which were the announced profits, but £1,031 million.

We had no objection to the revision of the figures, which we understood would bring the accounts into line with methods in the private sector, but it is a pity that the changes had to be made. If the revision was necessary, that fact should have been clearly understood from the beginning. I shall return later to how we can ensure that private and public sector valuations remain in line, or could be brought into line.

The main options considered for the sale were a single offer or phased sales in two or more tranches by either fixed price or tender. Convertible loan stock was considered, although I shall not discuss that now. The phased sale was rejected when the feasibility of selling shares by single offer was established. On 16 November 1984, Kleinwort Benson, acting on behalf of the Secretary of State, offered for sale shares representing slightly more than 50 per cent. of the company's ordinary equity.

The report comments on the rates of commission. They were high and covered not only the functions performed in the United Kingdom by the underwriters and sub-underwriters, but the selling role in relation to individual investors. Having seen the costs and results of the overseas sales, the Department of Trade and Industry agreed that for future flotations it would consider whether to place shares overseas case by case and in the light of the size of the issue. That is absolutely right.

We go on to say that when one comes to restructuring the accounts of any nationalised industry, or public body, that is due to be sold on the market, if the nationalised industry finds it necessary to change its accounting policies on privatisation, this raises questions about the basis on which it prepares its accounts. There should be a proper comparable basis. We regard this as important, and we say so in paragraph 24. We regard it as the appropriate provision for asset replacement, and we intend to return to the matter in due course.

We recommend — this owes very much to the hon. Member for Horsham, whose expertise, interest and involvement we very much appreciate — that further consideration be given to the phasing of sales. When I had the honour and privilege of being Financial Secretary to the Treasury, I did what I assume the right hon. Gentleman himself is doing or will do: I took a very close interest in the price at which one sells gilts in the market. I used to make the trip to the City to ensure that the 1 per cent. or whatever it was the finest rate that one could get. After all, we have responsibilities to the taxpayer, and it is up to us to get the highest price possible for the debt that we are selling.

Over the past few years, the amount of Government debt sold has been between £4 billion and £10 billion a year. When one was talking about privatisation involving, say, £100 million, or £50 million, one got the price a bit wrong it was a pity, but it was not serious. We are now talking about privatising to the extent of £5,000 billion a year, in the same area as the amount that one gets for gilts. The rules, the close interest and the disciplines that we have established over many years for making sure that the taxpayer gets the last penny one can devise for the sale of one's gilts now has to be applied — in slightly different circumstances, no one can deny that, but the principle must be to get the highest possible price for the taxpayer. When we are talking about broadly comparable amounts of money, that must be one of the most important aspects of the sale of our assets.

In the two previous reports, we wanted to review the arrangements to minimise the risk of large profits at the taxpayer's expense and make sure that merchant bank advisers with an underwriting interest did not get too much out of the sale, and we wanted to examine the need to underwrite these new issues. We felt that the commission rates were set too high. The proceeds of sale amount to £3·863 million, and we do not think that sufficient consideration has been given even now to the phasing of the sales. This is wrong. Why do we have to sell it all so quickly, as if we are selling uncertain fruit on a Saturday night in the open market? We have time.

People can understand the Government's intentions if they phase it and sell off a tranche at a certain price with the understanding, which can be unequivocal, that they will be selling off the rest in due course. If one gets the price a little wrong, there is still time to sell more. When one sells gilts, one does not unload them all on 1 January; one takes one's time, one sizes up the markets and one introduces the securities at certain times for certain amounts in different ways in order to get the maximum amount possible for the taxpayer. I am obviously against selling these off, as the House knows, but that is not the point that we are dealing with here. We are dealing with the need to ensure that the taxpayer gets the maximum benefit from the sale.

We have questioned in the report the allocation of shares to certain financial institutions. There is much more to be looked at here. There was money available to the taxpayer that the taxpayer did not receive. These are serious matters, and I hope that they will have the serious attention of the Minister when he replies.

I deal next with Nexos. This company was set up by the National Enterprise Board in 1979. It was part of the British Technology Group, and was set up in January of 1979 to develop a market and office system based on word processors, facsimile machines and voice systems. In 1981 the NEB decided to wind down the company. It was finally

put into liquidation in May 1983 with a then estimated loss of about £31 million. An investigation was undertaken by the Department of Trade and Industry. We took evidence on the report in July 1985. We have had a great deal of help from some hon. Members regarding the operations in the company, and I certainly have been grateful for the elaboration of some of the matters that I have received from the Department of Trade and Industry.

The NEB had a strategy for the office equipment industry. It thought that it would develop and produce key elements for office systems of the future. This was at a time when the NEB was a vigorous body receiving Government funds and hoped to establish a new company to take over the marketing and support of office machinery products and to co-ordinate them. However, between then and the subsequent failure, there was a change of Government. The new Government obviously were not quite so enthusiastic about the work of the NEB, and there were resignations from the NEB and a lack of direction at the change-over from which certain problems resulted.

The NEB was going to take a minority shareholding in the company. Between 1979 and 1980 it discovered that the facsimile machines and word processors were relatively inadequate and obsolete, and there was a major shift of emphasis from selling existing products to the development of new ones. It decided to expand at the wrong time, just when there was a lack of interest in this area both by the Government and within the industry. It hoped to make these new products available for sale by July 1980. It had various other schemes in mind. It commissioned a number of feasibility and design studies, and it had other development projects. At the end of 1979—it could not have been a worse time—it started a rapid build-up of a large sales and marketing operations for all these new products.

The investigation that came at the end of it all—I will not go into details, which I am sure will be dealt with by the hon. Member for Amber Valley (Mr. Oppenheim), who has been very helpful—concluded that the principal reason for the failure of Nexos was that its management tried to do too much too quickly, creating a much larger organisation with higher outgoings than was justified either by sales or by the amount of approved funding by the NEB. The comment was made that Nexos had embarked on a business plan which was critically dependent on the early market success of just one product, its word processor, but had failed to recognise and plan for the possibility of unforseen delay in the development of that project, and there was delay. As anybody in this rapidly expanding and growing industry knows, delay in the marketing of such articles can be fatal.

While the Department of Trade and Industry was considering the October 1980 application to increase Nexos funding to £35 million — it was awaiting the outcome of the board's effort to attract private sector finance — the company was provided with drip-feed funding, the worse kind of funding, enough to keep hopes alive but not enough to make the company change the plans to something more realistic.

The Committee went on to say:

"There is little doubt that the decision to drip-feed Nexos undermined potential customer confidence in the company. It was unfortunate therefore that the DTI took so long to reach a final decision on whether to provide the additional funding up to the level requested by Nexos . . . it was now clear from events that the Board's monitoring of Nexos was unsatisfactory. Given the drastic changes in the NEB Board over the period of the Nexos investment — four chairmen and three chief executives with an entirely new Board of Directors from November 1979"

few things can be worse than that for a company—

"and taking account of NEB's other, more important tasks — the rescue operations for British Leyland and other companies—the Department though that the NEB's failure to monitor adequately what was happening in Nexos, though not excusable, was understandable."

The Committee added that there was a loss of confidence within the NEB with the high turnover of staff.

Thus the Committee emphasised its concern and was obliged to ask the Department of Trade and Industry to carry out an investigation into Nexos. Although the prime responsibility of the Comptroller and Auditor General is to audit public expenditure, he has no right to look at the accounting and other records of Nexos or the NEB. That is quite unsatisfactory. We took the view that when public funds have been misused Parliament has the right to expect the Comptroller and Auditor General to undertake direct investigations. He should not investigate at second or third hand, but should undertake direct investigations, and report his findings. We said that bodies that are in receipt of public funds must be accountable to Parliament, through examination by the Comptroller and Auditor General.

The PAC would not always want to look at the detailed accounts. The Comptroller and Auditor General should have that power. He represents Parliament and is a servant of Parliament. He was not before, but he is a servant now, as a result of the National Audit Act 1983. As a servant of Parliament, we should afford him the power to ensure that what drips through those various other bodies and organisations is less diluted than it is at present.

I turn to the 11th report of the PAC concerning the proposed defence school of music. From time to time, the subject has caused a certain amount of amusement. I am sorry that the hon. Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel) is not with us because, as Chairman of the PAC, I accorded him a rather special place of privilege when we took evidence. I placed him so that he had an excellent view of the proceedings, and ensured that he was equipped with all the documentation that he required. I think that he was duly appreciative of that, and I know that he would have dearly wished to take part in this debate.

There are 80 bands in the three Armed Services, and they employ 2,600 people. The Ministry of Defence had planned to move the Royal Marine school of music to Eastney, near Southampton, in 1987-88——

Mr. Michael Hancock (Portsmouth, South): Portsmouth.

Mr. Sheldon: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for that information.

There is also the Army junior school of music at Kneller hall, Twickenham, in the constituency of the hon. Member for Twickenham. Adult musicians are trained at the RAF's music centre in Uxbridge, where advanced training is also carried out. The cost of running those three schools of music was about £2·9 million. In December 1981 the Ministry of Defence started an investigation into the Service schools. It wanted to see whether it could obtain better value for money through rationalisation and privatisation. I must admit that I never quite understood that. The study group on musician training reported in

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March 1982 that all the accommodation and facilities associated with it at Deal and Kneller hall were substantially under-utilised.

In 1982, the Ministry of Defence commissioned a study group to look into the various options in order to assess music training and facilities required. Out of three potential sites — Deal, Kneller hall and Eastney — the study group concluded that Eastney was the best option on the basis of cost and the availability of accommodation. In March 1983 the Ministry agreed to the establishment of a defence school of music and asked the study group to prepare plans for the building structure and the courses to be provided, and to cost the three options. Deal was not included, because the married quarters were likely to be insufficient. Eastney was found to be the only suitable site. Kneller hall was considered to be too small, with the cost being too high, and there was also a shortage of married quarters in the area.

In December 1983, it was decided that a defence school should be established at Eastney. In the same month, the Secretary of State endorsed the establishment of a defence school of music, but asked that other locations should be considered, preferably north of Birmingham. The Redford infantry barracks in Edinburgh were considered a possible site, and that was included in subsequently costings. Later, Deal was included as a possible location, following representations by the right hon. and learned Member for Dover (Mr. Rees). At that time, he was Chief Secretary to the Treasury. That raises several questions, but I shall not go into them now.

A report on the cost comparisons between Deal — which had now come into the picture — Eastney and Redford in May 1984 showed that Eastney was still the cheapest option and that Redford was the most expensive. Subsequent work showed that the cost of providing additional married quarters for a defence school of music, and consequently for the RAF, could make the building of the school at Deal significantly the most expensive choice. Ministers concluded that the cost comparisons should be regarded only as "indicative" of the order of ranking rather than as reliable guides to precise costs. They thought that wider issues had to be considered, including the levels of unemployment in the three areas. Having taken account of all such factors, the Secretary of State decided to locate the defence school of music at Deal.

However, having looked at the financial evidence available at the time, the accounting officer with responsibility to the House felt obliged to tell the Secretary of State that the Ministry should not be settling on Deal. He pointed out that the Ministry had not at that point carried out a full investment appraisal, which he acknowledged should have been done in late 1983 or early 1984. At the end of 1984 a new estimate was available to the Ministry for the disposal value of Eastney. The higher the disposal value, the greater the case for moving out of Eastney. It was found that the disposal value of Eastney had increased from £800,000 to £5·5 million.

Mr. Hancock: Would the Chairman of the PAC say that he was happy with the evidence for the change in valuation, and with the way in which it was arrived at? Has the PAC looked further into the source of that valuation and into its sincerity? Has it investigated the source of the original valuation from Portsmouth city council? As far as I can ascertain, no one of senior rank within the city council now acknowledges ever giving such information to anyone.

Mr. Sheldon: The hon. Gentleman may know more about these matters than I do, but the increase from £800,000 to £5·5 million was said to reflect the possibility that Portsmouth city council would take a more favourable view of how the site could be developed. I have no further information about any discussions that may have taken place between Portsmouth city council and the Ministry of Defence.

However, in July 1985 the working party reported that its financial appraisal showed that the advantages of establishing a defence school of music were considerably less than originally expected, although a modest saving was still implied. A reappraisal of the extra facilities and complement recommended in March 1985 is now being carred out, with a view to reducing the costs of the defence school of music. The Committee concluded:

"We are gravely disquieted that the MOD should have decided on a DSM at Deal, which could have entailed expenditure of around £10 million, and would inevitably cause considerable disruption to the present arrangements for training Service musicians, before carrying out a full investment appraisal."

We were glad to hear that the Department will now be carrying out such appraisals whenever a financial investment is contemplated and that results will be reported to Ministers before a decision is made.

As to the decision to establish the defence school of music, we note that the Ministers took social factors into account when Eastney had consistently appeared to be the best option on financial grounds. We were concerned with the social factors, and asked the Government what the difference was between social and political factors. Social factors were not reflected in the investment appraisals and, to the best of my knowledge, not announced to Parliament by Ministers before our investigation. Although we recognise that there are difficulties in quantifying such factors, we would have expected the Ministry of Defence to make every effort to do so, especially as they varied from one location to another.

The Ministry of Defence said that its original objective was rationalisation to make financial savings. We are sceptical that this objective will be met. In paragraph 22 we say:

"In the light of these very material points we have no confidence that the appraisals carried out to date provide justification for the MOD's decision. In this connection we welcome the Treasury's firm statement that they are not happy with the MOD's figures."

We were disturbed by the

"fact that it was not until we questioned MOD on their final investment appraisal that they discovered it was incorrect by a factor of £2·3 million."

It is not the task of the Public Accounts Committee to form a view as to whether there should be a defence school of music and, if so, where it should be sited. It is reasonable that there should be a proper appraisal of the finances so that it can be justified and be seen to be justified. I have a great affection for our three schools of music. I like their very diversity. I am not sure that uniformity at one site is something that I would necessarily encourage. This is purely a personal observation. Unless it can be shown that there are substantial financial advantages, I should prefer to leave things as they are. I repeat that they are personal observations that should not intrude on those of the Committee.

The last of the six reports before us is the one on "Control of Nursing Manpower", the 14th report of the current Session. We have looked at the control of the National Health Service manpower on a number of occasions in recent years. In 1983-84, about £3·5 billion was spent on nursing and midwifery, and this represented some 45 per cent. of the total costs and 34 per cent. of the revenue expenditure of the NHS.

The Comptroller and Auditor General found that there was uneven distribution of nursing staff in the health authorities. For example, the number of nursing staff per 1,000 of population ranged from 696 in the Oxfordshire region to 928 in the North-East Thames region. Therefore, we question what action the DHSS has taken to ensure, if not exact equality, the removal of some of the imbalances.

We heard from the Royal College of Nursing that 35 per cent. of nurses in training do not qualify. It considered this to be a significant waste of resources. Against this background, it went on to say, the demographic trends show that the number of young women entering the profession was likely to reduce, so threatening a major shortage of nurses. As nursing manpower planning was an issue for the health authorities we questioned whether the DHSS was concerned at a national level about the intake and the wastage rates of nurses.

As we know, the health authorities have the main responsibility for planning the demand for and the supply of nursing manpower. However, the Department seemed reluctant to admit any responsibility for this, and it concerned us that it does not have the information to say whether there are too many or too few nurses employed by health authorities. We strongly condemned this laid-back policy.

When our predecessors in an earlier Parliament examined this matter, they commented on this, and we find it disturbing that there has been no advance in 17 years. Therefore, it is not before time that the DHSS, we understand, is seeking to ensure that the decision as to the number of nurses will in future be taken within a proper planning framework provided at all levels in the NHS to decide on nursing manpower, planning, performance and needs in general.

The DHSS must not try to control the number of nursing staff in each authority, but it is only it which decides on the overall view of demand and supply and makes sure that the number is adequate on a national basis. We were particularly concerned about the numbers lost to the service because of those who depart during training. As well as the obvious loss of value for money, there is the prospect of a shortage of nurses, both qualified and in training, and this is a serious matter of direct importance to patients. We asked that the Scottish Home and Health Department should take note of the initiative in Wales, where we found an imaginative and potentially beneficial attitude.

Those are the six reports that we have singled out for special mention in the debate. Our work does not end there. We have a number of reports on which we could have gone into as much detail as, and possibly more, those that we have selected. Our task today is to give the House a bit of a snapshot of the work of the Committee. We take our work seriously. We meet twice a week throughout the year. When I first became a member of the Public Accounts Committee, we started in January and finished in July. Now we have sessions in the early spillover part of the parliamentary year, and the enthusiasm of my colleagues remains unabated. I am grateful to them and for the work done by the officials concerned. We hope that part of our agenda will decrease as and when the improvements of the administration increase. We are sceptical of this, and so we look forward, without surprise, to a continuing and heavy work load, acting as we do on behalf of the House.

Water Authorities (Privatisation)

6.17 pm

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The Government have just announced, in a written reply, the abandonment of a central plank of their political and economic strategy—their proposals to privatise Britain's water assets. The disgraceful and cowardly manner of the announcement is as despicable as the original proposals. It demonstrates the contempt with which the Government treat the House and the country.

The Government announced in a Green Paper their intention to privatise Britain's public water assets, and as recently as last week the proposals were confirmed in a debate in the House, in which the Minster with responsibility for these matters in the Department of the Environment said that he would reaffirm the Government's intentions. It is scandalous that the Secretary of State for the Environment has chosen not to announce this most important decision, which so damages the Government's credibility — indeed, the whole position of Ministers in his Department—that perhaps he should review his position.

Millions of people—indeed, the majority of people in Britain—will regard this as very welcome news, not only because it abandons what were in the first place ill-founded, ill-prepared and unacceptable proposals but because it heralds the increasing decline of this Government and their ultimate defeat at the next general election. We believe that there should have been a major statement on the issue. I ask you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to safeguard the interests of the House.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): I think that I had better make it clear to the House that the fact that there has been a written answer is not a matter for me. There has been no point of order so far upon which I can rule.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. We cannot have "Further to the point of order" on something that was not a point of order.

Mr. Allan Roberts (Bootle): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The written answer of the Secretary of State for the Environment has been published late today, Thursday, and many hon. Members have left the House for their constituencies. In their written answer the Government have given no reason for changing their policy. They have treated the House of Commons with contempt. All that the written answer says is that, after consultation with the chairmen of the water authorities, it is not possible to proceed with privatisation. However, consultations with the water authorities took place before the Government announced that they intended to proceed with privatisation. The House has a right to know the real reasons for the Government's backing down.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You will recall that earlier today an important statement was made that took up nearly an hour of important parliamentary time, and that dealt with the Government's response to the Peacock report. Despite all the questions, we were unable to ascertain correctly the Government's position. My hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) has now told the House that the Government have responded in this contemptible fashion. It has been made quite clear that the lady is for turning. We want to know why. The Secretary of State for the Environment was proved to be wrong on more than one occasion when he was Secretary of State for Transport. Why has he not got the guts to come to the Dispatch Box to explain why this policy has now been turned on its head?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The method of giving information to the House is not a matter for the Chair. So far no point over which I have any jurisdiction has been raised.

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. A different situation has now arisen. The Secretary of State for the Environment, who has so far evaded his responsibilities to the House, is now on the Treasury Bench. The Leader of the House is also present. It is outrageous that, other than the Prime Minister, the one Minister in this Government who is most committed to privatisation has not had the guts to come to the House and make a proper statement at that Dispatch Box.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: All the matters that have been raised so far may be important, but they are matters for debate and there are ways and means of raising them. Until now no matter has been raised on which I can help the House.

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. As the Leader of the House has just arrived in the Chamber, may I suggest that he should now prevail upon the rather tentative and reluctant Secretary of State to make a statement either later this evening or tomorrow morning.

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen): I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment needs no compliments from the right hon. Gentleman — *[Interruption.]* The nature of the right hon. Gentleman is such that he could not deliver an insult without it sounding like a compliment. I take account of the point that has been raised. It is a matter that can be looked at through the usual channels.

Mr. Walter Harrison (Wakefield): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I listened intently in an effort to hear what was said by the Leader of the House. No hon. Member was more intent than I, but I could not hear what he said. Some of my hon. Members have told me that they, too, could not hear what he said. I want to raise a point of order on the issue, because I have been very concerned about the privatisation of the water industry. Therefore, I should like the Lord Privy Seal to repeat what he said.

Mr. Biffen: I think that it would be for the general benefit of the House if we looked at this matter through the usual channels.

Mr. Harrison: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am very concerned about this important issue having been raised in this manner. As is well known, I made my second major speech on the subject of water.

Mr. Brian Sedgemore (Hackney, South and Shoreditch): It was brilliant, Walter.

Mr. Harrison: I thank my hon. Friend. I never let any question on the water industry pass. That is why I listened

intently to the Leader of the House. I do want more than an assurance that this matter will be dealt with through the usual channels. On the night of the Liberal party's debate on the water authorities—a Monday—I said that there had been banditry, but it was not even recorded in the *Official Report*. [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh!"] Of course I said that from a sedentary position. My hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) accosted the Leader of the House, who gave him good advice about how to raise a subject on a subject on a subject. I am so concerned about this takeover and banditry——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The right hon. Gentleman knows more than most hon. Members how the usual channels operate. He also knows that the merits or demerits of any announcement are not matters for the Chair. I am waiting for him to raise a point of order with me.

Mr. Harrison: I have always given full support to the Chair. On occasion, I have been the only one from my party in the Lobby against my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner). On this occasion, the House has not been afforded the courtesy that it should have received on such a major issue as the privatisation of the water authorities. This matter is not just for the usual channels. That is not acceptable. There should be a proper statement, and negotiations should take place through the usual channels as to when a debate should take place.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This is a procedural matter. It has become a regular occurrence that major statements are made by the Government at times when that causes maximum inconvenience to hon. Members. I realise that neither you nor Mr. Speaker have any control over the timing of Government announcements, but surely it is in the interest of all hon. Members, and therefore of the House generally, for the Chair to advise Ministers that important statements should be made at times when all hon. Members with constituency interests in the subject can be present. Therefore, it is unacceptable for an announcement to be made late on a Thursday when, for a variety of reasons, hon. Members have left town to go to their constituencies. It is also unacceptable to suggest that a statement will be made on Friday, when hon. Members will still be out of town. If you cannot rule on it, at least you or Mr. Speaker could advise Ministers how to behave.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I certainly cannot rule on the time when Ministers should make statements.

Public Accounts

6.29 pm

Sir Michael Shaw (Scarborough): Perhaps we may now resume our quiet but thoughtful debate on the affairs of the Public Accounts Committee. It occurred to me, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that it might have been advantageous if we had been discussing a report of the Select Committee on Procedure, when we could have reflected on recent events.

I welcome, as does any member of the PAC, the opportunity to follow the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon) and to thank him for the way in which he conducts our affairs, week after week, in a fair and thorough manner that gives us all the opportunity to ask questions and to formulate our reports.

The work of our Committee becomes more and more important. I was rather upset by the initial announcement of the debate, because it gave no indication of what we would discuss. However, I now welcome the way in which the motion for the debate was finally tabled on the Order Paper, because it indicated the scope of the debate and headlined the reports that we felt were most important. This debate also gives hon. Members who have a special interest, but who do not serve on the PAC, an opportunity to air their views.

The work of the Committee is so important that occasionally it should benefit from the wider audience of the Chamber—even if not so large an audience as we had momentarily a few minutes ago. As a general rule such debates falls within the province of Front-Bench spokesmen and members of the Committee, though we have tried to attract a larger audience. I welcome the fact that the motion has been tabled in a way that encourages hon. Members to participate. Unfortunately, most hon. Members look at the Order Paper, reach for a railway timetable and look up the times of the trains to their constituencies. That has always been so, and I am afraid that it will continue to be so. Nevertheless, it is important that these debates continue to be held.

In addition to commenting on individual reports, it is right that we should discuss the general work of the Committee and the impressions gained from our studies. There have been developments in our work and in the methodology of Departments that deserve close scrutiny and public comment. I wish to say a few words about the general nature of our work and to deal specifically with the Nexos report.

I suspect that many people think our work to be rather dull—certainly not glamorous, although I believe the word "sexy" is the current jargon. We certainly do not seek to hit the headlines, and I hope that that will always be so. Our work involves a great deal of reading and preparation.

Now that the Comptroller and Auditor General has been established in his new role under the 1983 act, together with a new and enlarged team, the complementary role of the PAC has never been more important. It is vital that there are not frequent changes in the membership of the Committee. If a subject arises that has been dealt with previously, it is helpful to have served on the Committee for some time and heard the arguments especially if the accounting officer was not involved previously. We are not easily beguiled by accounting officers if we have such experience. Therefore, when hon. Members join the PAC it is wise, as far as it is possible,

[Sir Michael Shaw]

for them to decide to stay with it for some considerable time. It is nice to see an old boy here this afternoon. The hon. Member for Fife, Central (Mr. Hamilton) spent many years on the PAC exercising his forceful mind on the issues before it.

My first comment on our work relates to the checking of the financial and value-for-money considerations involved in departmental decisions. If decisions are taken for political reasons we make no comment, even though we must be free to examine any financial and value-for-money considerations that may arise later. If, however, decisions are said to have been taken for financial or money-for-value reasons, we must determine whether those reasons are sound.

I believe that our scrutiny must be more searching than hitherto, and examples of that can be found in the reports. I give a warning to future accounting officers that if financial and value-for-money reasons are given as the basis for a decision, they must be fully justified. Certainly in one instance that reason crumbled under peremptory examination and a further investigation had to be made.

My second comment is on the lack of effective controls where Government money has been committed to projects. Too often there has been a lack of clarity in the programmes and responsibilities, or where nominee directors have been appointed their duties have not been properly considered and defined. The right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne discussed that point in some detail. It is right that the Committee considered that matter, because a feeling has developed that to be a nominee director is a cushy job at the end of one's career. It is a tough, demanding and very responsible job, because many people and their money depend upon a nominee director carrying out his task properly.

The encouraging feature is that there are clear signs that the lessons brought out in our earlier inquiries and reports are being learnt. I am not saying that without the PAC, without our hearings and without our reports, no such progress would have been made in the Departments. I recognise that significant changes are taking place within the Departments. I am saying that without the extended role of the Comptroller and Auditor General and the close examination of the departmental accounting officers by the PAC, these changes would not have come about as quickly as they have done.

On the evidence given to us, several of the PAC's reports still disclose an acceptance of past shortcomings, but that is coupled with an assurance that lessons have been learnt and that things will be better in future. That is encouraging as far as it goes, but the PAC looks forward to future inquiries so that we will have facts that will fulfil the promises that have been made.

Nexos is an especially unhappy example that cost the taxpayer about £32 million. The company was formed in 1978. That is when the NEB decided to make equity investments in certain companies in certain sectors. I can do no better than quote from the main findings of the PAC. Paragraph (b) of the summary of main findings and conclusions reads:

"The principal reason for the failure of Nexos was that its management created a much larger organisation, with higher outgoings, than was justified by either sales or the amount of funding approved by NEB."

Paragraph (d) states:

"NEB negotiated supply and marketing agreements with Nexos's main suppliers which were deficient in a number of important respects."

Paragraph (f) is as follows:

"the investment by the NEB in the companies who were the main suppliers of Nexos created a potential conflict of interest".

Paragraph (k) states:

"It is unacceptable that the C&AG was unable to investigate and report on the Nexos loss. This case reinforces the view expressed by previous Committees that all bodies in receipt of public funds should be accountable to Parliament through examination by the C&AG".

I entirely agree with that. I return to paragraph (h), which reads:

"We strongly endorse the lessons on monitoring identified by the DTI."

In the course of questioning Sir Brian Hayes during one of our sessions I put the matter to him directly. I asked Sir Brian—this is question 2966:

"One can only ask what lessons have been learned from this little incident?"

Sir Brian replied:

"A number of lesssons. The lesson that the present Government would draw is that this is not the sort of activity it is sensible to conduct, that in fact the National Enterprise Board's attempt to set up wholly in the public sector a new company to plug a gap which was believed to exist in the economy was a misguided one. But of course that is a matter of general policy and the fact is that the National Enterprise Board was operating in 1978 when this story began under another Government and under quite different policies."

He continued:

"The second lesson is that the monitoring of a company and of an investment is a very difficult business which needs a large amount of attention and may not have attracted all the attention it needed from the National Enterprise Board for very understandable reasons during the difficult days of 1979 and 1980. The third lesson I would draw is that in general it is better that the people who monitor investments should not themselves be involved in the actual management of those investments."

That leads me on directly to nominee directors. Initially, Nexos had as its first chairman the head of the NEB division responsible for monitoring the investment itself. It had also a member of his staff, who was also made a director. They later resigned. It seems, from all the evidence, that all the important decisions about the new company were taken by the NEB and not by the new company. It is no wonder that Sir Brian concluded:

"in general it is better that the people who monitor investments should not themselves be involved in the actual management of those investments."

The oddest feature of all is that, having learnt that lesson, the DTI proceeded to put another £13 million into the company. It agreed to do so only after a new independent chairman and two new independent non-executive directors, who were not in any way connected with the NEB, were appointed. In answer to a question from the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne—this appears on page 102 of the report—Sir Brian replied:

"Ministers were also influenced"—

that is in making further payment to Nexos—

"by the fact that they were informed at the meeting they had on 19 February that an independent chairman and two independent non-executive directors were being placed on the Board of Nexos and that these would be able to take a clearer view than had been possible up to that date of the management of Nexos itself and the problems it faced. It was in fact in the light of that knowledge that Ministers authorised the additional funds that were to be made available."

The mysterious thing is that, having placed such faith in the appointment of an independent chairman and two

additional non-executive directors, it appears from the evidence that we received that no advice was taken from them. In paragraph 24, our report modestly states:

"It is of concern, however, that in spite of the confidence placed by DTI in the new Nexos directors, their views seem, from the evidence received, never to have been sought with regard to subsequent events".

That seems to be inexplicable. So far as one can see, events proceeded with the NEB still making all the major decisions, without the advice of the new directors, on whom the DTI had placed such faith, being taken in any way.

This sorry experience shows exactly how non-executive directors and outside directors who are brought in for special purposes should not be used. I hope that the lessons have been learnt. When we make these appointments, the conditions of service and the objectives must be clearly laid out and those who are appointed must be in a position to act to save taxpayers' money and to make the enterprises of which they have been made directors flourishing and prosperous for the future, rather than sinecures for those who have left their main jobs.

6.50 pm

Mr. George Park (Coventry, North-East): I wish to comment on the first, the third and the 14th reports from the Public Accounts Committee. It may be my misfortune that my right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon) touched on all three reports during his opening speech. It is the habit of members of the Public Accounts Committee to make their contributions in their own way. I doubt whether my slant will be the same as that of the Chairman.

The first report is entitled "Role and Responsibilities of Nominee Directors". There was, and probably still is, a general assumption, which I share, that nominee directors are appointed to bodies which receive public funds to see that such funds are put to good and proper use. If that is not the case, they should alert the body that appointed them. The report highlights the fact that their first responsibility is to the body to which they are appointed, and they have no duty to make regular reports to the Government unless that is written into their terms of reference. As the Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee said, the only instance of such a requirement is the Welsh Development Agency. For the remainder, reliance has been placed on informal chats with the accounting officer.

Prior to the De Lorean debacle, no written guidance was issued by the Treasury. The Treasury accepted that that was remiss of it, and it partly started a review to improve the instructions to nominee directors. One organisation which exists for the promotion of non-executive directors — PRONED — considers that independent reporting back by nominee directors is wrong in principle, and that all such reports should be made through the company chairman. I wonder what effect that would have had in the De Lorean case. I should think that it would not have had much effect. Today I received—as did the Chairman—a copy of the guidance note. It is a massive document. I shall refer to three parts of it. Paragraph 10 says:

"While the chairman of the company should provide the principal point of contact for discussion of the company's trading performance and strategy, the director may be asked by the department or NDPB about these matters, and also asked to express a view on Board appointments and management performance."

Paragraph 11 states:

"the director should consider whether, given his fiduciary duties to the company, he is able to make the information available to the body."

That is, the body that appointed him.

"If this is not the case, and the development is deeply prejudicial to the body, the director must consider whether to resign."

The point that I like best — I hope it will be insisted on — is in paragraph 13. I should like to think that the 100 nominee directors — that figure was mentioned earlier — and the bodies on which they sit will be advised of the new guidance and asked whether they are prepared to accept it. The paragraph says:

"the department or NDPB should seek an agreement"

the words "should seek an agreement" are underlined in the original

"with the company on the role and activities of the nominee director, in particular in relation to monitoring and reporting, normally as a condition of providing financial assistance."

I hope that measure will be implemented.

The third report is entitled "Sale of Government Shareholding in British Telecommunications plc." In my view, and in the Committee's view, the major conclusion is that there are serious lessons to be learnt from the arrangements and results of this large sale of BT shares. The Committee recommends, in view of the Government's plans for further privatisation, that the Treasury, together with the Department of Trade and Industry and other Departments likely to be concerned with future sales, should thoroughly review the arrangements for and results of the sale. In other words, the Committee did not think that the proper value of BT was obtained.

That was not the first time that the Public Accounts Committee had drawn attention to the need to review the arrangements for selling off publicly-owned companies. In the 10th report in 1981-82, and the 17th report in 1983-84, the Committee recommended a review to minimise the risk of future sales allowing large profits to be made at the taxpayers' expense, and warned against too heavy a reliance on merchant bank advisers with an underwriting interest in the sale. Although the Treasury said that the Government's objective would be to obtain the best price, that objective was not reached.

In the run-up to the sale, the Government, as usual, did some window dressing. The method of accounting was changed from the historic cost convention, and BT ceased to charge supplementary depreciation. It shortened the estimated lives of a number of fixed assets and charged to revenue expenditure certain assets that previously had been capitalised. If that new method of accounting had been used in 1982-83, the reported profits for that year would have been £1,031 million instead of the stated amount of £365 million—a difference of £666 million.

The auditors said that the changes were necessary to reflect fairly the state of affairs of the business. I suppose it could also be said that it whetted appetites for an enhanced killing when the shares came to the market. The Department of Trade and Industry took advice from leading merchant bankers and stockbrokers, who approached the matter with all the caution of a fox approaching a hen coop—it can see a good meal but it does not want to get caught.

A phased sale was ruled out, and sale by tender would be appropriate only if demand was likely to exceed supply, and that was considered unlikely with BT shares. The issue was considered too large for a sale by tender. Finally, it

[Mr. George Park]

was agreed that the shares should be sold by a fixed price offer, although the Treasury warned that that made the pricing decision crucial. However, that was only after it was further agreed that there should be a higher than normal commission. That cost £294 million about three times the cost that would have applied elsewhere. Arrangements had to be made for selling some of the shares overseas. Ultimately, those shares were sold in America. They quickly returned to the United Kingdom market, no doubt making a quick buck in the process since the price was down by at least 4p or 5p. I know it can be said that that is a matter of hindsight. However, the Public Accounts Committee warned about it.

Once again, as in 1982-83, there are serious lessons to be learnt, such as expecting leading merchant bankers and stockbrokers to act as gamekeepers and poachers at the same time. At the third time of asking, will the Government take heed of the warnings of the Public Accounts Committee, or, in their haste to dispose of valuable public assets, will we see further feast days for the City?

The 14th report concerns the National Health Service and is entitled "Control of Nursing Manpower". The Committee found that the DHSS did not know whether there were too many or too few nursing staff in the United Kingdom as a whole. The DHSS believed that that was a question for local decision. That lack of knowledge did not stop the Department, in 1983, from imposing from the centre reductions in NHS manpower overall with a consequential reduction in the nursing work force. There was no mention of assessments being made of the effects of this reduction, althought we all know the position in our localities. Clearly, the decision was taken on the basis that, as the NHS work force accounted for 73·5 per cent. of its costs, they had to be contained within the limits set by Ministers, irrespective of the effects on manpower and patients.

The report of the Comptroller and Auditor General showed that there was an uneven distribution of nursing staff in health authorities, which ranged in 1983 from 696 per 100,000 population in the Oxford region to 928 per 100,000 in the North-East Thames region. We were told that these discrepancies would become evident during the reviews of the NHS management board, but no examples were available of any action taken, and, finally, once again, it was a matter for the regions and districts to solve within available resources. That was the nub of the question.

It was thought that there would be improvements as general managers settled in over the next three years, but, in its important evidence, the Royal College of Nursing was concerned whether the products of this greater efficiency brought by general managers would find their way back into direct patient care. Managers complain that there is no incentive to alter ratios of nursing staff when the products of any savings will simply be used to make up budget shortfalls. The Royal College of Nursing drew atttention to the fact that 35 per cent. of nurses in training do not qualify and there is a high wastage rate among those who do qualify—about 20 per cent. in the west midlands.

It is extremely difficult to attract qualified nurses back into the service they have left, due in part to the conditions of work and wages, the use of unpaid breaks as handover periods and the proportion of time spent on duties other than nursing, and in the mentally ill areas they see no future due to changed policies which discharge these patients into a community already constrained for resources.

These problems are known to exist, but the DHSS does not know how many nurses are attracted back into the service. The amount it does not know is astonishing. Despite the devolving of decisions to the regions and districts, the DHSS must accept final responsibility for standards of nursing care in England, because over the whole NHS there is significant scope, as the report says for the more efficient and effective deployment of nurses. There is room, too, in making the service more attractive, to retain those qualified nurses we have and to encourage others to join them. Only then will waiting lists be reduced and the service once again become one of which we can be proud.

It is clear from the reports of the Public Accounts Committee that there are many areas where money has been wasted, where it has not been used to the best advantage and where the true value of public assets has not been realised. The Government have a long way to go to remedy those faults.

7.3 pm

Sir Peter Hordern (Horsham): I should like to join those hon. Members who have congratulated the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon), the Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee, on his leadership over a long period. He sets a fine example to us all. He is always extremely diligent and thorough in the way in which he takes witnesses through examinations. The Chairman's role has become more important, partly due to the change in the nature of the PAC from dealing strictly with accounting matters — when Departments have spent too much money or when there has been some peculiar aspect in their accounting — to being concerned much more with value for money. Subjective judgments must be and are made by the National Audit Office. It calls for much finer judgments and much more careful assessment than in the past. The right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne brings to these matters great perspicuity, and he has the backing of us all.

There are a number of reports before us, and I shall consider only two. I have noticed, as one who has been a member of the PAC for some time, the way in which one topic after another repeats itself. Some of us who, I am afraid, have become old lags on the Committee have become somewhat world weary with the excuses made from time to time as the same topic appears before us in yet another version. We are always given optimistic accounts of how things have changed: "We have turned the corner; we have taken careful notice of the PAC's criticisms; we have covered all these aspects and I am glad to say that we are confident that the mistakes will not happen again." Yet within two or three years we are back, always with a different accounting officer, but with the same old story.

Some programmes are very wasteful compared with others. The hon. Member for Coventry, North-East (Mr. Park) referred to one programme and my hon. Friend the Member for Scarborough (Sir M. Shaw) referred to the Nexos programme. These are important matters. My hon. Friend said that Nexos cost about £32 million. Of course

that is serious, but it is not so serious when compared with some of the programmes which continue to go wrong, year after year.

Why, when these programmes continue and severe losses continue to be suffered, do the Government — I am not especially concerned with their political nature — not take heed of the warnings and their many years of experience? The present practice is that the public expenditure programme is rolled forward every year for the next three years. This means, inescapably, that the same mistakes are likely to be made, unless a radical appreciation is made of each programme, one against another. This process is never undertaken, although to my certain knowledge, the matter has been raised year after year. I shall give two examples showing how things have gone wrong and why the Government should change their view of public expenditure and measure much more carefully one programme compared with another. Instead of trimming the edges of virtually every programme, they should ascertain whether one programme merits more attention than another.

I should like to pick up one point made by the hon. Member for Coventry, North-East on British Telecom and underwriting arrangements. The Government receive expert advice on underwriting matters, but I suspect that they will go to the same sort of people for advice as they have in the past. No doubt their judgment will be excellent, but I should remind the Government that we are about to enter a period of great competition in the City of London, and not before time. I believe that the hon. Member for Coventry, North-East mentioned a figure of £140 million —it may have been more —as the commission that had been paid.

At the end of October there is to be intense competition for commissions. I cannot understand why the Government should not put not only British Gas but the commission out to tender. Some large and important participants have appeared in the City of London recently who have considerable capital resources. If the experience in the United States is any experience at all, there will be considerable competition for that business. I hope and trust that the Government will take advantage of it. In my opinion there should be no underwriting at all. The Bank of England should underwrite the lot and then see what tenders there are for commission. As I understand it, there is now to be rather less privatisation than there was to be a few hours ago so perhaps the matter is not quite as important as it was.

I shall deal with two aspects of the reports: first, the common agricultural policy; and, secondly, torpedoes. There are important priorities which have now assumed greater importance. The National Health Service is one, arising partly from the need to reorganise it, but I believe that education, especially secondary education, has come to play a much more important role than previously. Any international comparison of secondary education, especially the middle and lower ranges, shows that a serious situation exists in the basic knowledge of the core subjects. The figures and evidence show that children in France and West Germany, for example, have substantially better results than we do.

Whatever the evidence — I know that there may be dispute — I have no doubt that in a post-industrial society of the sort that we have we shall have to spend more to retain and attract better teachers into the profession. When I say this sort of thing, I am often asked where the resources will come from. I shall name two places. The first is the common agricultural policy, and the second is a mundane thing called torpedoes.

The common agricultural policy now absorbs two thirds of the Community budget. In 1980 we contributed £600 million net to the Community. Since that time the wheat price has reduced in real terms by about 12 per cent., and one would think therefore not only that the cereal farmers have been efficient, which is certainly the case, but that their incomes have been stabilised. In fact, there has been a growth in productivity of nearly 30 per cent.

The supply of milk in the European community still exceeds demand, even after the imposition of the quota system, by 15 to 20 per cent. We now have the extraordinary situation that milk has been formed into mounds of butter so that it may be fed back to the cows at a fraction of the price that it costs to produce in the first place. That is the situation to which we have had to resort, and a more absurd system it would be impossible to imagine. However, there is a case for dairy farmers, because of the large number of them, and the fact that if they are all run out of business they will inevitably have to move towards the towns to find work.

In my belief, the same does not apply to the cereal farmer. In early 1985, 4 million tonnes of cereal were held in intervention. I understand that the fear of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food is that if by chance the cereal price is cut, which it has asked for, and if there is some form of social subvention, the United Kingdom might be a net financial loser if the income aid to poorer farmers were provided by the Community because, it is said, we have a large number of efficient cereal farmers who are very effective producers. What has to be pointed out is that the whole lot is subsidised, whether produced by large cereal farmers or by small cereal farmers. We would do the people of this country a great deal of good if we stopped producing cereals and started to import cereals from other countries. We would also do the Third world a great deal of good if we were to do that. The reality is that some of our millionaire cereal farmers — that is what some of them are — may not get as much of our taxpayers' money in subsidy as they do now if the system were to change.

I believe that the common agricultural policy is the worst feature of the European Community. I was in the United States a fortnight ago and trade experts said that what they resented most when talking to the European Community on trade matters was that we spend all our time talking about farm prices and steel, and we never talk about space, technology and things of the future. If the European Community does not get together and work towards a proper reform of the common agricultural policy, I believe that that policy will do more damage to the Community in the long run than anything else.

The torpedo programme appears to be the largest single waste of money that I have known over some years on the Public Accounts Committee. The report that we are considering identifies total expenditure up to the mid-1990s of £5,000 million on torpedoes. I start with this proposition, which is a comparatively simple one. If you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, had to ask your constituents what was the best way to spend £5,000 million, I do not know, but I do not think that you would choose to persuade them that spending it on torpedoes was the best and most

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efficacious way of using the money. We looked at this and found that the Sting Ray torpedo was started in 1969 after early development within the Ministry of Defence itself.

Mr. Peter Griffiths: I noticed the tense my hon. Friend used very closely. He said "we looked at this" as opposed to "we are looking at this". I thought that he might have added another sentence — "that if the Committee had been looking at it today it would have come to different conclusions."

Sir Peter Hordern: I shall deal with a little history first, because it is important. I shall certainly come to the present position and future prospects a little later.

The work continued on the Sting Ray project until 1976, when the programme had to be completely revised due to the emergence, we were told, of further technical problems. At that time the Ministry learnt that the United States was developing an improved version of its mark 46 torpedo, which offered a number of Sting Ray's characteristics for about half the cost, and with an earlier in-service date. I do not know whether this is known, because I do not think that we refer to it in our report, but at that time we bought some of those mark 46 torpedoes ourselves. In fact, we bought quite a number — over 1,000.

The Sting Ray project was reviewed in 1977 and again in 1978. Having possessed some of the American mark 46 torpedoes in some quantity, the Ministry of Defence, for some reason, must have been dissatisfied with them or felt that there was a better opportunity to develop a new range of torpedoes offering a much higher specification. I imagine that that must have been behind the Ministry's thoughts.

What happened was that the expenditure on Sting Ray reached £700 million, which was some £450 million higher than the estimated cost of purchasing the same requirement of the improved mark 46 torpedo. In 1980 we questioned the Ministry closely on the reasons for going ahead with Sting Ray, the estimated cost of which had now risen to £920 million, compared with £200 million for buying some improved mark 46 torpedoes from the United States. We asked the Ministry for further estimates of the cancellation cost and were told that it would amount to £161 million. The employment consequences of cancellation were estimated to be negligible.

The argument that is being put strongly by those who have defended the torpedo record is that of the disastrous effect on employment locally. I dare say that those arguments will be used again, but we were told something different, that the employment consequences of cancellation were estimated to be negligible.

The right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne dealt with Spearfish, and I shall not follow him on that one. However, I remind the House that the Tigerfish torpedo has been under development for over 25 years and has cost about £1,000 million at constant 1984 prices. Up to March 1984 we had spent over £800 million on Sting Ray and Spearfish, neither of which was yet in full production in May last year. We reported that we

> "remain concerned that the arrangements which have operated in the past have resulted in MOD bearing all the additional costs arising from failures while the main contractor appears not to have suffered any financial penalties and, in the case of Tigerfish, now has a further substantial contract which is partly to remedy deficiencies related to earlier contracts."

I realise that the position is now different. We have taken as optimistic a view as we can, because the contracts that are now with Marconi are fixed-price contracts. However, the torpedoes that are available to us are not the only torpedoes available to the West. There are other torpedoes, too. To claim that because there is a fixed-price contract the taxpayer has good value does not have any validity. If one puts the price high enough on a fixed-price contract, the taxpayer still stands to lose. Therefore, I should like to refer to another matter.

It is of some consequence to look at the total amount of our expenditure on defence equipment purchase. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence claimed great credit for that, and a great deal is due. In the defence debate at the beginning of this week he said:

> "Our defence budget is running at a level about 20 per cent. higher in real terms than it was in 1979. That is not all. Within that much larger budget, equipment has risen from 40 per cent. to 45 per cent. We spend a higher proportion of our budget on equipment than everyone else in NATO."

I do not doubt that that may be thought of as a positive achievement. We are spending a significant amount of money, but all that means is that the need to see that that money is being spent efficiently and effectively is all the greater. Of course, my right hon. Friend was perfectly correct, and so was Sir Clive Whitmore, who came before us to tell us about the improvement in efficiency and competitiveness in drawing up contracts. I understand that the amount of competition for contracts is now well over 60 per cent. In fact, the witness before us said that it had gone up to 65 per cent. However, there remains a hefty 35 per cent. of business placed by the Ministry of Defence for which there is no competition.

In his speech at the beginning of the week, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State also said:

> "We are continuing to transfer resources from the tail to the teeth — for example, about two thirds of naval manpower is now in the front line. Naval support staff numbers have been cut by about 6,000 . . . Ten years ago, there were 79 civil servants to every 100 personnel in the regular forces; five years ago there were 69, and today the figure has come down to 53."—[*Official Report*, 30 June 1986; Vol. 100, c. *712*.]

Looking at that figure, I should have thought that it was a remarkable achievement, and there cannot be anything like so many people in the Ministry of Defence purchasing department as there were before. However, on looking at the public expenditure White Paper and at the question tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames) a few days ago, I notice that the number employed in the Ministry of Defence in 1986 in purchasing equipment is 36,500. That is a great number of people employed in that direction. It is important that the Government should ask themselves at the end of every year, "Is this the best possible use of our national resources? Are there not other priorities that are now beginning to assume greater importance than this one of buying equipment in the Ministry of Defence, in the way we do?"

It is important to underline our responsibilities in defence. As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said in the White Paper, our contribution falls into four areas: first, our independent strategic nuclear deterrent; secondly, the defence of the United Kingdom itself; thirdly, our land-air contribution to the European

mainland; and fourthly, maritime operations in the eastern Atlantic and the Channel. In the defence White Paper my right hon. Friend said:

"We thus maintain a wider spectrum of capabilities than any other NATO ally except the United States and France."

We provide 70 per cent. of the ready NATO maritime forces. That is a remarkable achievement for a country with considerably less productive capacity than the West Germans or the French. We must keep under consistent review whether our defence strategy is right to take on such large burdens, but even if it is accepted that that is always right, and we must continue, in all circumstances, to have such heavy responsibilities, is it necessarily right that we should seek to pursue those objectives while spending an enormous amount of money on one particular form of weapon that we make exclusively for ourselves? That is an important question, which the Ministry of Defence will have to look at closely.

I shall now look at the alternatives, because we have not heard much about them. I said that we already possess a substantial number of mark 46 torpedoes. I understand that those torpedoes are now also being bought by West Germany, France, Spain, Italy and most of the NATO countries, but I also understand — it may not be generally known — that the United Kingdom has done the work for both West Germany and the Netherlands on bringing up to date the mark 46 torpedo to what is called Mod. 5, although we have not done that for ourselves. That option should be examined.

The expenditure of £5,000 million is by no means a small amount. I understand that the Americans are now working on a mark 50 torpedo, which will not be available for another few years. The Government say in the Treasury minute:

"The cost and complexity of modern torpedoes is such that it is unlikely that any of the four European countries with a torpedo capability will attempt to proceed alone with the development of the next generation of weapons."

I am glad to hear that that is so. The time has come to put a stop to the idea of our proceeding alone with the development of torpedoes. I see that the Americans are developing the new mark 50 torpedo. Why is it that we talk so much about co-operation and working with the Americans when we are not working with them on that torpedo? Why are we not doing that or insisting that they should take part in our torpedo programme? I decline to believe that the threat to this country posed by the Russian or any other navy is such that we must have our own distinctive torpedo programme compared with what is available to the United States. Why at least can we not get together with other NATO countries and thereby save a great deal of expense?

I am sorry that I have spent so much time on this subject, but I believe that expenditure of £5,000 million over a very long period is expenditure that we can ill afford to ignore. If we do, it will merely mean that some other programme will be considered sacrosanct, and any suggestion that things can go on as they are because so much is being spent is a false economy. If the defence White Paper and the statements by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on the matter mean what they say, the expenditure on front end technology in defence equipment must be done more in conjunction with our NATO partners, whether in western Europe or in the United States.

In this area, this country can no longer afford to go it alone. When one compares the expenditure of that amount of money with the national priorities that we must have in a post-industrial society to see to it that young people are given the opportunity to be trained and taught in our schools to a higher standard, I for one have no doubt which is the higher priority.

7.29 pm

Mr. Michael Hancock (Portsmouth, South): I should like to discuss two of the reports, both of which concern my constituency, and the employment prospects of the people living in the city of Portsmouth and the surrounding area. I should like to consider the torpedo question later, as Marconi is situated in the Portsmouth area and is the largest employer there. I therefore have a significant interest, if not in the history, in the future of torpedo development.

I wish to consider the implications and the saga behind the school of music. Eastney is in the heart of my constituency. For a long time it has been the ambition of the members of the city council, of all political parties, that Eastney should once again be used as a service establishment, hopefully as the school of music for the Royal Marines.

I am grateful to the Chairman of the Committee and to the other Committee Members for recounting what they see as the history of the problem. I should like to detail events again, as certain significant events occurred during the discussions on Eastney about which I do not believe the Public Accounts Committee was told the whole truth. In some instances the Committee was not given the correct and most up-to-date information. Because of that, the Ministry of Defence and the Public Accounts Committee have either sought to mislead the House or have inadvertently done so because of a lack of information.

The discussions within the MOD in 1982 came to fruition in the sense that a decision was taken that there would be a single defence school of music. At that time, Deal and Kneller hall were considered but Eastney was not. In 1982, three potential sites were examined. Eastney was then included and was found to be the cheapest option. The most expensive option considered was to continue the current system of a fragmented approach to military music.

In March 1983 plans were drawn up. Once again Portsmouth — Eastney — was included and Deal was excluded. Eastney was the only viable site. Deal was too expensive and Kneller hall was too small. In December 1983, the Secretary of State rejected that report out of hand. He wanted a site north of Birmingham to be considered and Redford barracks came into the reckoning. Deal was also brought back into the reckoning, following, we are led to believe, representations made by the local Member of Parliament who at that time shared Cabinet status with the then Secretary of State. One can only believe that he used considerable pressure because on two previous examinations Deal was considered not to be viable on several counts.

Following that investigation covering the whole country, it was reported in May 1984 that Eastney was once again the cheapest of the locations under consideration. On 18 July 1984, Deal was chosen, based on certain factors which included the wider ramifications of the decision.

The Public Accounts Committee considered the unemployment position in Deal and in Eastney in some

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detail at that time. It is interesting that the report refers only to Eastney and not to Portsmouth. The statistics quoted in the report suggest that the unemployment position in Deal was 16·1 per cent. and that in Eastney it was 12·1 per cent. The unemployment statistic for Portsmouth—not the travel-to-work area but simply for Portsmouth—was more than 14 per cent. The figures given were therefore inaccurate.

I can suggest several reasons why the figures were inaccurate. The figures quoted for Deal cover the Deal and Dover travel-to-work area. Portsmouth embraces a much wider travel-to-work area and includes areas which are more prosperous than the city and which are better in employment terms. At present, unemployment in the Portsmouth travel-to-work area is 12·5 per cent. Unemployment in the Dover travel-to-work area is 12·7 per cent. In 1984, when the report was produced, the travel-to-work area statistic for Portsmouth was 12·5 per cent. There was clearly a discrepancy in the figures. A like-for-like examination of the figures should have involved the unemployment rates in the two areas. In that event Portsmouth was undoubtedly worse off than Deal. The wider implications went further than a simple examination of the figures. The figures were misinterpreted.

There was also a problem over the married quarters. When this matter was actively considered in July, there were more than 1,000 empty married quarters in the Portsmouth area. The Minister's former companion in the MOD, the present Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces, answered a parliamentary question on 9 June and said that there are still 728 empty married service houses or flats available in the Portsmouth area.

The argument about accommodation does not hold water. Portsmouth was the primary site. Nevertheless, an amazing decision was taken. After three trawls through the system Eastney proved to be a viable, the cheapest, and most appropriate site. Yet, in the face of that, the ludicrous decision was taken that Deal should be the site.

A separate examination was made of the financial position. At that stage the comparisons in valuation were drawn to the attention of the Public Accounts Committee and the MOD. The figures quoted in the report suggest that at one stage the site valuation at Eastney was £800,000. It now appears that at some time during the discourse on the wider implications, by some magic coincidence, the attraction of Eastney became such that it rose in value from £800,000 to £5·5 million.

Mr. Peter Griffiths: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way as we share an interest in the city of Portsmouth. Does he agree that these two figures—£800,000 and £5·5 million—are so different that it is reasonable to assume that no one of any seniority in Portsmouth city council would have given either of those figures to the Ministry of Defence, certainly not to the latter knowing that the policy of the city council was to attract the school of music and that such a figure could be used only to destroy Portsmouth's case?

Mr. Hancock: I could not agree more with the hon. Gentleman. I should like to take this opportunity to suggest how the position arose. At the same time as the Public Accounts Committee and someone within the MOD were told that the valuation had jumped so dramatically, the chief executive of Portsmouth city council wrote to the PSA which was acting on behalf of the Ministry of Defence. The letter states:

"Some land has already been released for residential development but following the news that the Joint School should not come to Portsmouth, we have taken the opportunity to look carefully again at the Barracks in order to assist you in arriving at a satisfactory answer for the future. I must say immediately that the City will expect full protection to be given to the Ancient Monuments, the Listed Buildings and the Conservation Area. I must also emphasise most strongly that proper attention must be paid to the general setting in which the monuments and buildings stand in addition to the general value of the Conservation Area. In particular the Parade Ground, with its surrounding buildings (the Officers' Houses, the Barrack Blocks and the Museum and HQ Block) form an essential feature of the Eastney area and the City Council now looks for firm proposals to bring these buildings up to a good condition and into a proper use. If modest parcels of land are to be sold off the City would be happy to discuss their best use."

It talks about modest parcels of land being sold off.

When we exclude from Eastney the area about which the city council wrote to the Ministry of Defence, there is nothing left except very small parcels of land which would not raise even £800,000 if they were sold. That letter was written by the chief executive of Portsmouth city council. It was a follow-up to a letter sent to Lord Trefgarne, who was then the Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces. That letter was sent by the Conservative leader of the council, Councillor Ian Gibson, who set out the importance to the city of this site. He described its special setting close to the seafront and the conservation area with the buildings that offered opportunities for the city and the Ministry of Defence.

I have been a member of the city council since 1971, and I have been on the planning committee since 1976. During that time I cannot recall a time when an officer asked the planning committee or the political bosses of the city their opinion about the disposal of land at Eastney. It was never discussed because everybody took it for granted that the site was far too important to be sold for a massive housing estate or for any other purpose.

I pay tribute to the hon. Member for Portsmouth, North (Mr. Griffiths) and also to the leader of the council, Councillor Gibson, his predecessor Councillor Marshall and all the other councillors of all political persuasions whose driving ambition for Eastney has always been to bring back the training centre of the Royal Marines band.

It is amazing that the report suggests that Portsmouth city council officers have made statements which would lead the House and the Ministry of Defence to believe that they had an asset worth £5·5 million. This week I spoke to the chief executive, the chief planning officer, the planning chairman and the leader of the council. They all deny right down the line that they have ever been involved in any negotiations at this level about the disposal of the site. Nobody in the city council has admitted giving that information to anybody at any level.

Perhaps if the doorkeeper at the civic hall were questioned it might turn out that he was the one who suggested that Eastney was to be a prime site for development. Perhaps Taylor Woodrow, when it was looking at other sites in Portsmouth, or Laing or Wimpey all suggested that this was the valuation of the site. I have yet to find anybody who can speak with the voice of authority in Portsmouth who had any part to play in

making those statements. That casts grave doubts over the validity of that information given to the Committee by senior officers.

Let us look at the cost of building. In March 1985 the report suggested that the cost of building at Deal had risen from £5·8 million to £10·6 million. We were also told that the same rise in costs had occurred in Portsmouth. That ignored the fact that Portsmouth had 700 empty houses and that there would be no need to build married quarters. Those comparisons are incorrect, and once again we have been misled by people who seem to have reasons other than finding the most effective and efficient way of dealing with the problem of locating the Royal Marines school of music or the defence school of music.

I draw the attention of the House to the problems that we face in Portsmouth. The people there do not rush to complain that they have been treated badly, but in 1948 about 40,000 people were directly employed in Ministry of Defence work in Portsmouth. That has now dropped to 6,000 and the city has suffered badly because of the way in which successive Governments of all parties have continued to cut the defence commitment in the Portsmouth area. That has forced more and more people to find alternative work and that has proved difficult.

It has been difficult to get land released to attract other developments and one piece of land never discussed for development was Eastney. That was because the Ministry of Defence has always said that it had ambitions to use that site. As recently as a few weeks ago, the Ministry of Defence said again to the city council that it needs the land at Eastney and certainly the playing fields, because of its intention to relocate HMS Mercury. Wherever it takes place, that relocation will necessitate the Navy holding on to at least the playing fields at Eastney and they make up a large proportion of the land area there. That leads me to believe that if a reasonable decision is to be made about the school of music it must be in favour of Eastney.

The facts speak for themselves. Measured against every other location in the country Eastney is the cheapest site. It has the ready-made asset of married quarters and a large recreational facility with playing fields and swimming baths. In addition, the headquarters of the Royal Marines training unit is already there and for those reasons nothing should stand in its way.

I should like to draw the attention of the House to page 13 of the 11th report, in which Sir Clive Whitmore says:

"The Royal Marines are not particularly wedded to staying in Deal; they are living in buildings there which have not had a great deal of money spent on them in the way of maintenance. I am sure if you got a marine on his own he would say he was only too glad to get out of Deal."

If that information is coming from the Marines and is put forward by the permanent secretary, surely the Marines should be given an opportunity to see which site they find most attractive. Neither the Royal Marines nor the Royal Navy has any commitment now in that part of Britain. The home of the Royal Navy is traditionally in Portsmouth and I envisage the Royal Marines school of music being based in Eastney. I urge any hon. Member who has any influence on this decision to come out strongly in favour of Eastney barracks being used.

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham): I apologise to the hon. Gentleman for being out of the Chamber at the start of the speech. Is he aware that the current reappraisal by the Ministry of Defence includes not only looking at the option for putting the whole of the so-called defence school of music in one place, but at the prospect of the three different services remaining in different places as at present?

Mr. Hancock: I am sure that the hon. Member Twickenham is speaking in defence of his own constituency interest and I appreciate his argument. I am suggesting that if we cannot have the defence school of music then at least we should have the Royal Marines school of music, because I am sure that the Marines would welcome the opportunity to go to that area.

The Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee should look carefully at the Government's response to his report which was published in April. On page 14, paragraph 64 says:

"The Department has however instructed the Property Services Agency to invite the chief planning officer in each of the areas to consult the chairman of his planning committee informally about the prospect of development of surplus land."

Despite the time that has elapsed and the obvious importance of that decision, no such consultation has taken place. Once again the appropriate questions have not been asked and the House is expected to believe that the issues were looked at fairly and squarely. I do not believe that, and I suggest that many other hon. Members share my view.

Mr. Terry Davis (Birmingham, Hodge Hill): Is the hon. Gentleman telling the House that the chief planning officer in Portsmouth has not even heard from the Property Services Agency?

Mr. Hancock: I am saying that the chairman of the planning committee in Portsmouth told the chief executive and the leader of the council yesterday that he still had not been consulted about these propositions. I have no knowledge about whether the planning officer himself has been consulted because I was unable to contact him yesterday. I imagine that, if he had been asked, his first step would have been to accede to the instruction and consult his chairman and, in time, I am sure that the chairman would have consulted his members. No such consultation has taken place. I can only surmise, as I am sure many other hon. Members will do, that Deal is still the favourite son because of other reasons which have still to be brought out. In spite of its great efforts, the Public Accounts Committee, regrettably, has still not got to that important question.

An hon. Member asked whether it was part of the Committee's duty to look at the political implications, and went on to suggest that it had a role to check that political decisions were made for the best financial reasons. I suggest that if, at the end of the day, Deal is still chosen it will be chosen because of political expediency. The job of the Public Accounts Committee will be to find out why it is chosen when the financial reasoning behind such a decision falls so short of the Committee's expectations of getting value for money.

It has been said that it is a national scandal that £5 billion has been spent on developing a torpedo. Every hon. Member would agree with that. It is a national scandal that we, as a maritime nation with a long history of naval warfare, can spend such a sum of money over 25 years. What do we get at the end of it? I spoke to Marconi today and was informed, with great pride, that the Tigerfish fired at the moored HMS Lowestoft, with a single hit, managed to sink it in less than 17 minutes. [HON. MEMBERS: "It was

[Mr. Hancock]

stationary".] That was no mean feat after 25 years of development and considering the amount of money that had been spent. We should be grateful that the torpedo sunk HMS Lowestoft — albeit that it was stationary at the time and in calm water. Another successful test led to the sinking of a tethered submarine by a Sting Ray torpedo which was dropped from a Nimrod. The submarine was unable to avoid it, but none the less the torpedo did its job. We should be grateful that, after such expenditure, we have had two major successes. At last we have a tried and tested system — successful at hitting stationary, moored vessels.

It is easy to score silly points and make people laugh, but the serious question is why £5 billion has been squandered over 25 years. If we could cry over spilt milk, we would have already drowned in the Chamber today.

Successive Governments have allowed such spending to go on. Some Governments threw the towel in at a late stage and suggested that others could take control. It was only at a late stage that Marconi was given the opportunity of being its own master in the development of these torpedoes. I am proud to say that Marconi is convinced that it has the matter under control and that the systems it is engaged upon are now working well and will be effective as armaments needed to defend this country. It is working within time and within cost, and, in its opinion, it is bang on target.

We can only believe what we are told today. Surely the question to be asked is that raised by the hon. Member for Horsham (Sir P. Hordern) — why was it allowed to happen and drag on over such a long period? Successive Ministers of Defence could have stepped in and said, "Enough is enough." Why was the project not re-examined when we were told that an American torpedo was available, off the shelf, which could do the job that we wanted to be done, for half the price that we had already expended? Yet we continued to put good money after bad.

I wish Marconi well for the future. Many jobs in my constituency are tied up with Marconi and its developments. The PAC has a vital job to ensure that we never have a repetition of this situation. The roll-up procedure — the rolling on of policies over a three-year period — needs to be re-examined. Project analysis should be carried out to make sure that it is not cheaper to say no and start again from scratch rather than allow some projects to drag on.

I wish my colleagues well and I hope, at long last, that the Royal Navy has the weapons that it needs. I hope that the House will consider future similar projects carefully. This is a national scandal because that vast sum of money could have gone on many other much needed projects which are dear to hon. Members. Let us have the Royal Marines school of music at Eastney, if not the defence school of music, and let us give a proper lead in the way in which defence contracts are controlled.

7.55 pm

Mr. Michael Latham (Rutland and Melton): I intend to follow most of the points which have just been made by the hon. Member for Portsmouth, South (Mr. Hancock).

One of the problems in a debate of this kind—apart from the fact that we are considering things which have occurred in the past—is that everybody starts by paying a tribute to everyone else and saying how hard they have worked. It can easily become a back-slapping operation. Nobody will pay more of a tribute than I do to the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon), who does a marvellous job.

The point of this exercise is not just to say how hard we have all worked but to try to leave in the Minister's mind and those of his officials the fact that we do not want to hear the same things when we are back here again in 12 months. My hon. Friend the Member for Horsham (Sir P. Hordern) said that we tend to do just that. The hon. Member for Fife, Central (Mr. Hamilton), who served on the Committee for many years, must have heard these points being made over and over again — scandalous examples of waste, mismanagement and taxpayers' money going down the drain.

I shall deal first with the defence school of music. I am especially glad to see my hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel) in the Chamber because he has worked so hard on this matter. My hon. Friend put a memorandum to the Committee and attended the meeting of the Committee when it took evidence on the matter. I listened to the discussions and took part in the questioning of the accounting officer, Sir Clive Whitmore. I have no axe to grind in the matter—none of the three places in question is in my constituency—and I began to wonder how we could possibly get into this extraordinary position. I do not think I have ever heard a worse performance before the Committee than that of the accounting officer, the permanent secretary. It was absolutely dreadful, not because he is not a brilliant man—of course he is—but because he had no satisfactory case to make.

I honestly thought that the Ministry of Defence had been making up the figures as it went along. It was only as a result of a question that I asked that the Ministry discovered that it had made a significant miscalculation in the figures it had given to the Committee. If that question had not been asked, perhaps we would have never known that the Ministry had made serious factual errors. That is all revealed in appendix 2 of the report. It is extraordinary that the Ministry could come before the Committee in that state.

We also had the important testimony of the Treasury officer of accounts, Mr. Judd. At the end of the discussion I asked:

"Mr. Judd, you have read the papers, you have heard all the evidence. Are the Treasury really happy with all these figures?"

Mr. Judd, an extremely honest and capable official, replied:

"No, I cannot say that we are happy with the figures shown in the paper. The proposition has never actually been put to us. It may need to be put to us if the expenditure remains as high as it appears to be now. At that stage we shall of course want to look at the figures which are then current as a result of the reappraisal that Sir Clive is telling you about."

In questions 518 and 519 the permanent under-secretary admitted that the Property Services Agency, which is to an extent responsible for this ramshackle state of affairs, had not even decided whether it wanted a new building at Deal or to renovate the existing one. How could it possibly have done any costings on that basis with which it could appear before the Committee or before the House?

When such a state of affairs exists—when there are totally unsatisfactory costings which completely fall apart under examination by the National Audit Office and

subsequently by the PAC — it reflects poorly on the Ministry. I hope that my hon. Friend on the Treasury Bench will make it absolutely clear that such a situation will never occur again, with figures of such an unsatisfactory nature being put to the National Audit Office.

The hon. Member for Portsmouth, South made a perfectly proper defence of the situation in his constituency, and I expect my hon. Friend the Member for Portsmouth, North (Mr. Griffiths), if he catches your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, will do the same. The Committee's job is not to judge between any of these sites or indeed to decide, as my hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham would doubtless say, that the situation should remain as it is. That would be a perfectly proper view for my hon. Friend to take in view of his constituency interest. We simply want the most cost-effective solution, and we have not yet seen any figures to give us any indication of what that might be.

There is a lot of merger mania in the Ministry of Defence. There are examples of that in my constituency and I have questions about it on today's Order Paper. The MOD wants to merge the Royal Army Veterinary Corps' dog training school with Royal Air Force Newton's operation. They are similar in the sense that they both employ dogs, but not in any other respect since the purposes and training of the dogs are completely different. I have referred that to the National Audit Office because I am not satisfied with the costings. I believe that they will fall apart when they are properly examined. I understand that an internal report has been prepared on this matter —I have not yet read it, but I have seen a copy of it— which suggests that the figures are far less satisfactory than they had originally appeared to be. One of the questions on the Order Paper this afternoon deals with that, but I have not yet had a response to it.

In another example from my constituency the MOD wants, in effect, to take substantial operations away from RAF North Luffenham and to move them to RAF Henlow. I shall need a great deal of convincing that the upfront expenditure, which is tremendously heavy, will be commensurate with the so-called gains from the merger. I strongly suspect that that will not be so, and I have already seen Ministers to tell them so. If the performance on the defence school of music is anything to judge by, the way in which these matters are worked out in the MOD is pathetic, and we must keep a careful watch on that.

Several hon. Members have addressed the important matter of torpedoes. This has been — I use the words "has been" in deference to my hon. Friend the Member for Portsmouth, North, who has twice intervened to point out that this is a past matter—a shameful story. If anybody is in any doubt about that, they should look at the back evidence of the transcripts in the report. I commend to the House the extremely informative question 2106 in which both the reply from Mr. Peters, the deputy accounting officer, and my question are heavily asterisked for exclusions. I state:

"The purpose of torpedoes, obviously, is to sink the enemy's warships but you have only ever used Tigerfish twice *** in the Falklands War. In the whole of its history it seems to me to have an absolutely appalling record. In the period June to September 1983 even then only *** per cent. of the weapon firings were successful."

The question continues in the same vein.

I want to be satisfied on that matter. Marconi has put forward publicity saying that the corner has been turned. I do not mix my metaphors in that regard because the torpedoes are supposed to work properly. If that is so, thank heavens for that. We must wish the company well in future. The PAC must ask how it can be that all that money has been wasted over so long when most of the time the programme was under the direct control of the MOD? I ask myself, who took responsibility, who was to blame and what happened to them? I suspect that the answer is that nobody took responsibility, nobody was found who was to blame and they got promoted.

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton: They are probably in the House of Lords.

Mr. Latham: They may, indeed, be in the House of Lords. That is the deficiency in our accountability system. The accounting officer changes, the Secretary of State changes and the Government change, but the impetus of the bureaucracy continues and increasing sums are wasted until at the end of the day we have spent £5,000 million on a torpedo the history of which I cannot relate because a whole load of asterisks delete what happened in the Falklands war.

Mr. Hamilton: The hon. Gentleman will concede that the PAC decides what will be sidelined and what not. Presumably he was a party to the sidelining about which he is complaining?

Mr. Latham: The hon. Gentleman must not misinterpret or misquote me. I am not complaining about the sidelining. It was agreed by the PAC. We were told that it was in the interests of national security and one must accept that. I am merely pointing out that there was sidelining. Those of us on the Committee know what was behind the sidelining. The Chairman said:

"Paragraph 2.4 is really quite an appalling paragraph; one of the worst that we have seen."

Indeed it was. Members of the Committee know that that was an appalling position. We are glad to have assurances that matters are now improving and that Marconi has them under control.

The more I see of the Committee—I have served on it for only three years, unlike some others who have served longer — and the more I see of the work of the Comptroller and Auditor General and the National Audit Office, the more convinced I am that it is absolutely essential for the country. One thing about the NAO and, indeed, the reports of the PAC is that they set the fear of god into the mandarins in Whitehall. There is nothing that a permanent secretary less enjoys than appearing before the PAC to answer a ropey case, such as that of the defence school of music, and Parliament must capitalise on that. It should not really be necessary because we should get all that information from Ministers on the Floor of the House. However, it must be done by the detailed case work of the NAO and PAC, to which the NAO reports.

For many years, literally billions of pounds have been wasted, and that has come to light in the PAC's reports. When we return in 12 months I have no doubt that we shall talk about more deplorable situations because that happens all the time. The job of my hon. Friend the Minister is to ensure that there are a great many fewer such cases as the years go by.

8.6 pm

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton (Fife, Central): It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Latham). When the PAC was dealing with the defence

[Mr. Willie W. Hamilton]

school of music I sat in and listened to his forthright condemnation of the position. The House and the country may look on him as a kindly inoffensive-looking hon. Member, but he is a brutal and fearsome interrogator. I would not like to be an accounting officer in any Department, knowing that he would cross-examine me. He is no mincer of words and he has a tongue like a whiplash. Long may he continue in the duties he is performing on behalf of taxpayers. I associate all the other members of the Committee with that.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-Under-Lyme (Mr. Sheldon), who is Chairman of the PAC, is too little appreciated by the House and the nation for the services that he and the Committee perform for taxpayers. When we talked about televising the House I thought that it would be better first to experiment with televising the PAC. At least it does not go on Cook's tours, but stays at Westminster and its work is all the more effective for that. All the other Select Committees wander round Japan, and, while they do not have many trips to Iceland, they are attracted to Miami and Hong Kong. The PAC remains here, which is partly why its reports are as damning as they are.

The hon. Gentleman speculated about what has happened to those responsible for the colossal waste of money. Nothing has happened to them. They have probably been promoted. There is a case for examining the possibility of surcharging Ministers and civil servants for their crass inefficiency, their crass negligence and their crass incompetence in the same way as we surcharge local councillors. Local councillors are surcharged and even suspended from holding public office for a period of years if they are discovered to be mis-spending public money, yet top, highly paid civil servants and Ministers go scot free although they have perpetrated extravagances which are peanuts compared with the sums that local councillors handle.

I shall not spend too much time on torpedos. Every hon. Member who has spoken has criticised Marconi. The hon. Member for Portsmouth, North (Mr. Griffiths) is in a minority of one in the House when he seeks to defend Marconi. For years, Marconi has enjoyed a dripping roast from the Ministry of Defence. Whatever its mistakes and whatever rubbish it may produce, it never loses a penny. It is never penalised for any wrong that it has done. The taxpayer foots the bill every time.

I was amused by the comments of the hon. Member for Rutland and Melton—I am glad that he has stayed—who was forthright about the torpedos. Remember that they will cost the taxpayer £5,000 million until the middle of the 1990s, at 1984 prices, so by that time the cost in cash terms will be substantially higher. That works out at about £400 per household in the United Kingdom for three torpedos—one little bit of our defence effort. The hon. Member for Rutland and Melton said that two of the shots were fired in the Falklands. They both missed, or were not fired in anger. The hon. Gentleman said in Question 2108 of the minutes of evidence:

"They certainly did not sink a ship."

They cost £5,000 million and they missed.

The Government always lecture us about getting value for money. We spent all that taxpayers' money. I must say to my constituents, "You must put your hand in your pockets to defend the country from the wicked Soviet people. If we spend £5,000 million on three torpedos that do not work, that is too bad. That is the run of bad luck that we have had."

I wish to say a kindly word about the hon. Member for Horsham (Sir P. Hordern) in his absence, although it is invidious to single him out. The hon. Member for Scarborough (Sir M. Shaw) has been a noble worker in the cause for many years on the Public Accounts Committee. The hon. Member for Horsham made a valid point that must be considered by the Government. When I was a member of the Public Accounts Committee, we talked about Sting Ray. The Committee adopted a chauvinistic attitude to supporting Marconi because it was a British firm. We did not wish to have much to do with the American mark 46 torpedo, even though it was half the cost. We were told that it did not do the job.

Mr. Peter Griffiths: That is right. It did not do the job.

Mr. Hamilton: What are our torpedoes doing? They are missing. The two which were fired in the Falklands did nothing. We have constantly talked about NATO co-operation in defence procurement. Britain simply can no longer afford to go it alone in the provision of such equipment. I do not know what good will come of this debate. I suspect not very much. That is the sad thing about such debates. We all get worked up, and if there was a Division tonight on the torpedo project there would be a massive vote against proceeding along this line. But there is no Division and we shall all be going home soon for the summer recess. The Government carefully time these debates at the fag end of a session on a Thursday night, with no vote, when they know that the House will be thinly attended and there will be no great headlines in the newspapers tomorrow about the £5,000 million paid for something which did not work. It will be about Gatting and the test match rather than about £5,000 million wasted.

Mr. Peter Griffiths: Would the hon. Gentleman not continually repeat that £5,000 million has been spent? Less than half that has been spent. That is the total cost of the complete programmes, and of the torpedoes that we shall get.

Mr. Hamilton: I was just about to make that point. I have just asked my right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon) whether there is a figure to show, if the clock was to stop now, how much taxpayers' money has already been taken. The figures I quoted were figures given in the Public Accounts Committee's report, which show that £5,000 million will be spent by the mid-1990s at 1984 prices. In question 2093, the hon. Member for Horsham asked:

"Can you tell us now what you think Sting Ray is going to cost the country altogether?"

The answer referred to the figure in appendix 1 on page 2 of a secret report, so I do not know what that figure is. The hon. Member for Horsham continued in Question 2095:

"Can you tell me what the original estimate was when the project was first started?"

Mr. Levene replied:

"I can take you back to May 1981 . . . The total cost of completion then was estimated at £920 million at 1980 prices."

Mr. Levene expanded his answer. I wish the *Hansard* reporters to get this correct, because it is an astounding statement:

"We then come into the rather strange vagaries of Government accounting, to which I have started to become accustomed"

this was the great wizard boy, Mr. Levene, just beginning to get accustomed to the strange vagaries of Government accounting

"where we are not in fact dealing entirely with real money. In other words—to try to simplify it—if the development cost was completed in 1981 and cost in real money terms £250 million, when we then uprate it to 1984-85 we get a figure of £602 million. This does not actually mean that it cost us £602 million, it means that if you bring all the cost levels up to the same level, in other words the 1985 level, you get a figure which was in real terms paid out at £250 million suddenly becoming £602 million. I have over-simplified it."

There I had better leave it. The House will have gathered the gist of what he said. Mr. Levene said that Government accounting was so strange that he was only just beginning to grasp what it was all about. This is how we run our defence services.

The hon. Member for Horsham (Sir P. Hordern) talked about the colossal sums which defy the unerstanding of the ordinary citizen. It becomes meaningless to talk about thousands of millions of pounds. The hon. Gentleman said that, when we are dealing with that quantity of money, we must rapidly reach the stage when we should urgently re-examine our national priorities. That exercise is taking place in the Cabinet and in the Star Chamber, where the battle is being fought as to how we should decide on the level of public expenditure, and how much we should reduce it in order to cut taxation in the forthcoming Budget.

My right hon. Friend also mentioned the 14th report, on the control of nursing manpower. The cost of nursing and midwifery staff constitutes a high proportion of the National Health Service expenditure. The 1983-84 figures, quoted in the report, were £3·5 billion or 45 per cent. of the total staff costs, and 34 per cent. of the revenue expenditure of the NHS, excluding family practitioner services expenditure. In 1983, the total number of nurses and midwives was about 397,000 whole-time equivalents. The Government make great play of the fact that there has been a substantial increase in numbers since they took power, and I accept that there has been an increase. However, no one seems to know whether the overall number is too great or too small. The Government imply that, if the number of nurses is increased, the service must automatically improve. On the face of it, that might be a reasonable proposition, but no one knows whether that figure is too large or too small for present needs.

The issue is further complicated by the great regional variations, as the figures quoted by by right hon. Friend show. There is an enormous variation in the number of nurses per 100,000 of population between Oxford and one of the Thames areas. However, the difference between Oxford and Scotland is even greater. There are 696 nursing staff per 100,000 of population in the Oxford region, as compared with 1,100 in Scotland. There seems to be no simple reason for that. At any rate, no one in the Department could give simple or clear reasons for the disparities.

However, some points that emerge from the report must concern the Government, the House and the country. The Royal College of Nursing said that 35 per cent. of trainee nurses do not qualify. I have gone into the matter in some detail, and many reasons emerge as to why girls leave their training before completion or why they fail to qualify. Of the 65 per cent. who qualify, a high proportion leave the NHS after their expensive training. Again, there are many reasons for that, but there is no doubt that it means a considerable waste of public money.

Another undeniable fact is that demographic trends are likely to reduce the numbers of young women entering the nursing profession, which will mean that within a measurable period there will be a shortage of nurses in the Health Service. What comes across loud and clear from the report is that the Government's claim, that an overall increase in nursing staff provides unquestioned proof that the service is doing well, is far from the truth.

The community nursing services include district nurses, health visitors, midwives, community nursing for mentally ill and handicapped people, school nursing and other specialist nursing services. It is difficult to know whether, at any time or in any place, the numbers quoted are adequate or whether they are surplus to requirements. As long ago as 1972, the DHSS provided several yardsticks by which this might be measured. The general guide, although not a hard and fast rule, is one health visitor for every 4,300 people and one district nurse for every 2,500 to 4,000 people. Those yardsticks are still used. Had we used them in September 1983, 65 per cent. of all health authorities in England would have failed to meet the health visitor target, and 80 per cent. would have failed to meet the district nurse target.

When the DHSS was questioned about this, it took the view, and still does, that such complex problems are best left to the local health authorities, which are aware of the problems in their areas. That is a sensible proposition, and I do not complain about it.

In March 1985, the DHSS set up a review team to study the matter. Perhaps the Minister can tell us what progress has been made. A written answer was given to my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, North-East (Mrs. Short) relating to the membership of the review team. Can the Minister give us an idea as to the timetable for the review, and when the House can see the report?

The problems of community care, in numbers and expense, are daily becoming more acute. Since the Government now consider that the 1972 yardsticks are out-of-date and irrelevant, the DHSS should withdraw those guidelines—the Committee made this point—and make it clear that health authorities should not be bound by them. If the local health authorities are to control their problems, those 1972 yardsticks should be ignored, and if the Government are prepared to pay, they should get the staff if they can.

I have paid enough tributes to the PAC, but I shall make a final point on the Health Service generally, and this report in particular. The Committee, perhaps properly, does not see fit to go into the pay and conditions of nurses, doctors and other staff.

I suggest that it might examine the personnel memorandum PM(86)17 issued on behalf of the DHSS concerning

"Arrangements for remuneration and conditions of service"

of the new managers in the National Health Service. I need not labour the point too much, but all these general managers are now promised an incentive bonus which will be gauged by the speed with which they can close hospitals. That is one of the criteria laid down. Another is the speed with which they can get people out of hospital to community-based provision, which is what is happening now. Thousands of men and women, usually mental

[Mr. Hamilton]

patients, are being discharged from mental hospital into the community apparently so that taxpayers' money can be saved by closing those hospitals, and the mentally ill or mentally disabled are then thrown on to the community, which simply does not have the staff, money or wherewithal to look after them. This is creating an increasingly serious problem. I think that the Public Accounts Committee would do well to have a good look at that new contractual agreement with the Department.

I end by quoting something that appeared in *The London Standard* only last Tuesday:

"A Government Minister has pledged more consultation with parents and relatives before homes and hospitals are closed and thousands of mentally ill people are 'dumped' in the community."

That followed a lobby of Parliament by the National Society for Mentally Handicapped People in Residential Care and a meeting with Baroness Trumpington, the Minister responsible for services to the mentally handicapped. The chairman of that society said:

"We have stressed to the Minister that the possible closure programme is turning into a national scandal . . . Assurances she is receiving from health authorities that parents and relatives of mentally handicapped people are being consulted are just not true."

Baroness Trumpington promised that she would go back and make sure that consultation would take place in the future before those patients are 'dumped' on the community.

I hope that the PAC will have another look at that, but above all keep up the excellent work that it has done, especially so far as torpedoes are concerned, and I wish the hon. Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Latham) good health, good fortune and increased vigour.

8.33 pm

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim (Amber Valley): I want to talk about the sad, sorry and rather shabby case of Nexos, and I will do my utmost not to ramble on for half an hour or so.

I first came across Nexos when editing an information technology report in 1980. In 1982, I conducted investigations for that report into Nexos. More recently I am pleased to say that the sad subject of Nexos has been the subject of a Public Accounts Committee report.

What was Nexos? Nexos was set up by the last Labour Government as the United Kingdom answer to IBM—a fairly ambitious project, I think it would be agreed. Unfortunately, this rather ambitious project went bust ingloriously in 1982 at a cost to the taxpayer of close on £40 million. In between those two dates, expensive salesmen were head-hunted by an overpriced headhunting agency to run Nexos.

During its brief and inglorious career Nexos consistently succeeded in making substantially larger losses than its total turnover. Indeed, its most successful venture was in importing and distributing large amounts of Japanese-made office equipment. One of the biggest problems was that it concluded a series of totally untenable deals with other companies, usually involving its ending up buying expensive equipment through middlemen. In fact, Nexos was such a totally unmitigated disaster that most people in the information technology industry were amazed that it lasted as long as it did.

What were the main reasons that Nexos ended up such a disaster? First and foremost, I believe that the whole concept of an information technology company dreamed up by politicians and civil servants was almost inevitably doomed to failure from the word go. After all, if it had been a viable project, surely private industry would have done the job itself.

The second problem was that the National Enterprise Board insisted that Nexos make deals with NEB-backed companies. I will talk briefly about only three of these deals. First was the deal with Logica VTS to supply Nexos with word processors. Normally, if a company agrees to market another company's products, that company does not pay the producing company a fee for marketing those products. On the contrary, the producing company is almost invariably delighted that some company is actually there to market its products, but not so with Logica VTS and Nexos.

The NEB first made Logica VTS invest a sum of more than £1 million in Logica's development costs. There were no time limits imposed on Logica VTS as to how long it could take to produce the word processor. When it finally did so, far later than the initial estimate, the word processor did not at first work. It was an extraordinary state of affairs, and Nexos had absolutely no redress either from Logica or from the NEB.

A second agreement was made between another NEB-backed company, Systene, and Nexos. Again, the Systene computer that it was meant to be supplying to Nexos was late and did not work when it arrived. Fortunately, the Nexos management had included a clause in the contract insisting on substantial penalties if the Systene computer was not delivered on time. Unfortunately, the NEB stepped in and pevented Nexos from taking Systene to court to get damages from that company because, of course, Systene was another NEB-backed company.

Perhaps the worst of a pretty poor series of deals that Nexos had foisted on to it by the civil servants at the NEB was the deal with Muirhead Office Systems Limited. Through this deal, Muirhead was to act as a middleman to buy Japanese facs machines which Nexos was then forced to buy at an inflated price from Muirhead. In fact, Nexos could have gone to any one of a large number of Japanese facsimile machine manufacturers and bought similar—indeed better—machines at far cheaper prices, but, no, the NEB insisted that Nexos went to Muirhead Office Systems Limited and bought the machines from it, acting as a middleman importer of Japanese machines and insisted that it paid an inflated price for the facs machines. Nexos was clearly from the word go tied by the NEB into a series of ludicrous, untenable commercial deals.

The third reason for Nexos's problems was that almost invariably the deals were concluded on a totally uncommercial basis. One of the main tenets of the NEB deals seemed to be that almost invariably they were the cost-plus type of deal, quite uncommercial but typical, unfortunately, of the way that Governments operated in the 1970s.

The fourth reason why I believe Nexos went bust was because much of the management was totally incompetent. This led, for example, to vast over-ordering of equipment. At one point, the Nexos management ordered more facsimile machines from Muirhead than the whole of the British market could have absorbed in a year—clearly a poor commercial decision.

The fifth reason for the failure of Nexos involved muddled lines of communications and limited management control. One example of that will suffice. In 1981,

when the Government were weighing up whether to wind up Nexos or to try to keep it going a little longer in the hope of finding a buyer, the Nexos management, realising the untenability and uncommercial nature of the deals into which it had been tied by the NEB, tried to contact the then Secretary of State for Industry to tell him that there was absolutely no point in committing further Government money to the company until the nature of those deals had been sorted out by the NEB.

Unfortunately, the NEB, in its wisdom, refused to pass on the management's views to the Secretary of State, and the Nexos management was eventually forced to send a message round by hand to the Secretary of State at the House. Unfortunately again, that message was ignored. I suppose that one's first reaction might be to blame the then Secretary of State for Industry, but I believe that he was blameless, and I shall say why.

The whole idea of asking a senior Minister, who is obviously extraordinarily busy, to act as a non-executive director of 30 or 40 hare-brained NEB companies is nonsense. We cannot expect Ministers and civil servants —most of whom have no business experience whatever —to make such judgments and decisions. Even if they had the time, they would not be qualified to make them. Sadly, the NEB, or the British Technology Group as it had by then become, could not even inter the corpse of Nexos in 1982-83 without making a series of monumental cock-ups and splashing around yet more public money with glorious abandon. When it became clear, in 1981-82, that Nexos simply could not survive, it was decided to sell off the company.

Heads of agreement were at one point signed with a major British office equipment company, Gestetner. However, unfortunately, the NEB decided at the last moment, after the heads of agreement had been signed, to pull out of the deal. It then decided to sell off various parts of Nexos to a variety of other organisations. The way that those divisions was sold off is beyond belief. For example, it gave the marketing rights for the Logica VTS word processor, which was by now working, back to Logica for nothing, even though Nexos has invested £1 million in Logica VTS to develop the word processor in the first place.

The marketing rights for the stock of Ricoh Japanese word processors were given to a consortium of ex-Nexos service engineers, although a far higher sum could have been raised by disposing of them openly on the market. Indeed, I understand that most of those word processors ended up unsold, rotting in a warehouse in Swindon. Finally, and possibly most amazingly, a stock of about 1,000 Japanese facsimile machines, over-ordered by Nexos from Muirhead Office Systems Limited—for which it had paid in excess of £1 million—was sold back to the middleman importer, Muirhead Office Systems Limited, for £1. Thus, 1,000 machines which were worth more than £1 million were sold for just £1. Muirhead said, "Thank you very much," and proceeded to sell off the machines for between £1,000 and £1,500 apiece.

As a final act of bureaucratic backside covering, the chairman of the BTG, as the NEB had by then become, totally denied that the sale had taken place and threatened legal action against anyone who said that it had. However, the PAC report revealed that that sale had taken place and that the machines were sold for £1.

What are the lessons to be learned from the Nexos fiasco? The obvious lesson is that civil servants and politicians cannot set up viable industries, and will inevitably end up wasting taxpayers' money if they try to do so. That is not to say that there is not some role for Government. This Government have led the world in their pump-priming help for the electronics industry and others, and in creating the conditions in which new businesses can spring up and prosper. But sadly that is not a lesson that has yet been taken on board by Opposition leaders.

I understand that the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) has committed his party, if it ever gets back into government, to setting up not another NEB but, this time, a British enterprise board. Clearly the lessons of history have not been learnt in some quarters.

8.44 pm

Mr. Peter Griffiths (Portsmouth, North): I am not an excitable man, and I do not often intervene in the speeches of other hon. Members. I prefer to let them say what they have to say and then to make my speech. The fact that I have intervened four times today should not be taken to mean that I am in any way critical of the PAC or of its members. Indeed, I pay tribute to them for the excellent work that they did over the defence school of music. As the hon. Member for Portsmouth, South (Mr. Hancock) pointed out, the Committee's report makes it crystal clear that, at each stage of the investigations into the costings for a defence school of music, Eastney was the cheapest option, and if it was decided not to go ahead with such a school but to retain separate service schools, the cheapest option for the Royal Marines was to leave unsatisfactory accommodation at Deal and to go to vacant accommodation at Eastney in Portsmouth.

As the hour is late, I shall not pursue that point, other than to make a suggestion, with due modesty, to the Committee. The Committee carefully examines the costings of programmes and the way in which they may have been overrun, but it may not always question those who offer the best estimates about the basis of them. For example, the report says that the Committee was told that the best estimate that the Ministry of Defence could offer was that the value of the site at Eastney, which had once been valued at £800,000, could be revalued at £5·5 million because of its improved development potential.

It would have been highly desirable if a member of that Committee had then asked who had said that, or who had provided those figures. As my colleague, the hon. Member for Portsmouth, South has said—he is a member of the district council—no one on the council will admit to having produced such figures. The only possible way that the figure of £5·5 million could have been reached is if, by some stretch of the imagination, the whole of the existing Royal Marines barracks, the parade ground and everything else had been cleared, and the whole thing had been available as a prime housing site overlooking the Solent. Only under those totally inconceivable conditions could that figure have been valid.

However, the cause of my great excitement today has been the 28th report of the PAC on the torpedo programme. When the programme was originally published, I became somewhat agitated. I pressed the Ministers responsible at the Ministry of Defence urgently to contact their colleagues in the Treasury so that there would be a vigorous Treasury response. There was a Treasury response; it was modestly vigorous, although nothing like as vigorous as I might have wished.

[Mr. Peter Griffiths]

During my interventions today, I wanted to point out something. The date of the Committee's report is 15 July 1985. In other words, it was published a year ago. The Committee took evidence during the session 1984-85, so it must be a document of historical significance rather than of immediate significance for today, if the subject matter under consideration is a continuing programme. If, as in the sale of a particular company, an event took place in the past, comments today might be even more valid than those made two or three years ago. In the torpedo programme, the situation now is completely different from that when the report was made and published, and certainly different from that which existed when the evidence was being taken.

In my intervention to the hon. Member for Fife, Central (Mr. Hamilton) I made a point that I would like to have made as well to the hon. Member for Portsmouth, South, who fell into the same trap of saying that £5 billion had been spent. In fact, rather less than half that money has been spent. That £5 billion is the total cost of three programmes running through to the middle of the next decade providing us with the equipment that we need.

In any production programme, whether one is making torpedoes or sprockets, in the early days a great deal of money will be spent, but there will not be many torpedoes or sprockets. It is only at the end of the programme, when the production process is under way, that results are shown. Therefore, it is unfair to talk about £5 billion having been spent, and even worse to say that it has been wasted. At the end of the day, we shall have the weapons.

I accept that it can be argued that £5 billion is too much to be spent on three torpedoes. I do not know how one decides the appropriate amount. Torpedoes, in the terms used in this document, are nothing like those which members of the public tend to have in their minds when they think in such terms. They picture a world war 2 film, with torpedoes fired from submarines, or an old Swordfish airborne torpedo. None of these weapons bears any resemblance to those at all, and as one looks further through the programme from Tigerfish to Sting Ray and Spearfish, so the difference becomes ever greater. It is wrong to suggest that we are simply modestly updating something that already exists. It is equally wrong to suggest that there have been, or that there are, any American alternatives to the torpedoes that are discussed in this programme, and available in sufficient quantities when they are required and operationally successful.

The report is concerned with three torpedoes, of which the first is Tigerfish. This was the one that, at the end of its deliberations, the Committee felt was the greatest story of disaster. So it was, in its early days. The programme was begun and designed in house by the Ministry of Defence. When, in 1972, the Ministry could not produce a heavy-weight torpedo, matters were passed on to Marconi. Marconi inherited not a programme but a project, together with a systems of subcontracting that was byzantine, involving, as the report points out, "several hundred contracts". Those contracts had been placed not by Marconi with firms with which it wanted to deal but by the Ministry of Defence, and left to Marconi. Even British Leyland, at its worst, with all its subcontracting in the west midlands, did not have to deal with 200 contractors that it did not choose itself. No one could run a programme satisfactorily in that way. It is a remarkable achievement that Marconi Underwater Systems has managed to produce a workable torpedo from this project.

We have already heard about the sinking of the Lowestoft, but I remind the House that before the exercise using the warhead against the Lowestoft, there was a fringe trial in an American range off Florida. Some 50 Tigerfish torpedoes were fired, of which 49 ran and targetted 100 per cent. successfully. I know that the Chamber is not full, but I challenge any hon. Member with knowledge of defence equipment to tell me of any existing torpedo of that complexity with a higher level of successful firing. That is evidence of what we have now. The sinking of the Lowestoft was merely an example of firepower. It was not intended to prove that one could hit a tethered ship.

The programme with which I have been involved the longest is that for the lightweight torpedo Sting Ray, which is dropped from a helicopter or aircraft. I took to see my hon. Friend the Minister a group of trade union representatives from Marconi, who were pressing for the adoption of Sting Ray. It is now a fully developed weapon. It bears no resemblance to the American airborne mark 46 torpedo. The American torpedo is less accurate, has a shorter range, is grossly noisy, is easily distracted by defences and does not have so powerful a warhead. I do not know at what point the comparison is being made with that torpedo, but it is a grossly unfair comparison.

There has also been reference to the sinking of a submarine by a Sting Ray. It is true that the submarine was stationary, but it was in shallow water, and an air drop into shallow water is the most difficult task that one can present such a torpedo. It was brilliantly successful.

Finally, there is the Spearfish. It is the largest of the projects and was only in the early stages of development when the Committee began its deliberations. The report says that the Committee did not know whether the torpedo will be on time. I put it on the record that, as from today, Spearfish is ahead of target and it is expected that the costs will be well within those budgeted for by the prime contractors.

I make such a fuss not because of the total cost of the torpedo programme but because the Committee spoke about overseas sales. At the moment, the United States navy, which does not have a heavy-weight torpedo, is looking around the world to find one. The prime contender, as my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Defence said only yesterday, is the Tigerfish. Why should we rubbish one of our products, which the Americans cannot match, just when they are considering it? It beggars belief that we should do so.

Sales of Sting Ray are also likely to be damaged if people continue to criticise the weapon using outdated evidence. There are potential sales in South America and Australasia, and actual sales in Asia. This is evidence of what can be done. There is no doubt that these programmes are successful, and will be successful.

Should there be any suggestion that any of the programmes should now be abandoned, the theory that there will be no employment implications is no longer true. If Sting Ray were to be abandoned now, that brand new plant at Neston would be valueless and the workers there would become unemployed. What may have been true a year ago, or two years ago, is no longer true. This country has a torpedo programme that has come to fruition. Marconi Underwater Systems has done this country

proud. We should be grateful. It would be helpful if hon. Members did their best to ensure that we get overseas sales for our fine weapons, because that is the potential which is available to us now.

8.59 pm

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham): Neither you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, nor the House will be much surprised when I say that I intend to speak on the implications of the 11th report of the Public Accounts Committee for the defence school of music, so-called.

In just under three weeks British military bands will march through the streets of London on the joyous occasion of the wedding of HRH Prince Andrew and Miss Sarah Ferguson. Army bands will play, as they always do, a magnificent part in the glory and majesty of the royal procession. That procession will pass in Whitehall the splendid equestrian statue of HRH the Duke of Cambridge, the son of Queen Victoria, commander-in-chief of the British Army in the mid-19th century. He decided that the standard of British Army bands in the Crimean war was so abysmal that he would set up a band training scheme for the Army. He bought the country house which was formerly occupied by the great painter, Sir Godfrey Kneller, in Whitton, beside Twickenham, and there set up the Royal Military School of Music at Kneller hall, where it has flourished ever since for 128 years.

During that time Kneller hall has become the pride of Twickenham, the pride of the Army and the pride of Britain. The bands that are trained there are the envy of the world. In an Adjournment debate that I initiated on 25 October 1983 I said:

"They have a high standard of excellence. They lift the spirits of the nation. Who does not feel uplifted by the sight and sound of a British Army band on one of our royal or state occasions? They are without doubt one of our finest traditions."

[*Official Report*, 25 October 1983; Vol. 47, c. 259.]

In paragraphs 2 and 3 of appendix 1, in a memorandum that I sent to the Public Accounts Committee, I wrote:

"These exceptional standards, as part of the traditional British scene, help to attract visitors whose spending generates employment and income and yields tax to the Government. Thus the military, traditional, musical and sentiment aspects of Kneller Hall also confer some economic benefits, which cannot be measured, but which should not be overlooked by a financial committee. These assets should not be put at risk unless there is a substantial and certain cost saving with guaranteed upholding of standards."

Yet that is what is at risk.

Two years ago, in July 1984, my right hon. Friend the Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) announced that Kneller hall would close. His announcement is contained in annex 1 of the 11th report of the Public Accounts Committee. It says:

"A period of consultation will now begin on plans to establish the new Defence School of Music at Deal, with an intended completion date there in about 1988".

That decision, and the way in which it was taken, is the subject of the 11th report of the Public Accounts Committee.

It is a remarkable report. I pay tribute to the Committee, its Chairman, the hon. Members who served on it and its officers. I was deeply impressed when, on 4 December, as my hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Latham) said, I witnessed the work of the Committee when it interviewed Sir Clive Whitmore, the accounting officer at the Ministry of Defence. I was deeply impressed by the penetrating questions that were put by the Chairman, the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon), by my hon. Friends the Members for Scarborough (Sir M. Shaw), for Rutland and Melton and for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby) and by the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours). They had mastered a complicated subject matter.

Considering the huge work load that the Public Accounts Committee carries, it was a very impressive performance by the Committee. It was completely on the ball. Its report is very thorough. It seems to me that if it can produce reports of this kind the Public Accounts Committee is working just as the House and country would wish it to work.

The decision of my right hon. Friend the Member for Henley has aroused deep feeling in both my constituency and in neighbouring constituencies. Kneller hall is greatly cherished. As I said in the Army debate on 30 January, 5,000 people attend the best of the summer concerts, and 3,000 to 4,000 people attend the smaller ones. Those people are drawn from all over west London.

The band from Kneller hall performs at schools, for old people, on civic occasions and in local high streets for Christmas shopping crowds. Kneller hall itself is a listed building, standing on the only hill in the area, and flies the Union Jack. It is a profoundly British institution, part of our heritage, and people love it. It is not surprising that 18,679 people from my constituency and neighbouring ones signed a petition that I presented, first to the Prime Minister in January, and then to the Secretary of State in March.

Nor is it surprising that the views of people in west London were echoed by right hon. and hon. Members when no fewer than 164 Conservative Members signed early-day motion 397, which refers to the excellent report of the PAC and expresses the hope

"that band training will long continue to flourish at Kneller Hall, Twickenham"

for the Army, and for the Royal Marines at Deal and the Royal Air Force at Uxbridge.

The views of the House and of residents of west London were endorsed in a debate in the House of Lords on 5 February, when five peers—Earl Cathcart, Lord Mulley, the Earl of Cork and Orrery, Lord Westbury and Lord Graham spoke strongly in favour of retaining Kneller hall as the Royal Military School of Music. No one spoke against that, although Lord Trefgarne, who replied for the Government, spoke in somewhat guarded terms——

Sir Michael Shaw: Surprise, surprise.

Mr. Jessel: Quite, but I always want to be polite—even about those with whom I disagree.

Kneller hall is greatly beloved of the Army and respected in the music world. The great conductor Sir Charles Groves, who recently was a guest conductor at Kneller hall, is a stalwart supporter.

The PAC said in paragraph 19 of its report:

"We are gravely disquieted that the MOD should have decided on a DSM at Deal, which could have entailed expenditure of around £10 million, and would inevitably cause considerable disruption to the present arrangements for training Service musicians, before carrying out a full investment appraisal."

It then said in paragraph 22:

"we have no confidence that the appraisals carried out to date provide justification for the MOD's decision. In this connection we welcome the Treasury's firm statement that

[Mr. Jessel]

they are not happy with the MOD's figures. We trust that they will scrutinise any MOD submissions on this subject very closely."

Following the publication of that report, I wrote to the Chief Secretary to the Treasury drawing his attention to that passage. I asked him to confirm

"that the Treasury will continue to make its views known to the MOD."

He replied on 6 March:

"I can, therefore, assure you that the Treasury views will most certainly be made known and that the request in paragraph 26(iv) of the PAC report will be met."

The decision of my right hon. Friend the Member for Henley was not only unsound financially, as the PAC report shows, but lacked sentiment and soul. He failed to allow for the strength of feeling in Whitton, Twickenham and the whole of west London. The reappraisal deals with costs, but I hope that the Government, having originally ignored costs, will not make the opposite error of assuming that costs are the only factor. It should consider not only costs, but the strength of feeling to which I have referred.

The importance of Kneller hall is not confined to Twickenham and neigbouring constituencies. It is of importance to the entire country, which values the high standards of military bands. I hope profoundly that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence will decide to save Kneller hall not merely for the next three years, which is what has been decided so far, but thereafter to save it permanently, so that for generations to come the glorious sounds of the finest military bands in the world will continue to reverberate throughout the nation.

9.10 pm

Mr. Terry Davis (Birmingham, Hodge Hill): As usual, our annual debate about the work of the Public Accounts Committee has been poorly attended. Unusually, we have heard several contributions this afternoon and evening from hon. Members who are not members of the Committee. I cannot remember hearing so many stimulating and interesting speeches from hon. Members on both sides of the House who are not members of the Committee on matters about which they have special knowledge, either for constituency reasons or, in the case of the hon. Member for Amber Valley (Mr. Oppenheim), for reasons that attach to previous work before coming to this place. The debate has been especially stimulating and interesting for that reason.

A regular feature of this annual debate are the tributes which are paid by hon. Members on both sides of the House to the Chairman and members of the PAC. It is not a matter of ritual to reiterate our appreciation. The fact is that they undertake work which is often unpublicised, and which is certainly unglamorous. It is especially important, however, as the Committee acts as the watchdog of the House over Government Departments. I associate myself with the tributes which have been paid to the members of the Committee, and especially those directed to my right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon).

As my right hon. Friend explained, the work of the Comptroller and Auditor General and the National Audit Office has several facets. First, it is intended to prevent corruption, and it is fair to say that there is nothing in the reports before us that identifies corruption. Secondly, their work is designed to seek to obtain value for money. It was disturbing when my right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne told the House that the NAO has been able to devote only one third of its time, instead of one half, to projects involving the test of value for money, as distinct from ensuring that the accounts are accurate. I hope that the NAO will be assisted by the Government to recruit enough staff to change the present imbalance.

It is a fact that the PAC, assisted by the Comptroller and Auditor General and his staff, has found much inefficiency in several Government Departments. We must all be concerned about what has been uncovered. My hon. Friend the Member for Coventry, North-East (Mr. Park) said that the PAC has identified many instances where money has been wasted. I suppose that the most serious allegations, at least in scale, have concerned the torpedo programme. We have been told that the programme will cost £5 billion by the mid-1990s, and my right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne asked what we shall get for that expenditure. The relevant report tells us that we have obtained "poor value for money". Those are the precise words that appear in the report.

The hon. Member for Horsham (Sir P. Hordern), who has great experience in these matters, told the House that in his opinion it was the largest single waste of money that he has ever seen. I regard that charge as being extremely serious. The hon. Gentleman asked, for example, whether we should continue to bear the burden of the programme. The truth is that we do not know how much money has been spent or wasted on it. As I have said, the total cost will amount to £5 billion by the mid-1990s, and the hon. Member for Portsmouth, North (Mr. Griffiths) told us that less than £5 billion has been spent at present. I think he said that half that amount has been expended.

However, we do not know exactly how much has been spent, let alone how much has been wasted. This information has been blanked out in the PAC's report. I refer especially to the answer to question 2108 from the hon. Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Latham). The question was asked and an answer was received. The Members of the PAC may have that information, but the rest of us are not aware how much money has been spent on the programme.

Only the hon. Member for Portsmouth, North seemed to disagree with the suggestion that the torpedoes do not work. However, not even he tried to suggest that all the money had been spent wisely and nothing had been wasted. He seemed to accept that there were grounds for criticising the Ministry of Defence, if not Marconi. What has happened to civil servants in the Ministry of Defence who are responsible for what the hon. Member for Horsham described as the largest single waste of money he has ever seen? That is a serious matter. Ministers have changed from time to time, but the waste of money has continued under Governments of both political parties. However, civil servants do not change that often. The question must be asked: what is being done about those civil servants who are responsible for waste of money on that scale?

The hon. Member for Amber Valley dealt in some detail with Nexos. I thought that his contribution was interesting. There is a lot to learn from his experience and comments about the reasons for the failure of Nexos, even though I would not agree with the hon. Gentleman's political views. He agreed that there had been incompetent management at Nexos. He said that the National

Enterprise Board had been largely responsible for insisting that Nexos should make a series of poor deals with other NEB-backed companies. He also told us that a large measure of responsibility rested with the NEB.

The hon. Gentleman drew the conclusion that no Government, no politician and no civil servant should ever attempt to set up new companies or new industries. That is where I part company with the hon. Gentleman. On that basis, no industrialist or business man would ever set up a new company or industry, because it is not unknown for business men, industrialists or merchant bankers to make mistakes and to have failures. I disagree most strongly with the hon. Gentleman's conclusion, but I am concerned about some of the information that he put before the House.

It seemed, from what the hon. Gentleman said, that there were grounds for criticising the civil servants at the National Enterprise Board who were responsible for dealing with Nexos, and perhaps those in the Department of Trade and Industry. That also came from the report of the Public Accounts Committee. The people at the top of the company lost their jobs. From what we have read between the lines of the report from the Public Accounts Committee, I suspect that many people employed at Nexos also lost their jobs when it was wound up and split up. But what happened to the civil servants who were partly responsible for that failure—those who decided to "drip feed" Nexos, as the Public Accounts Committee put it? What has been done as a result of those examples of inefficiency in the Civil Service?

The hon. Member for Scarborough (Sir M. Shaw) made two other points about the Nexos report. First, the hon. Gentleman argued that there were grounds for criticism of the relationship between the Government and Government-appointed non-executive directors on the Nexos board. Similarly, he said that there were lessons to be learnt from the contents of the report on nominee directors — an investigation which arose from the De Lorean case.

It is clear from the Treasury response to the Public Accounts Committee report, and from the contribution of my right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne, that the Government have responded by issuing a new guidance to nominee directors as a result of the PAC report. It is interesting to see in the report that many of those nominee directors are former civil servants. I hope that those civil servants responsible for the torpedo project and Nexos have not been appointed nominee directors by any of those NDPBs.

But what about the other directors? As I understand it from the report introduced this evening by my right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne, the directors of British Leyland and Rolls-Royce are not included on the list of nominee directors. The Treasury seems to regard them as special directors, for reasons which I do not understand, although I have read the report several times.

The Government have a shareholding of nearly 100 per cent. in both British Leyland and Rolls-Royce. What guidance is given to the directors? We are told, it seems that the directors are appointed by a self-perpetuating elite. The chairman of BL, the chairman of Rolls-Royce and existing directors scout about for people they think will be good, congenial directors, and then make recommendations to the shareholders—the Government — for endorsement at some annual general meeting. That is not good enough.

I hope that at some time in the future the Public Accounts Committee will go on to consider the relationship between the Government and those directors who are not covered by the report about nominee directors. What are the duties and responsibilities of these other directors who deal with much bigger companies and enterprises in important industries compared with the directors who are the subject of the report? What is the relationship between those directors and the Department of Trade and Industry? We should be told.

The hon. Member for Scarborough made a second point in relation to the Nexos report. He argued, rightly, that political considerations had been involved in the decision to establish Nexos and that political lessons should be learnt from that experience. Again, the lessons will vary according to one's political views.

The Nexos report is not the only one that we need to read with political views in mind. As my hon. Friend the Member for Coventry, North-East made clear, political considerations were involved in the way in which the sale of Government shareholdings in British Telecom was handled. That sale was strongly criticised by my right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne, who asked why there was such a rush to sell everything at once, because that was bound to depress the price and affect the income received by the taxpayers through the Government. My right hon. Friend argued that the Government had not received as much money as they could have done from the sale, and that the taxpayers had lost. He asked several times: why was there a rush? The answer — which perhaps we should not expect the Chairman of the PAC to give us—is "political reasons". The Government had to rush through the sale of BT to finance their deficit. The whole of the Government's strategy on public expenditure and income is based on the sale of assets. The Government rushed the sale — regardless of getting the best possible price for BT—for political reasons.

That brings me to the report on the proposed defence school of music, the implications of which are the most disturbing of all these reports. The hon. Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel) questioned the fundamental decision on the amalgamation of three existing schools of music. I think that he will be pleased to learn that the Treasury has agreed that that fundamental decision will be reviewed. It has said also that there will be other investigations, reconsiderations and reappraisals of the economics of where the merged school will be located.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne told us that if there was to be a merger of those schools of music, it was clear that Eastney was the best site and that Deal was less suitable and more expensive than Eastney. Then why was Deal chosen as a site by the Ministry of Defence? The hon. Member for Rutland and Melton told us that the paper was the "least convincing" one he had seen in all his time on the PAC.

The hon. Member for Scarborough went as far, or further, in the examination of Sir Clive Whitmore. It is important to put on record what the hon. Gentleman said:

> "Reading this document one gets the clear impression, which has been borne out by your answers so far, that the decisions were not made on financial grounds and that after the decisions had been made, then a financial investigation was carried out in the hope that perhaps the decision already taken could be justified."

[Mr. Terry Davis]

Having read that report, I think that the way in which the hon. Gentleman put that point was justified. That is the impression one gets from the wriggling that went on in trying to answer the Committee's questions.

The PAC concluded that it viewed the decision with "grave disquiet". It reminded me of some of the decisions I saw when I worked as an auditor. Decisions were taken for non-commercial reasons and then an economic justification was prepared. Not surprisingly, the results did not match the economic justification, and eventually the chickens came home to roost. If people had said at the beginning that they were taking the decision for non-commercial reasons, there would have been much less criticism and no blame would have been attached to it.

It sounds as though this decision may be more serious. The hon. Member for Portsmouth, South (Mr. Hancock) made a series of serious allegations, and there are some serious points to be answered by the Financial Secretary, or perhaps by the Government on a later occasion.

The question is whether the decision was taken for political reasons. My right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne told the House that Deal was included on the list only as a result of representations by the right hon. and learned Member for Dover (Mr. Rees) who, at the time, was Chief Secretary to the Treasury. But the question raised by the allegations of the hon. Member for Portsmouth, South is whether there might be some other reason for the decision having been taken — a reason which would be regarded by everyone in the House as being even more serious. I am not clear how we will be assured that there has not been an example of the sort of corruption that we all fear to find in the public service. The Financial Secretary owes the House a statement on how the Government intend to proceed to ensure that the public interest has not been betrayed.

It is clear from the report that both inefficiency and political considerations have been involved in the control of nursing manpower. My right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne and my hon. Friends the Members for Coventry, North-East and for Fife, Central (Mr. Hamilton) fastened on to that report and explained how the Department of Health and Social Security imposed centralised controls over the numbers of staff being employed in the National Health Service without knowing whether the right numbers of nurses were being employed in the first place and, indeed, without knowing whether they needed to increase the number of nurses. Obviously that is a matter of political consideration. It is clear that, by any managerial test, it was a grossly inefficient decision to take.

I end on a point with which I began. The prospect of an examination by the hon. Member for Rutland and Melton may frighten permanent secretaries, as my hon. Friend the Member for Fife, Central suggested. The reports of the Public Accounts Committee may be as damning as my hon. Friend called them. However, as my hon. Friend asked, what has happened to the people who were responsible for this waste of money? What happened as a result of the 1980 report by the Public Accounts Committee on the torpedo programme? What has happened as a result of the latest report published a year ago? We should be told whether civil servants are expected to be accountable for their inefficiency.

9.27 pm

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Norman Lamont): I have to confess that this is the first time that I have had the pleasure of attending a debate on reports of the Public Accounts Committee. I am slightly embarrassed to make that admission, because it is only a few months ago that I was standing here admitting that it was the first time that I had attended a debate on the Army. The response then was much the same as it is now. I thought that I should make that admission before going on to make any ritual noises about how sad it is that more hon. Members have not joined in the debate. However, I agree with the hon. Member for Birmingham, Hodge Hill (Mr. Davies) that one of the interesting things about the debate is the number of Members who are not members of the Public Accounts Committee who have participated and contributed to the debate.

I now find, rather suddenly, that I am a member of the Public Accounts Committee. I thank the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon) for writing to me no less, and inviting me to attend the sessions of the Public Accounts Committee. As a good Conservative I have sought precedents in this matter, and I believe that that has not happened much in the past. I shall certainly bear his kind invitation in mind.

Being a stranger to these debates, I was somewhat puzzled when, as the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne was finishing his speech, the Chamber filled up with about 50 hon. Members, all of whom appeared deeply concerned about the defence school of music. I found it a puzzling phenomenon. However, it later became clear why they had arrived.

Even if I have not attended these debates before, as a Minister I am certainly extremely aware, and have always been aware, of the effectiveness of the Public Accounts Committee and of the importance of its recommendations. I can certainly say to the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne that its recommendations have a considerable impact on Departments and Ministers.

My hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Latham) said that the Public Accounts Committee struck terror only into mandarins. I can assure him that it strikes terror not only into mandarins. It has a far wider impact than that.

My hon. Friend made an outstanding speech. I think that everybody who was here to hear it will agree with that. We became a little alarmed at the force of my hon. Friend's attack on back slapping. I thought that he was going to go in for a bit of back stabbing, instead of back slapping, such was the vitriol of his attack. I became a little alarmed about the friendship that seemed to be growing up between the hon. Member for Fife, Central (Mr. Hamilton) and my hon. Friend. It seemed as though, in his mellowing and ripening years, he felt that he had found a good successor on the Public Accounts Committee, but I can assure the hon. Member for Fife, Central that, having known my hon. Friend for some 25 years, despite his acid remarks, he is a very nice person, although he is an effective member of the Public Accounts Committee.

I think that everybody is agreed that the function of the Public Accounts Committee is of enormous importance. Obviously it is a matter of public interest that the influence and scope of the Committee should be increased, as it has been increasing. There is one measure, which perhaps is not adequate, of how that has been happening, and that

is the number of reports coming from the Committee. In the current session the Committee has already passed the 1984-85 total of 38 reports. Of course, it is not just the quantity of reports that matters, but it shows that the area of accountability and the ability of the Committee, supported by the National Audit Office, has been widening, which is a welcome development.

As a newcomer to the debate, I pay tribute to the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne for his work as Chairman of the Committee. Even in the short time that I have been in the Treasury, seeing the paperwork, and having access to all the papers that go before the Committee, I know that it is a demanding job, and that it is one to which the right hon. Gentleman has given an enormous amount of care and dedicated attention. The House is very much in debt to him for the way in which he has done that.

The dilemma for a person in my position responding to the debate is normally the difficulty of having to reply to so many different subjects with which the Financial Secretary is unconnected. Perhaps my problem is different. I am slightly embarrassed at the extent to which I have been in the Departments that are connected with the reports. I am relieved to say that, as far as I can see, in none of them have I had direct, intimate and immediate involvement, but I have been skirmishing around them.

Two defence subjects have been raised in the debate. One is simple and one is complicated. The simple one is torpedoes and the complicated one is the defence school of music. I feel that I have been extremely close to that, first by being in the Ministry of Defence, and secondly by being a parliamentary neighbour of my hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel).

This may be only the 11th report, but it must be at least my hon. Friend's 12th speech on the defence school of music. I pay tribute to the tremendous campaign and assiduity of my hon. Friend in his determination to see the school in his constituency retained. Although I am his neighbour, I confess that I have never had the pleasure of visiting the Kneller hall school of music. Alas, I have found that in public life it is sometimes necessary to angle, even in public, for invitations, and I look forward—

Mr. Jessel: My right hon. Friend will be extremely welcome to visit Kneller hall, provided that the Government take the right decision.

Mr. Lamont: That seems to be a somewhat conditional response. It does not fit very well with my hon. Friend's normally very generous, open and spontaneous nature.

I agree with the hon. Member for Hodge Hill that serious issues have been raised in the report and in the debate. The central and obvious point is that the Government have accepted the Committee's recommendations and taken its points extremely seriously. Because of that, the decision is being reconsidered and a fresh and full evaluation of the best way to proceed is now being undertaken. As my hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham stressed, that evaluation, which includes the use of professional accountants outside the Department, will include the option of leaving the present schools where they are. I can assure my hon. Friend that the Treasury will have to be satisfied about the finances of the chosen solution. The reassessment is not yet completed, but my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence will announce the decision as soon as possible.

The hon. Member for Portsmouth, South (Mr. Hancock) raised a serious point. I do not think that the hon. Member for Hodge Hill chose to follow that up, but he would agree that that point was serious. The hon. Member for Portsmouth, South asked whether there had been contact with Portsmouth council about the valuation of the land. It was made clear in Sir Clive Whitmore's evidence to the Committee, on page 11 of the report, that the PSA had been asked by the MOD and had informally consulted city council officials. That is, it had consulted not members of the council, but city council officials. That is what happened.

The hon. Member for Portsmouth, South—who has explained the reasons for his absence from the Chamber to me—referred to the differential unemployment rate. It is true to say that unemployment in Deal was higher than in Eastney, although not higher than in Portsmouth as a whole. The hon. Member for Hodge Hill asked why Deal was chosen. As I understand the position, when the former Secretary of State considered the matter, one of the factors that he took into consideration was the number of defence establishments in the Southampton-Portsmouth area. That is one of the reasons why he wanted to look elsewhere and why, with his well-known passion for devolution and regional development, he wanted to look for a site in the north of England. However, when no suitable site could be found there, the decision was made in favour of Deal.

The employment position was considered, on the ground that although the investment appraisal favoured Eastney, it was only just so. My right hon. Friend the former Secretary of State felt that when one took into account the employment position, the balance was swung in favour of Deal.

Mr. Terry Davis: As the Financial Secretary to the Treasury appears to have concluded his remarks about that report, may I press him further on that point? I did not choose to pursue the issue raised by the hon. Member for Portsmouth, South (Mr. Hancock), as the Financial Secretary said. I do not have the intimate knowledge of that subject that the hon. Member for Portsmouth, South has. However, he made several allegations about the dubious nature of the valuation of land, and that was endorsed by the hon. Member for Portsmouth, North. The hon. Gentleman questioned whether anyone had given misinformation about the value of the land. He also commented on what had not happened since the Treasury minute was issued.

The whole thing leaves a lingering smell. I am not criticising the right hon. and learned Member for Dover (Mr. Rees). Even the former Chief Secretary to the Treasury is entitled to press his constituency interests, but the House should be assured that there is nothing more serious here at a lower level in some branches of the Civil Service. I am not saying that there was any truth in the allegations, but they were serious and should be investigated. We cannot leave the matter in this way.

Mr. Lamont: I shall certainly follow up other things that were said by the hon. Member for Portsmouth, South. I felt it right to comment on some of the things that he said even though the hon. Member for Hodge Hill had not pressed them, because I felt they were important. I hope that no aspersions will be cast on the actions or motives of my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for

[Mr. Lamont]

Dover (Mr. Rees). I know that the hon. Member for Birmingham, Hodge Hill did not do that. I knew that I would be responding to this debate, and when I inquired, one of the things that I was told immediately was that when my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Dover was Chief Secretary he asked that he should play no part in the Treasury on any decisions taken on this matter, because he wished to be free to press his constituency interests.

Mr. Terry Davis: I have already made it clear that I am not raising any questions about the former Chief Secretary, for whom I have a high personal regard. The allegations made by the hon. Member for Portsmouth, South deserve to be answered. They cannot be answered now from the Dispatch Box by the Minister, who had no notice of those questions, and I do not expect him to deal with them now. I am asking him for an assurance that those allegations will be investigated by the appropriate people.

Mr. Lamont: I had hoped and thought that I had given that impression. If I did not, I now give the undertaking that I will look into the matters.

I shall now move from the subject of the defence school of music to another subject that was raised by the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne and by the hon. Member for Coventry, North-East (Mr. Park). I think that it was also touched on by my hon. Friend the Member for Scarborough (Sir M. Shaw) when he talked about Nexos. It is the whole question of nominee directors, which has arisen out of a few cases. I say a few, but that is not to say that they are not important cases, because they include the De Lorean case and the Nexos case, in which the argument has been advanced that where the taxpayer is investing money it is right that he should be represented by nominee directors.

As the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne said, we have issued a revised and expanded guidance note on the appointment of nominee directors. Copies of that were sent to the Committee. I am sorry that the right hon. Gentleman received one only today. I understood that it was sent yesterday, and while I appreciate that that is short notice, I had a choice of either sending it at short notice or delaying it until after this debate and opting for a comfortable life. I thought that it was a good thing that it should be available for the benefit of the Committee. I hope that when the right hon. Gentleman has had an opportunity to study the note in greater detail he will find that it meets many of the anxieties put forward by the Committee.

The prime responsibility for appraising projects and for monitoring lies with the sponsoring Department, the agencies or the non-departmental public bodies concerned. One has to strike a balance between commercial freedom and accountability. The guidelines we have issued do not mean that the funds invested in a commercial business will always be protected by a nominee director. The Department or the non-departmental public body will have to consider in each case whether the appointment of a nominee director is appropriate, bearing in mind the size and nature of the investment. The guidance note draws a distinction between large listed companies, where perhaps the Government have a residual shareholding following privatisation, and companies which are having funds invested in pursuit of regional or inward investment policies or for selective assistance.

In the former case — residual shareholding in the large company — detailed monitoring is not usually required. The role of the nominee director in such a company is to keep a general eye on the value of the Government's investments. He may be concerned with things like the golden share. Careful monitoring is certainly required when it comes to companies where money has been invested in pursuit of regional or inward investment policies. In this case the nominee director may be required to strengthen the board and to provide certain skills.

The hon. Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Deakins) put his finger on one of the points of concern to the Committee. The director of a company, as we are all aware, cannot just represent an interest, and a nominee director has the same responsibilities as any other director of a company. The problem that we face is how to reconcile what the PAC wants with the obligations that are placed by law on directors. We have reached the conclusion that, where assistance is provided, there should be agreement between the company and the Government, agency or sponsoring Department about the degree of monitoring and the freedom of the director to report back.

The hon. Gentleman asked whether companies would be free to decide not to accept the financial assistance offered on such terms. The answer is yes. People will be asked whether they wish to accept the terms on which this monitoring will take place.

My hon. Friend the Member for Scarborough identified the problem of a conflict of interests. I agree that one can have a conflict of interest if a director is the person responsible for deciding on assistance within a Department or within a Government agency. That is not a desirable situation, and in my view it should only occur exceptionally. When such conflicts arise, we intend that the appointment should require the agreement of the permanent secretary as well.

Another question which has been raised in the debate concerns nursing manpower and whether there is a formula for the right number of nurses for a complex organisation such as the National Health Service. The Government believe that this is a matter for the health authorities in the context of their own needs and strategies. When one reflects on the problem, one realises the degree of nursing for a given standard of medical care can vary in different parts of the country, because of morbidity rates, the pattern of services and the cluster of mental illness and mental handicap hospitals in certain areas. The sheer mathematics of a formula for the entire country does not make a great deal of sense.

It is right, however, that within a region there should be a formula, and one ought to be able to make an assessment within each region. A short time ago we did not have a formula in any region for making an assessment of the right number of nurses. Although we have not reached the position whereby each regional health authority has such a formula, we are moving to the situation where most of the health authorities have one or are planning to adopt one. That is the way the Government see it, rather than having an overall formula for the country.

The hon. Member for Fife, Central asked when the Cumberlege report would be available. I am afraid that the only information that I have is that it will be available later

this year. I shall find out whether I can get anything more precise, and if so I shall communicate it to the hon. Gentleman.

A certain amount of time was taken up with the privatisation of British Telecom. A question was raised concerning the basis for the accounts and why we have moved from current cost accounting to historic cost accounting prior to privatisation. I am sure that many hon. Members will recognise that there are strong reasons why one needs to have current cost accounting in nationalised industries, where often there is heavy investment in old assets. In contrast, current cost accounting has not been generally adopted by the private sector. The policy that we followed at the time of privatisation was to have accounts on both bases available because we were aware that investors would want to have the type of accounts that are most commonly used in the private sector.

The right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne asked whether we could not have accomplished the sale of equity on a bit-by-bit basis. I was not sure whether he was not advocating drip feeding of the type condemned when applied to Nexos. We have looked at the matter, but phasing of sales is not favoured because, leaving aside the fact that the political objective of privatisation would not be achieved, there is a problem of the overhang of the stock on the market.

The right hon. Gentleman contrasted the position of the gilts market with that of the equity market on privatisation. With respect, there is a difference between the two markets. Although it would be a simplification to say that gilts are much alike and although it would be wrong to say that there is no room for relative price movements, it is a fact that the overhang of stock in one particular company tends to have an effect on the prices of that one company rather than on the wider market, which is the effect of a tap stock on the gilt market. The effect of phasing would have been adverse on the price.

The hon. Member for Coventry, North-East talked about the terms of privatisation, the fat cats in the City and the commissions that are being earned. Sometimes one hears that the Government are driving a hard bargain on commissions and privatisation. Following the British Telecom sales there have been some secondary sales, including Cable and Wireless, British Aerospace and Britoil, in which the commissions have certainly been lower than those negotiated for BT.

We want to negotiate a good price and the best and keenest commission that we can possibly get, but the BT sale was the biggest share offering ever, and when arguing over commissions we had to bear in mind the natural anxiety about whether the issue of the share could be guaranteed to be a success. Obviously that was a major factor in the negotiations of the commission.

The hon. Members for Fife, Central, for Hodge Hill and for Portsmouth, South and my hon. Friends the Members for Portsmouth, North (Mr. Griffiths) and for Rutland and Melton rightly talked about the torpedo programme. No one could disagree with the general dismay at the problems that have been encountered in the development of Tigerfish, and no one could quarrel with the fact that it has been expensive and that there has been a long delay. It is the function of the PAC to identify that and to investigate why it has happened. But I agree a little with my hon. Friend the Member for Portsmouth, North. We must identify the cost overruns and where things have gone wrong, but it is wrong to imply, even if a project has had cost overruns and things have gone wrong, that a weapons system which we are desperately anxious to export is not working when it is working. The hon. Member for Portsmouth, South went somewhat far in his condemnation of the Tigerfish torpedo. It has been successfully tested and the Royal Navy has professed itself well satisfied with the results of the test.

The hon. Gentleman seemed to think it rather odd that a torpedo should be tested on a stationary ship. I am not sure what other sort of ship it could be tested on. Perhaps it is a new version of scrap and build, which is, I know, a way in which people always like to aid the shipbuilding industry. It seems rather odd to think of having a moving ship with men on it in order to test our weapons. The Royal Navy has professed itself well satisfied with the Tigerfish torpedo. The new development incorporates some of the technology in the Sting Ray torpedo, which was the point made by my hon. Friend for Portsmouth, North. As a number of foreign countries have the torpedo and we are anxious to export more, I think we ought not to be ashamed to say that those who have bought it have a good product. The right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne and the hon. Member for Fife, Central are right, of course. It is a matter of enormous concern that we have had the problems that we have in the development of this torpedo.

Some of the points raised go back a long way, to the early 1970s and, in terms of the price and contractural arrangement, we have a very different situation today. All the contracts now are fixed-price contracts—that applies to Tigerfish, Spearfish and Sting Ray. It is true that we do not have a prime contractor for all three torpedoes. There is a prime contractor for Tigerfish, for the weapons handling system and for the torpedo. The problem is that Sting Ray is fired from several different platforms—helicopters, aircraft and ships—and one cannot have a prime contractor that covers the lot. The Ministry of Defence said that it would consider whether the prime contractorship could be widened in the case of the Spearfish contract. That is being considered. No decision has been made on it. It was felt that it would not be commercially right to disrupt the existing fixed-price contract to go for primary contractorship across the board.

Various hon. Members raised the question of competition for torpedos in future. It is intended that when Spearfish has finished its development there should be a contract for production. I assure my hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton that there will be some vigorous competition at the subcontract level. Three quarters of Sting Ray will be subcontracted and two thirds of that three quarters is being placed by competition. I am assured that companies outside the GEC group are filling a large part of that. I think that there is a real prospect for competition there.

The hon. Member for Fyfe, Central raised the question of collaboration on a future generation of torpedoes. I entirely agree with him. This is the logical way to go. His logic applies not only to torpedoes, but to many other weapons systems.

Mr. Terry Davis: The Minister has not answered the important question about what happened to the civil servants who were responsible for the waste of money on

[Mr. Terry Davis]

the torpedo programme and also partly responsible for the waste of money on Nexos. If the Minister does not know the answer, will he find out and write to me?

Mr. Lamont: I am willing to write to the hon. Gentleman. When I was a Minister at the Ministry of Defence, I can well remember that I asked exactly the question that the hon. Gentleman has put to me. Trying to find out which civil servants dealt with a programme stretching over 25 years is a pretty difficult and lengthy thing to do. I assure the hon. Gentleman that people's performance is taken into account, but it would be wrong to think that only a very small group of people are connected with the project. It would be quite wrong also to think that all the fault lies with civil servants. As a number of my hon. Friends and Opposition Members have indicated, much of the fault lies also with British industry.

The method adopted in the debate, of concentrating on about six subjects, has proved extremely worth while and has targeted the debate most usefully. I therefore thank all those hon. Members who have participated in it.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House takes note of the 26th to 38th Reports from the Committee of Public Accounts of Session 1984-85, of the 1st to 14th and 16th to 18th Reports of Session 1985-86 and of the Treasury Minutes on those Reports (Cmnd. 9696, 9743, 9755, 9776 and 9808), with particular reference to the following Reports:—

1984-85:	28th	The torpedo programme
1985-86:	1st	Role and responsibilities of nominee directors
	3rd	Sale of Government shareholding in British Telecommunications plc
	8th	Nexos
	11th	Proposed Defence School of Music
	14th	Nursing Manpower.

Orders of the Day

OUTER SPACE BILL *[LORDS]*

As amended (in the Standing Committee), considered; read the Third time and passed, with amendments.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 79(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.)

ROAD TRAFFIC

That the Motor Vehicles (Variation of Speed Limits) Regulations 1986, dated 21st May 1986, a copy of which was laid before this House on 3rd June, be approved.—*[Mr. Neubert.]*

Question agreed to.

ESTIMATES

Resolved,

That this House agrees with the Report [26th June] of the Liaison Committee.—*[Mr. Neubert.]*

Water Authorities (Privatisation)

10.1 pm

The Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Nicholas Ridley): With — *[Interruption.]* — permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement.

My consultations on privatising the water authorities have shown that, while preparations for their privatisation are well under way, more time is needed to prepare the necessary legislation. I have therefore concluded that we are unlikely to be able to introduce the Bill in the next Session.

I understand that further powers may be needed to enable water authorities to prepare themselves for privatisation.

I reaffirm the Government's intention to proceed with water privatisation as soon as practicable.

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): Apparently, at least for once in a while — judging from the noise coming from the Conservative Benches — this is the news that the Conservative party, like the rest of the country, wanted to hear. Is the Secretary of State aware that this is a scandalous way for him — *[Interruption.]* — and his Cabinet colleagues to behave, as a statement has had to be dragged out of them at 10 o'clock on a Thursday night. At that, it is a pathetic and inadequate statement to meet the information needs and requirements of the House and to meet the needs and requirements of those responsible for managing the industry, those who work in it and the public. It is a pathetic performance, and a humiliating introduction to the Secretary of State's tenure of his high office.

Will the Secretary of State make it clear that several major legal questions, which are unanswered, and which the Government are currently unable to answer, lie behind this humiliating climb down? Will he confirm that the Government have no legal title to those assets, and are unable to sell them for that reason alone? Will the right hon. Gentleman also confirm that the water authorities have no legal powers to prepare themselves for privatisation in the way that this Government have been urging them, or indeed pushing them, to do? Will he further confirm that privatised water authorities would not be recognised as competent authorities by the EEC, could not, therefore, be acceptable to the Community, and would not be eligible for the sort of Community investment that is currently being made in order to try to clean up the pollution, for example, in the Mersey basin?

Will the Secretary of State also make it clear that his friends in the City have told the Government that there is no way in which the water authorities can be sold effectively for any realistic price, given the pending prosecution of Her Majesty's Government by the European Economic Community, because the quality of bathing water on dozens if not hundreds of British beaches does not match the minimum requirements? *[Interruption.]* Given that these proposals were at the heart of the Government's future programme and their legislative intentions, it is amusing to see how light Conservative Members are making of the retractions. They will not be laughing when they start looking for money for the tax cuts in the next Budget.

Is it not clear that the creation of private monopolies would fail completely to provide any realistic safeguards for consumers? In that respect, among others, the Government have failed to provide any convincing rationale for their proposals *[Interruption.]* —

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is a very serious statement.

Dr. Cunningham: I can understand why Conservative Members are anxious to get this over as quickly as possible. How could the Government have ensured the necessary regulation of privatised water authorities, which may well have major shareholdings of some of the biggest polluters in the country, to guarantee that they would meet the requirements for environmental protection that millions demand and expect?

Has not this whole episode been an example of how a reckless and despondent Prime Minister was willing to gamble with the health and well-being of the people of this country in a desperate grab for cash to bail out yet another election promise? We make it clear that, like the vast majority of people, we warmly welcome this recognition of the abject failure of the Government's thinking. We shall go on opposing these proposals if ever, or whenever, they return.

Mr. Ridley: I find the hon. Gentleman's mood a little difficult to interpret. I cannot discover whether he is angry or pleased. Some of his concern seems to be thoroughly misplaced. He said that the statement had been dragged out of me, but it was not a bit like that. I am all eagerness, but only a few days ago the Labour party was asking for the Bill to be postponed. I quote his words when he was told that we were proceeding with the Bill. He said that the Government's

"motivation is a crude, desperate grab for cash to buy votes."
—[*Official Report*, 5 February 1986; Vol. 91, c. 289.]

Now, when we have abandoned that immoral technique for a year, he seems to be thoroughly disappointed. I cannot help thinking that the hon. Gentleman is a little sad because he thinks that we may have shot his fox.

There is no suggestion whatsoever that we do not have legal title to sell these assets. Although the legal powers are utterly adequate for what the water authorities have done so far in co-operating to further the cause of privatisation, as flotation comes nearer their powers to plan and prepare for their operations as a private company are not entirely without doubt. For that reason, I included in my statement an undertaking that we would remove any such uncertainty so that in due course we may continue with the policy when we are returned to power after the next election.

The hon. Gentleman had further contradictions to put before the House. He said that he thought that the water authorities were unsaleable because of the state of the beaches in certain parts of the country. Then he went on to say that what we had done was to deny ourselves massive tax cuts. He cannot have it both ways. He was all over the shop tonight. I have never seen such a deplorable performance, and I know why: because it is the last time that the hon. Gentleman will be able to make the kind of silly speech that he made tonight.

Mr. Michael Colvin (Romsey and Waterside): Will my right hon. Friend acknowledge that it is a little unfair to make a statement like this at 10 o'clock on a Thursday evening, because Opposition Members normally enjoy a four-day weekend? For them to be expected to be here on a Thursday evening to listen to a statement like this is really asking a little bit too much.

[Mr. Michael Colvin]

However, as Conservative Members are here in strength, I should like to ask my right hon. Friend to give an undertaking to the House that he will think again about the disbursal of the proceeds from the liquidation of these assets. When the water authorities were originally set up, certain water boards that provided water, such as the Andover borough council, had their assets sequestered and no compensation has been paid to them. When my right hon. Friend comes to decide how the proceeds from the privatisation of the water authorities are to be disbursed, I hope that he will bear in mind the original owners of those water assets.

Mr. Ridley: I agree with what my hon. Friend says about the impending departure of the sleepers, which has caused and will continue to cause me to keep my answers as short as possible, so that the weekends of Opposition Members are not truncated and made short. I do not believe that there is a case of the kind that he mentioned relating to who owns the assets. However, a little time will enable us to examine all such questions, and I am sure that my hon. Friend is grateful that we shall do so.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): I congratulate the Secretary of State on responding so promptly to the points that we made to him when we initiated a debate on the subject about 10 days ago. We told him then that his plans would not succeed. Will the next election manifesto contain a reference to water privatisation, unlike the previous one, so that if the Government wish to proceed with privatisation they will have a mandate for it, for a change, if they are elected?

Secondly, given that the Secretary of State's Department has now abandoned rates reform, local government structure reform and rent decontrol reform, does the Department of the Environment have any other plan left to bring out on this side of the general election?

Thirdly, has the Secretary of State made any estimate of how much the Government will have to find from another budget in terms of additional revenue, since the prime motivation appeared to be financial gain to the Government from privatising the water authorities?

Lastly, when was it that the Government realised that what was always bound to be a several stage process lasting several years could never be completed within the maximum remaining length of this Parliament? To the rest of us, it was obvious a long time ago. Did it take the Secretary of State to make clear what was clear to the rest of us a long time ago?

Mr. Ridley: I must confess that when I heard the hon. Gentleman's speech in the recent debate on privatisation I thought that perhaps we ought to look again at the case for proceeding with it even more quickly.

I believe in the privatisation of state assets just as much as I believe in the privatisation of water. However, I actually believe it important to get it absolutely right so that when the Bill comes before the House, as it will, although the hon. Gentleman probably will not be here because it will be after the next election, and perhaps will be included in our manifesto—he will not be able to find one part that does not fully satisfy the House in all reasonable quarters.

I assure the hon. Gentleman that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor will not lose revenue that could have been available for tax cuts this side of the election. The great advantage is that there will be even more revenue available for tax cuts after the election.

Mr. Roger Sims (Chislehurst): Is my right hon. Friend aware that Conservative Members who warmly supported the policy of privatisation are disappointed that he has found it necessary to make this statement? However, I assure him that we realise the complexity of this legislation and are anxious that, when it comes forward, it is comprehensive. We welcome the reaffirmation of his adherence to the policy of privatisation. When he brings forward the legislation, it will have the wholehearted support of Conservative Members.

Mr. Ridley: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, to whom the information was first imparted because it was he who inquired about this matter not long ago. I am also grateful for his support for both the principle of privatisation and the obvious need to ensure that we get all aspects of this massive and complicated matter correct before presenting proposals to the House.

Mr. Michael Cocks (Bristol, South): I congratulate the Secretary of State on maintaining his reputation for always making the worst of a bad job. Since the motivation for privatisation is mainly political, what bearing will his announcement have on the timing of the next general election?

Mr. Ridley: I do not quite understand whether the right hon. Gentleman welcomes my statement or is against it. He appeared to be somewhat ambivalent. Many Conservative Members, and quite a few Opposition Members, believe that the Government have taken the right decision to present proposals that are fully worked out and correct.

The right hon. Gentleman must reach his own conclusions about the timing of the general election. On a personal note, I hope that it is a long time away so that we can have the pleasure of the right hon. Gentleman's company a little longer.

Sir John Page (Harrow, West): Is my right hon. Friend aware that the country will find the bogus indignation of the Opposition absolutely absurd? Does he appreciate that the captain of the Opposition ship that is sailing tonight has produced a unique feat of navigation by running into both Scylla and Charybdis on the same statement?

Does my right hon. Friend accept that all sides of the water industry will be grateful to him for giving a little more time to study the complications of privatisation before it occurs?

Mr. Ridley: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend on all but one point—I do not think that the Opposition's indignation is bogus, I think that it is genuine. I believe that the fury unleashed by the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) is because he wants us to proceed with the Bill. I cannot think of any other reason for there being so little welcome for my statement.

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): Does the right hon. Gentleman accept that any prolonged period of uncertainty cannot be good for those who work in the industry and that there needs to be clarification as quickly as possible?

In view of the difficult legislative position to which the right hon. Gentleman referred, will there be any paving legislation during the next 12 months? If not, will there be

more than one parliamentary year in which it will be necessary to introduce legislation before the matter is concluded? If so, will it not be a period of three or even four years before the matter is satisfactorily concluded?

Mr. Ridley: I can assure the hon. Gentleman that there is no uncertainty. The water industry will be privatised as soon as the general election is over and it will be done by a Conservative Government. The hon. Gentleman can assure his constituents that they have no need to worry about returning to the dead hand of state ownership. All necessary steps will be taken to ensure that when the legislation is presented it is in complete shape and perfectly proper. I cannot go beyond what I said in my statement earlier about any necessary changes beforehand.

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge): Does my right hon. Friend agree that, far from this being a humiliating climb down, it is no more than what might have happened given the reply which the Minister of State made in response to the debate on water privatisation? When responding to doubts that had been expressed by Conservative Members, he said that the Government would listen.

Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is possible, if we are now to take further time to consider the privatisation proposals, to decide to abandon the proposals entirely once the exhaustive examination has been completed?

Mr. Ridley: Although my hon. Friend is right to say that this is not a climb down, perhaps he exaggerates. This is neither humiliating nor exhilarating. I do not think that we need the extra time to review whether we shall continue with our policy. I tried to tell the House that it would be necessary to come to a conclusion on many important and complex matters in an extremely short time scale. It might be better to take a little longer to ensure that we get the right answers to the questions.

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton (Fife, Central): Does this statement imply a U-turn? If not, why should it be made at 10 o'clock on a Thursday night?

Mr. Ridley: It does not imply a U-turn. That is why it would have been perfectly proper not to make a statement. However, the House wanted me to make one. I have done so.

Dr. Keith Hampson (Leeds, North-West): Does my right hon. Friend accept that for some of us there is genuine concern and not bogus indignation? That is partly because many of us have recently been defending the Government's privatisation policy. We have been defending the Government's policy on the royal ordnance factories as well.

Is my right hon. Friend aware that it caused some concern when he did not come to the House earlier to make a statement? The statement which he has made is less extensive than the written answer which was arranged. In that written answer he talks about extra powers being necessary to take part in privatisation. What are the necessary extra powers? It would have been much better for us all if a statement had been made honestly, frankly and in detail earlier today.

Mr. Ridley: I much admire my hon. Friend's efforts to convince people that the policy of privatising water is right. I hope that he will continue to defend that policy. There has been no change made to that policy and we have not abandoned it. I do not think that it is necessary for the Government to make a statement every time that they have not changed their policy. All that I am saying is that we are not able to see a proper way to bring a Bill forward for the next Session. I think that there was a general expectation that we would be able to do that. It is right in the interests of all concerned that I should make that abundantly clear. I think that that can be done just as well by means of a written answer as by making a statement.

Mr. Peter Snape (West Bromwich, East): May I tell the Secretary of State—I add my sincere congratulations on his statement — how much we miss his sure-footed political agility in transport matters? Does he agree, fresh from his triumphs in that Department, where he managed to lose three court cases and not privatise British Airways, that not to privatise British water is entirely consistent, and could be regarded as the glittering pinnacle of a distinguished career? Bearing in mind that at the time of the right hon. Gentleman's recent promotion the Prime Minister said that he had been promoted because he was a man who gets things done, should the House, at the very least, start questioning the Prime Minister's ability as well as the right hon. Gentleman's faculties?

Mr. Ridley: The hon. Gentleman is a welcome convert to the privatisation squad. I may not have achieved anything else other than to persuade him that it is desirable to privatise both British Airways and water. I greatly appreciate his support. I shall even have a word with his leader to see whether I can arrange for him to have preferment as I have had.

Mr. Spencer Batiste (Elmet): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the spectacular success of the Government's privatisation programme can be maintained only if each measure is considered at the right time and in the right way instead of trying to meet some pre-arranged arbitrary timetable? If as a result of his consultations he is satisfied that more work needs to be done before the important measure can proceed, he will be widely supported.

Mr. Ridley: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. I am grateful to him for making the point that the policy of privatisation requires that we get each individual industry or company absolutely right before we offer it to the market and ask the House to approve its privatisation. I think that my hon. Friend will have noticed that in the queue for privatisation are gas, British Airways, British airports and Rolls-Royce. I should have thought that that was a sufficient programme to convince the House of our determination to proceed.

Mr. Allan Roberts (Bootle): In view of the fact that the Secretary of State claimed that one of the reasons why he wanted to privatise water authorities was to allow them to borrow in the open market—to raise funds to do things such as cleaning up the Mersey basin—will he release the publicly owned water authorities from the restrictions that are imposed on them by the Government? The restrictions prevent them from raising money to do necessary work.

Will the Secretary of State give an assurance that money will not be taken from the Mersey basin project in order to clean up beaches in the north-west area, such as Blackpool beach, which is terribly polluted, but that extra money will be made available either from the private sector or public expenditure? Does he accept that if the high priest of Thatcherite monetarism turns heels and runs in

[Mr. Allan Roberts]

the face of opposition from all the trade unions in the water industry — the public opinion is that the Government are doing a U turn and that privatisation has not been postponed, it has been cancelled because a general election will intervene — it will be one of the industries that the next Labour Government will not have to take back into public ownership?

Mr. Ridley: We are doing awfully well tonight. We have another recruit in favour of water privatisation in the unlikely figure of the hon. Gentlemam, as well as the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape). Do the Opposition want, or do they not, the Government to privatise the water industry? When we said that we intended to do so, they criticised us. When we said that, unfortunately, we had to postpone it, they criticised us for postponing. They really are all over the shop. The desire for opposition seems to have got the better of their judgment. I had better not reply at great length because I do not want the Opposition to miss their sleepers, which is the best thing that could happen to the House.

Blackpool beach may be polluted, but it is not polluted with radioactivity as the MEP, Mr. Huckfield, keeps saying. I think that it is disgraceful for him to make such accusations to try to frighten people away from the beaches of the north-west. Those beaches are the finest in the land. I encourage everyone to spend their holidays there.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels (Leicester, East): My right hon. Friend is a very dear friend. I must say that I am disappointed to hear of the delay, as someone who has campaigned for water privatisation and raised the matter in business questions today. Will my right hon. Friend assure the country that water privatisation will take place and that it will be a commitment in the Conservative manifesto? Will he assure the House also that, in the meantime, a full explanation will be given for the delay by his Department to Roy Watts and the Thames Water Authority, because Mr. Watts has been a great supporter of water privatisation?

Mr. Ridley: Yes, Sir. We shall proceed with privatisation. There is little doubt about that, because I believe that we shall be in a position to proceed with it after the next election. I understand that Mr. Watts was on television tonight showing his complete understanding of what the Government are doing and agreeing that it is right to ensure that the Bill is correct rather than introduce legislation that is not yet in proper shape.

Dr. John Marek (Wrexham): Will the Secretary of State be a little more specific and say whether, if the proposals are not enacted by the next general election, they will be part of the next Conservative manifesto? If he cannot answer that question with a simple yes or no, will he say whether he personally will fight to ensure that they do become part of that manifesto?

Mr. Ridley: The anwer is yes.

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): The hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) talked about pathetic behaviour. Is not the only pathetic thing his attempt to make a mountain out of this molehill of a statement? The hon. Gentleman rushed into the Chamber at 6.30 today in a lather demanding a statement. He had to be dragged off his sleeper to come here tonight. All he found was that the Government, in a sensible and pragmatic way, have listened to the people's representations and intend to carry on with denationalisation as early as possible. Should we not be asking the hon. Member for Copeland: where is the beef?

Mr. Ridley: The hon. Member for Copeland would have been wiser if he had caught his sleeper and gone away tonight.

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): Will the most arrogant Minister in the Government now talk reality to us and tell us what has dragged him kicking and screaming at 10 o"clock on a Thursday might to the most monumental climb down we have heard for years? Will the right hon. Gentleman finally admit that the Government — *[Interruption.]* The laughter of the Leader of the House, so feigned and obvious, shows that I am telling the truth. Will the Secretary of State now admit that the Government are in a terrible mess and do not know where they are going?

Mr. Ridley: I do not know where the hon. Gentleman comes on the arrogance table, but I do not think that he is at the bottom of that league. If the Government take a sane and sensible decision — first, to listen on the privatisation matters which worry people and, secondly, to give enough time to get the answers right — it is, as has been said, very worrying to the Opposition parties

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): I totally share my right hon. Friend's, commitment to water privatisation I am interested, as is my right hon. Friend, to hear the commitment of that relatively moderate member of the Labour party, the hon. Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts), to renationalisation in the unlikely event of a Labour Government ever being returned. I wonder whether my right hon. Friend can find an appropriate adjective to describe the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham), who said that he was scandalised about the sensible decision which my right hon. Friend took this evening, but would have gone on to say that he was scandalised if we had proceeded with water privatisation?

Mr. Ridley: We must look at this point. Labour Members want the water authorities to have the freedom to spend capital as though there was no limit. Of course, the only way in which that can be done is by privatising those authorities. It is clearly impossible in a planned public sector economy to have freedom to spend capital — the two are totally inconsistent. We are increasingly seeing from the Labour party a recognition of the importance of private capital, which of course means private ownership. I welcome that. I am sure that Labour Members will join me in supporting the Bill as they sit in opposition after the next election.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): If the privatisation of the water authorities is not now to take place during the life to this Parliament, will the Secretary of State produce figures on the costs of the appointment of J. Henry Schroder Wagg as bankers and Touche Ross as the accountancy firm? When those estimates have been produced, will he send the bill for this exercise so far to the place that should pay it—Conservative Central Office in Smith square?

Mr. Ridley: No. We have had excellent advice from those banks and advisers, and I am sure that more advice

will be needed as we move towards privatisation. I cannot believe that the hon. Gentleman would want us to advance in this matter without taking the proper advice.

Mr. Gary Waller (Keighley): Is my right hon. Friend aware that many of those who espouse the principle of privatisation in general look for certain pre-conditions—for example, that the enterprises to be privatised will market their products in as competitive a way as possible and will require as little control and regulation as possible? They recognise that the situation in the water industry is different from that in many other industries. Before new proposals are brought forward, will careful consideration be given to those factors?

Mr. Ridley: I agree with my hon. Friend. Those are important considerations which require proper study. That is why it would be difficult for me to complete the Bill in time for early introduction next Session, and that is all I have said.

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): Does not the postprandial performance on the Tory Benches and the inane grin on the face of the right honourable Tewkesbury cat prove that the Government have yet again had to retreat from a most embarrassing, ill-judged and disastrous policy?

Mr. Ridley: No, Sir.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that in this, as in all things, the Government will put the consumer and the people first? Has he noticed that in all the exchanges tonight no member of the Labour or Liberal parties has mentioned the consumer and the people of Britain? They do not care, and never have cared, about the consumers or the welfare of our people.

Mr. Ridley: Yes; and it can only be described as an uncaring party that opposes the Bill and then opposes its delay.

Mr. Ray Powell (Ogmore): Has the right hon. Gentleman consulted the Secretary of State for Wales—one of the most ardent supporters of privatisation—about abandoning the privatisation of the water industry? Perhaps the Government's reasons for abandoning the idea will be explained to the people of Wales. I welcome the right hon. Gentleman's assurance that the matter will appear in the next Conservative election manifesto, because that will represent a rare occasion on which the people will have been consulted on a major issue before action has been taken. On that occasion the electors of Wales will give the Conservatives a vote similar to that which the House gave the proposed Sunday trading legislation.

It is high time that the right hon. Gentleman came clean and admitted that he has been persuaded to drop the idea of privatising the water industry by the arguments of the 10,000 workers in the industry and the statements of local authorities throughout the country.

I assure the hon. Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) that the consumer's interest was well represented at a recent conference in London, when those concerned with the water industry made it clear that in no way would they support the privatisation of the industry.

Mr. Ridley: I have the full support of the Secretary of State for Wales in what I have said tonight. He feels, as I do, that proposals that we present to the House must be correct. The hon. Member for Ogmore (Mr. Powell) and his hon. Friend the Member for Copeland do not seem to be speaking with one voice tonight.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): If the right hon. Gentleman claims that his statement does not represent a climb down or a U-turn, will he accept that most people will see it as a Government cock-up? He owes it to the public to explain whether he inherited the decision that he has made or whether it is all his own work.

Mr. Ridley: The hon. Gentleman may not have heard my statement. I said that we were not able to proceed in the next Session of Parliament but would certainly proceed with the legislation, if necessary, immediately after the election. I do not see how that changes the policy in any respect.

Mr. Robert N. Wareing (Liverpool, West Derby): Is not the accident-prone right hon. Gentleman admitting that, in view of the fact that there was a commitment in the Queen's Speech only a few months back that there would be privatisation of water, the Government did not do their homework and are now having to cancel this not just for one Session but for two? Is it not also the case that he has had umpteen representations from people with expertise, including Tory councillors, saying that privatisation was ideology, not reality? Should not the message of the House this evening to the consumers and workers in the water industry be "rejoice" because the industry is now safe and there is no chance of privatisation because the Government will not win the next general election?

Mr. Ridley: I am afraid that it is the hon. Gentleman who has done his homework wrong. He should look at last autumn's Queen's Speech: he will find no mention of water privatisation.

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): Thankfully, the Government never threatened to inflict this lunatic idea on Scotland, but, since the right hon. Gentleman is apparently writing the next Conservative party election manifesto here this evening, can he give us an undertaking that the idea will be excluded from the manifesto as it affects Scotland?

Mr. Ridley: No, Sir.

Mr. Alfred Dubs (Battersea): Whatever the Secretary of State thinks the position is tonight, by tomorrow morning his statement will be seen by the majority of his supporters as a humiliating climb down and, at the very least, what he has said tonight is an indication of utter incompetence by the Secretary of State and his Department? Opposition Members who are utterly opposed to water privatisation are naturally pleased that there will be a delay, but will the Secretary of State have a bet with me that it will never happen?

Mr. Ridley: I think that the headlines tomorrow morning will be: "Labour party in turmoil; split down the middle"; "Totally incompetent Front-Bench position, backed up by idiotic statements from the Back Benches"; and, finally, to the House's relief, "All departed for sleepers".

Finance Bill

Mr. Terry Davis (Birmingham, Hodge Hill): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. May I remind you that during business questions today I asked the Leader of the House to explain why the Government were insisting on taking the Report stage of the Finance Bill next week in spite of the fact that the Government have not tabled all their new clauses and amendments to the Bill? I also remind you that the Leader of the House was kind enough to express some concern. May I, through you, Mr. Speaker draw the attention of the Leader of the House to the fact that tonight the Government have tabled another 68 amendments to be taken on the Report stage, which begins next Tuesday?

Mr. Speaker: That is not a matter for me. The hon. Gentleman prefaced his remarks by saying that he had raised the matter at business question time.

Bedford Commercial Vehicles (Redundancies)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Lennox-Boyd.]*

10.47 pm

Mr. David Madel (Bedfordshire, South-West): I am grateful to have this opportunity of initiating a short debate on the consequences of the recently announced redundancies at Bedford Commerial Vehicles .I am especially pleased that my hon. Friend the Minister of State, the hon. Member for City of Chester (Mr. Morrison), will reply to the debate. I am also grateful to my next door neighbours, my hon. Friends the Members for Luton, South (Mr. Bright) and for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle) for being present.

This is a depressing time for Dunstable and Luton with General Motors' plan to reduce the work force by 1,700 employees. My hon. Friend the Member for Luton, South and myself were most grateful to my hon. Friend the Minister for seeing us on the day the announcement was made.

In my view, if the merger talks with British Leyland had been successful — successful to me would have meant that Dunstable had a secure and proper place for the continuation of production of commercial vehicles as well as Luton — we would not now be having this debate on the redundancies. I do not want to spend too much time answering the critics of General Motors and the merger talks, some of whom, alas, are in the parliamentary Conservative party, but running through their criticisms is a thread of considerable ignorance about the activities of General Motors in the United Kingdom. The sort of things that critics of General Motors forget are as follows. They forget the contribution by General Motors to this country's war effort between 1939 and 1945, in the enormous production of vehicles to help the British Army.. They especially forget 1939 to 1941, when America was neutral, and we were virtually on our own, yet General Motors continued with its production in this country, thereby completely contradicting the argument that somehow or other General Motors cannot do anything unless the American Government tell it to.

Secondly, critics forget 1956. We shall learn a lot about that this year, 30 years from Suez, when there was a tremendous row between the American and British Governments, but that in no way disturbed General Motors' production and investment in this country. Thirdly, people forget Vauxhall's move to Ellesmere Port in the early 1960s, to a black spot unemployment area, with considerable investment, providing brand-new jobs. My goodness, were not certain of my right hon. Friends pleased to be able to say at the 1964 general election how delighted they were that Vauxhall had moved to Ellesmere Port. Critics also forget the heavy losses that Vauxhall and Bedford Commercial Vehicles have, alas, sustained over the years, yet General Motors continues to stay with us, and very welcome it is, too.

The present situation is grave. It is summed up by part of the information bulletin given to employees last week at Bedford Commercial Vehicles, at both Dunstable and Luton. The announcement says that General Motors "have now announced the 1985 net losses of £73 million, up from £62·4 million in 1984 and £52·5 million in 1983. Bedford's losses continue to run at around £1¼ million per week and further urgent action must therefore be taken to reverse this trend."

In spite of that, I believe that General Motors is here to stay. I want it to stay in Dunstable and Luton in a big way, and so do the people of Bedfordshire, who have confidence in the company as employers.

The present situation poses two challenges for management and unions. For management, maximum information on investment and product development plans, especially how Bedford Commercial Vehicles will now fit into General Motors' worldwide operations, is absolutely vital for the employees at Dunstable and Luton. For the unions, the challenge is that there must be continuing full co-operation with management to work to turn the company round to profitability. I have already mentioned the losses which have been drawn attention to in the information bulletin. They are serious, and they must be reversed. In my view, they can be reversed with the full co-operation and commitment of management and unions.

In that grave situation, the challenge to us three Members of Parliament representing Bedfordshire is to make some suggestions as to what we think can now be done to help Bedfordshire. First, we should be using Dunstable college as a base for further training and training opportunities. Local employers express great confidence in what Dunstable college does on training. I want to see additional places on the courses, and new courses set up to help. As I said, local employers have confidence in the college. I believe that we can build on that and help people who are being made redundant.

Secondly, there is Bedfordshire's structure plan. The emphasis now must be on industry. Where we in Bedfordshire can successfully and sensibly develop land, the emphasis must be on developing that land for industry that will provide new jobs. That is not just me and my hon. Friends who are saying that because the councils are also saying it. Just the other day I had a communication from mid-Bedfordshire district council in part of my constituency. It wants to see sensible industrial development to underpin the community and to provide new jobs.

Thirdly, south Bedfordshire district council has raised a considerable sum of money from its policy of selling council houses. I would like to see a large portion of that money released so that the council can get on with the vitally needed modernisation programme on its council houses. That would provide new jobs and give people confidence and opportunities.

We have just heard quite a to-do on water. The Anglian water authority must look carefully at the amount it spends in Bedfordshire to make sure that it is not denying us the infrastructure needed for industrial development. We do not want to lose jobs and curtail the expansion of industry because the Anglian water authority cannot provide the necessary supplies and drainage that will allow new industry to come in and develop and provide new jobs.

Each time we have more scheduled airline services at Luton airport it provides welcome new jobs. Luton airport is a major employer in Bedfordshire and things must be done by the Civil Aviation Authority and by others to provide more scheduled services. As I say, the more scheduled services there are in the airport, the more jobs are created, and that helps our area.

[Mr. David Madel]

I welcomed yesterday's statement on TVEI by my right hon. and learned Friend the Paymaster General. He said:

"We also need to improve the vocational qualifications system to encourage more people, young and old, to improve their skills when they have left school."—[*Official Report*, 2 July 1986; Vol. 100, c. 1004.]

That obviously means that the Government are moving to provide more opportunities for Bedfordshire. The "Action for Jobs" publication by the Manpower Services Commission is sub-titled, "Opening more doors". I appeal to the Government to make sure that all doors in Bedfordshire are open to provide those opportunities.

In my short speech, I have called for maximum co-operation in the county because I want to see people working together to get us out of this difficulty. My final plea to the Government is please to do all they can by their economic and purchasing policies to encourage and help General Motors. Through the Government helping and working with General Motors we can start to turn around this difficult unemployment situation.

General Motors is a most welcome employer in Bedfordshire. We want to find more opportunities for new employers and industries to come in and help us out of our difficulties, but above all we want to do things that will make General Motors say that the United Kingdom, and especially Bedfordshire, is a good bet for investment and that it intends to increase its investment in the county of Bedfordshire.

10.53 pm

Mr. Graham Bright (Luton, South): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, South-West (Mr. Madel) for the opportunity to take part in this debate. The bulk of the redundancies announced by General Motors, some 1,000, were in my constituency. We face the unpalatable prospect of losing 660 jobs in the van plant and 340 from the press shop.

There is chronic overcapacity in vehicle production in Europe and that has been known by the trade and by the House for many years. There are too many vehicle producers competing in a depressed market and Bedford Commercial Vehicles has suffered badly. Until 1979 it was profitable, but in 1980 it incurred a record loss of £83 million. Since then, it has lost a further £300 million and losses are currently running at £1·5 million a week.

Bedford Commercial Vehicles and its parent company General Motors recognise the scale of the problem and have acted to meet it. They have invested over £70 million since 1983 restructuring the whole of the van operation in Luton and reorganising heavy truck production at Dunstable. Bedford's heavy vehicle production capacity has been reduced and two imaginative new light vans, the Midi and the Rascal, have been introduced, both at the Luton plant. The company has been actively seeking partners and I thought that it was an extremely imaginative idea that it should join forces with Leyland to produce a base in the United Kingdom commercial vehicle market of some 26 per cent. The company has also been talking with MAN and Renault in an attempt to get together for future operations. None of those ideas have come to fruition.

I still hope that we get General Motors and Leyland back together. I believe that that is the only solution which will help United Kingdom limited. I fully support GM's efforts in seeking deals because it must get together with someone else. As my hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, South-West has said, GM has played a major part in the British motor industry and it has sustained the economies of Luton and many other towns in both good and bad times. Many other companies would have been driven out of the United Kingdom as a result of the losses it has endured both at Vauxhall Motors in the 1970s and now at Bedford since 1980. However—and I stress this—GM has kept faith in Britain. It has put its industrial relations, product range, and marketing for Vauxall Motors right. I am sure that the same can be done for Bedford Commercial Vehicles.

The first steps—tighter control of manpower, better stock control and greater production efficiency—are under way. These will restore the company to profitability. It would be a grave mistake to underestimate GM's determination to rationalise its heavy truck and van operation. It is perfectly capable of reviving them and taking first place in the European truck and van market, just as we have seen it revive its motor car section in Britain.

Unfortunately, the re-shaping of the GM strategy is likely to be at the expense of others. The deal which the Government sought a few months ago—to transfer Leyland Trucks and Range Rover to GM—would have ensured that Britain was the centre piece of the company's European production. The marketing and the production resources of the companies would have meant an overall increase in jobs, not to mention the prospect of new engines being designed and produced in Britain.

Because of short-sighted and ill-judged criticism, that opportunity has been lost. I have no doubt that, sooner or later, Bedford will find another partner, if it is not BL. If the partner is French, the design, manufacturing and the new range of trucks that GM requires—let us remember that it abandoned its world truck concept only last week—could shift to the continent.

I believe that Luton and Dunstable will continue to build vans and trucks, but I wish to issue a warning about the after-effects of the failed GM deal. It may well happen that the component manufacturers situated in the Birmingham and midlands area will lose their trade if a source of manufacture was started on the continent and the centre of gravity moved to France. Those Members and the people who scuppered the GM/Leyland deal could suffer far more than we have in Luton.

Leyland is too small to survive on its own indefinitely and it will be left out in the cold. In Luton we have paid the first instalment of the price to be met for rejecting the Bedford/Leyland merger . . . Other companies will have to face the realities of not supporting that deal. I regret the fact that that has happened and only hope that there is a chance of getting GM to base itself in Britain with possibly, Leyland, as its partner.

10.58 pm

Mr. John Carlisle (Luton, North): I am grateful for the opportunity to make a short contribution in support of my hon. Friends the Members for Bedfordshire, South-West (Mr. Madel) and for Luton, South (Mr. Bright) in this important debate.

The absence of any representative of the Labour, Liberal or SDP parties is regrettable. Indeed, we would not be gathered here, on this sad day for the Luton and Dubstable district, but for the posturings of the right hon.

and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith). He was one of the prime movers in scuppering the deal that was laid out between General Motors and British Leyland. For the right hon. and learned Gentleman not to have the courtesy to the House, to the people of Luton and Dunstable and to the unions from which he so regularly sought advice at the time of the intended merger, to be present tonight is disgraceful. He should be here to make a speech or, at least, to hear about the anger and frustration of our constituents at General Motors having to lay off 1,700 men because of the decision made. There is no doubt in my mind, nor, I think, in the minds of my constituents, that that is a direct result of the fact that the merger did not take place.

I am sure that my hon. Friend the Minister will share our disappointment that the Government did not see fit to go ahead with the original recommendation. Although I understand the pressures that they were under from Opposition parties and from Conservative Members, particularly my right hon. Friends the Members for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) and for Henley (Mr. Heseltine), it is to be regretted that the jobs were lost because the merger did not take place.

At the time we were extremely worried about the antics of the right hon. and learned Gentleman. Having had the nerve to turn up at Ellesmere Port in a Japanese car to talk to the unions at General Motors, he had the utter cheek to come to Luton to stir up the unions to such an extent that many of their members who came to lobby in the House turned up with pro-BL and pro-Land Rover stickers. In effect, it was like turkeys voting for an early Christmas. Now that Christmas has arrived in Luton and Dunstable, the results of his efforts and those of the Opposition parties is that we could well see the end of the United Kingdom truck industry as we know it.

My hon. Friend the Member for Luton, South gave a warning. I repeat the warning that I gave in an Adjournment debate some weeks ago that there is now a real chance that that industry will disappear. The Opposition parties do not care about the needs of their members which is why we are present to help our constituents and to help rectify the matter. It is good to see my hon. Friend the Minister in stout defence of what we have sought to do in the Luton and Dunstable area, and I thank him for the assistance that he gave us at that difficult time.

There is still a chance for our truck industry if the Government would go back to GM and say, "All is not over". If GM returns to the table with the sort of genuine proposals which it made at the time, something could be salvaged from this sad affair. It seems that those 1,700 jobs may have gone for ever, but we have absolute confidence in GM making an extremely generous settlement to those unfortunate people who have lost their jobs because that is it's history as an employer in our area.

We face an overcapacity market and extreme difficulties, and GM will need every assistance. That is why I fully endorse the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, South-West when he asks the Minister, if it is within his power, to provide every opportunity for more training, investment and assistance from the Government to our area to help those who have lost their jobs and, more important, those who now will not have the privilege of working for GM.

We are not downhearted, but, obviously, extremely disappointed. We look forward to the future with great optimism, but the Minister's help and guidance will be imperative if we are to survive these traumatic times and put GM back where it belongs, at the top of the motor and truck industry.

11.4 pm

The Minister of State, Department of Trade and Industry (Mr. Peter Morrison): I am glad that my hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, South-West (Mr. Madel) has had the opportunity to raise this difficult, awkward matter on the Adjournment this evening. Nobody could do more for his constituents than my hon. Friend and my hon. Friends the Members for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle) and for Luton, South (Mr. Bright). I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his kind remarks about my meeting with him. He has been very helpful to me in the nine months for which I have held my present position in terms of keeping me fully abreast of the position in his constituency and in Bedfordshire as a whole. For that I am grateful. Indeed, I hope and that he and his constituents, and the constituents of my hon. Friends the Members for Luton, North and for Luton, South will be aware that their calls and their concerns are constantly brought to the attention of the Department of Trade and Industry.

My hon. Friends have reminded the House of the long and important history of General Motors in the United Kingdom. My hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, South-West asked me to do all that I can to encourage General Motors. Of course I will do everything that I can to encourage General Motors — how could one do otherwise. Vauxhall, for example, as my hon. Friends the Members for Luton, South and Luton, North will know, was established in 1903, and it was merged in 1925, so that its history in the country is very long and significant.

I believe that I am right in saying that some 3·5 million commercial vehicles have been built in Britain for worldwide markets. But, as my hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, South-West reminds us, it remains a major supplier of trucks to the British Army. That supply has gone on through what have been awkward and difficult periods in the course of the previous decade.

We forget at our peril that over 80 per cent. of the content in Bedford Vehicles is United Kingdom sourced. Vauxhall's United Kingdom content is increasing to 60 per cent. this year, while 64 per cent. of the cars and vans sold here in 1986 will be built in the United Kingdom. Not only does General Motors' investment in the United Kingdom continue; it has gone on for a long time, and General Motors currently employs directly some 27,000 people.

Like my hon. Friends, I very much regret that the redundancies have proved necessary. But, as my hon. Friends have reminded the House, I regret to say that in the European truck industry there is some 40 per cent. overcapacity so that rationalisation is necessary.

I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Luton, South that, listening to what happened in debates and at Question Time in the earlier part of this year, one would not have noticed that the Opposition realised that rationalisation of the truck industry was at all necessary. I regret to say that they are burying their heads in the sand if that is what they continue to believe. Rationalisation — and I am sorry that no Opposition Members are present this evening in what is an important debate — however it comes is bound to come, and it is bound to be better if it is on a planned and rational basis rather than as a result of putting off what will be awkward and

[Mr. Peter Morrison]

difficult decisions. Redundancies are bound to be unpleasant, but in terms of getting rationalisation they are part of a total package. That package includes lower inventory costs, the raising of efficiency and better marketing.

The final solution—as all my hon. Friends who know the Bedford and Vauxhall situation will agree—is that management and work force act and co-operate. I have no doubt that that can and will be the case, despite the fact that the industry has a difficult and complicated decision to take. I understand that a considerable number of applications have been made for voluntary redundancies. Given that quite a considerable number of the workers are aged over 55, I hope that the company will be able to meet its job reduction objectives without having to have recourse to involuntary redundancies.

My hon. Friends have mentioned at some length the general employment position in south Bedfordshire. I agree about the schemes that have been installed there, not least because in a previous incarnation I had something to do with the youth training scheme, the community programme, with the original launch of the TVEI, and with the adult training programme.

Like me, my hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, South-West has considerable confidence in Bedfordshire's future. Given what the public sector is doing through the Manpower Services Commission to help with training and education, and the entrepreneurial initiative that has always been evident in Bedfordshire, I am sure that the county will continue to grow. My hon. Friends have raised a matter that is very important to them. This debate has not come as a surprise to me, because we have already had endless discussions, letters and telephone calls, as all my hon. Friends take their constituents' position very seriously, and wish to keep me fully informed of what may be best for the future. I can assure them that I shall do everything that I can, having carefully considered the advice that they give me.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twelve minutes past Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 4 July 1986

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PETITIONS

Plessey Company plc

9.35 am

Mr. Stephen Ross (Isle of Wight): I have the honour, Mr. Speaker, to present a petition from the employees of Plessey plc at Cowes in my constituency, where about 1,350 people work, and it is signed by nearly every one of them. It says:

That the undersigned object to the proposed takeover of the Plessey Company plc by the General Electric Company plc because such a takeover would result in very heavy job losses, serious harm to the research and development in which the Plessey Company plc has up to now been involved and the creation of a monopoly which would limit the choice facing major customers in the electronics and defence markets.

I should add that such a merger would be catastrophic for the economy and my constituency.

To lie upon the Table.

Nuclear Waste Disposal

9.36 pm

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby): With your permission, Mr. Speaker, I wish to present a petition from the people of Humberside, which showeth

That United Kingdom Nirex Limited are looking for sites for the storage or disposal of radioactive waste. It is known that sites in Humberside are among those being considered. It is also known that the Secretary of State for the Environment is proposing to make a Special Development Order granting planning permission for related exploration purposes. The undersigned are totally and absolutely opposed to these proposals because they believe that they could threaten public safety, that they would seriously damage the area's economic and social development prospects and that radioactive waste should be stored or disposed of at the site of origin.

Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your honourable House will under no circumstances approve a Special Development Order allowing preliminary site exploration or associated works in connection with the storage or disposal of radioactive waste in Humberside and will take all such action within the powers of the House to prevent a national radioactive waste storage or disposal facility being established in Humberside.

The petition is signed by 1,550 signatories and it completes a series of petitions from Humberside which have been signed by over 160,000 people a tremendous voice from Humberside — asking the Minister not to agree to the special development order. Unfortunately, the Minister has betrayed those aspirations. I am afraid that we shall now pay the price in public opinion which, as a result, turns against the nuclear programme and is driven to more extreme action than signing petitions.

To lie upon the Table.

Social Security Bill

9.39 am

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): I beg to ask leave to present a petition signed by Mr. John R. Ellis of Park Road, Bradford 5, and 1,745 of my constituents. They are petitioning against the Government's Social Security Bill, arguing that it

will reduce the incomes of poor families, including pensioners and the unemployed.

Figures were recently produced which showed that 19,000 households in my constituency, including those of pensioners, the sick and disabled, single parents, the unemployed and low-income families will lose income, and that 2,700 households, including, in particular, pensioners will lose more than £5 a week if the Social Security Bill becomes law.

The petitioners, who include many pensioners, pray that your honourable House will oppose the Social Security Bill.

Indeed, they are demanding that the Bill be scrapped.

To lie upon the Table.

Orders of the Day

Protection of Military Remains Bill

Lords amendments considered.

Clause 1

APPLICATION OF ACT

Lords amendment: No. 1, in page 1, line 1, leave out from beginning to end of line 34 on page 2 and insert—

"(1) This Act applies to any aircraft which has crashed (whether before or after the passing of this Act) while in military service.

(2) Subject to the following provisions of this section, the Secretary of State may by order made by statutory instrument—

(a) designate as a vessel to which this Act applies any vessel which appears to him to have sunk or been stranded (whether before or after the passing of this Act) while in military service;

(b) designate as a controlled site any area (whether in the United Kingdom, in United Kingdom waters or in international waters) which appears to him to contain a place comprising the remains of, or of a substantial part of, an aircraft to which this Act applies or a vessel which has so sunk or been stranded;

and the power of the Secretary of State to designate a vessel as a vessel to which this Act applies shall be exercisable irrespective of whether the situation of the remains of the vessel is known.

(3) The Secretary of State shall not designate a vessel as a vessel to which this Act applies unless it appears to him —

(a) that the vessel sank or was stranded on or after 4th August 1914; and

(b) in the case of a vessel which sank or was stranded while in service with, or while being used for the purposes of, any of the armed forces of a country or territory outside the United Kingdom, that remains of the vessel are in United Kingdom waters.

(4) The Secretary of State shall not designate any area as a controlled site in respect of any remains of an aircraft or vessel which has crashed, sunk or been stranded unless it appears to him—

(a) that less than two hundred years have elapsed since the crash, sinking or stranding;

(b) that the owners and occupiers of such land in the United Kingdom as is to be designated as, or as part of, that site do not object to the terms of the designating order which affect them; and

(c) where the aircraft or vessel crashed, sank or was stranded while in service with, or while being used for the purposes of, any of the armed forces of a country or territory outside the United Kingdom, that the remains are in the United Kingdom or in United Kingdom waters.

(5) An area designated as a controlled site shall not extend further around any place appearing to the Secretary of State to comprise remains of an aircraft or vessel which has crashed, sunk or been stranded while in military service than appears to him appropriate for the purpose of protecting or preserving those remains or on account of the difficulty of identifying that place;"

9.40 am

Mr. Michael Mates (Hampshire, East): I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Speaker: With this it will be convenient to discuss the following Lords amendments: No. 2, in page 2, line 37, at end insert—

"(5A) For the purposes of this Act a place (whether in the United Kingdom, in United Kingdom waters or in international waters) is a protected place if—

(a) it comprises the remains of, or of a substantial part of, an aircraft or vessel to which this Act applies; and

(b) it is on or in the sea bed or is the place, or in the immediate vicinity of the place, where the remains were left by the crash, sinking or standing of that aircraft or vessel;

but no place in international waters shall be a protected place but virtue of its comprising remains of an aircraft or vessel which has crashed, sunk or been stranded while in service with, or while being used for the purposes of, any of the armed forces of a country or territory outside the United Kingdom."

No 3, in line 41, leave out subsection (7) and insert—

"(7) The Secretary of State may by order made by statutory instrument substitute references to a later date for the reference in subsection (3)*(a)* above to 4th August 1914 or for any reference to a date which is inserted by an order under this subsection; and a statutory instrument containing an order under this subsection shall be subject to annulment in pursuance of a resolution of either House of Parliament."

No. 4, in clause 2, page 3, line 9, leave out "is, or"

No. 5, in line 12, leave out

"to which this Act applies"

and insert

"which has crashed, sunk or been stranded while in military service"

No. 7, leave out lines 32 to 36.

No. 8, in line 42, leave out "is, or"

No. 9, in page 4, line 5, leave out

"(whether or not the place is, or"

and insert

"or in a place which"

No. 10, in line 10, leave out

"to which this Act applies"

and insert

"which has crashed, sunk or been stranded while in military service."

No. 11, in line 12, leave out subsection (4) and insert—

"(4)In proceedings against any person for an offence under this section, it shall be a defence for that person to show that what he did or, as the case may be, what he caused or permitted to be done was done under and in accordance with a licence under section 4 below."

No. 12, in page 4, line 19, leave out "is not, and".

No. 13, in page 4, line 24, leave out from "place" to end of line 27.

No. 15, in line 38, leave out subsection (8) and insert—

"(8) References in this section to any remains which are comprised in a protected place or to any remains which are comprised in a place which is part of a controlled site include references to remains other than those by virtue of which that place is a protected place or, as the case may be, to remains other than those in respect of which that site was or could have been designated."

No. 16, in clause 4, page 5, line 43, leave out, "under section 1(4) above" and insert "designating a controlled site"

No. 17, in page 6, line 5, leave out

"of an aircraft or vessel to which this Act applies"

and insert

"to which the licence relates"

No. 18, in line 11, leave out "under section 1(4) above" and insert "designating a controlled site"

No. 19, in line 23, leave out

"to which this Act applies"

No. 21, in clause 9, page 8, line 33, after "a" insert "hovercraft,"

No. 22, in line 37, leave out from "site"" to end of line 38 and insert

"means any area which is designated as such a site under section 1 above;"

No. 23, in page 9, line 3, at end insert—

""military service" shall be construed in accordance with subsection (1A) below;"

No. 24, in line 7, leave out "section 1(2)" and insert "section 1(5A)"

No. 25, in line 12, after "voyage" insert

"(including in the case of a vessel, any aircraft which were on board)"

No. 26, in line 21, at end insert—

"(1A) For the purposes of this Act an aircraft or vessel shall be regarded as having been in military service at a particular time if at that time it was—

(a) in service with, or being used for the purposes of, any of the armed forces of the United Kingdom or any other country or territory; or

(b) in the case of any aircraft, being taken from one place to another for delivery into service with any of the armed forces of the United Kingdom.

(1B) Where a place comprising the remains of, or of a substantial part of, an aircraft or vessel which has crashed, sunk or been stranded while in military service is situated only partly in United Kingdom waters, that place shall be treated for the purposes of this Act as if the part which is situated in United Kingdom waters and the part which is situated in the United Kingdom: or in international waters were separate places each of which comprised the remains of a substantial part of the aircraft or vessel."

No. 27, in line 22, leave our subsection (2).

Mr. Mates: A few months ago the Bill completed all its stages, without amendment, in this House and had the warm support of all those hon. Members present. It has returned from the other place with what some may think is a formidable list of amendments. They are all Government amendments.

Amendment No. 1 was itself amended in the other place. Lord Grimond proposed the removal of a subsection which restricted the Secretary of State's powers relating to the designation of controlled sites. He felt that Secretaries of State could be trusted not to go completely round the bend, and it appears that the Government had some sympathy with that view. It was agreed that, in the interests of brevity, that subsection could be omitted.

I welcome these amendments, and I shall leave it to my hon. Friend the Minister to say a brief word about the Government amendments. Their Lordships accepted the amendments, after consultation, without reservation, and I hope that the House will do the same.

I am grateful to all those in both Houses who have taken an interest in this small but necessary Bill. I should particularly like to thank my noble Friend Lord Sandford for bringing forward this measure in the other place. On Report he paid tribute to the Government for the concern that they had shown for the special problems of those with a legitimate interest in the remains of military aircraft and vessels. I should like to do the same. I am delighted that these problems have been recognised and satisfactorily answered. I can, therefore, warmly commend their Lordships' amendments to the House.

Mr. Ian Mikardo (Bow and Poplar): I begin by congratulating the hon. Member for Hampshire, East (Mr. Mates) and Lord Sandford on the progress that they have made and on bringing the Bill to the House in a condition which they believe to be a considerable improvement as a result of the amendments before us.

The range and complexity of their Lordships' amendments are an indication of what a difficult area of law it is. It is vital that there should be clarity, because there may be some quite powerful commercial vested interests in military remains. As we know, there is much souvenir and treasure hunting among the remains of vessels, and the same might apply to aircraft. No doubt that was one of the factors that the Government had in mind in seeking to make the legislation as precise as possible.

In general, the House has a duty to ensure that legislation is not ambigious. I say that with a smile, because, after long experience, I know just how difficult it is to achieve that. If someone has to go to court to pursue what he believes to be his rights, and has to find out whether they really are his rights, it must represent a failure on our part. We have then failed to make the legislation so clear that no learned judge needs to put his mind to interpreting it.

As I am anxious that we should get the legislation right, as the Bill is important and, as the hon. Member for Hampshire, East has said, valuable — we will all be happy when, in a short time from now, it completes its progress through Parliament — I want to ask either the Minister or the hon. Gentleman some questions about the amendments.

Lords amendment No. 1 seeks to omit the word "vessel" from subsection (1). It has the effect of confining the application of that subsection to an aircraft. What puzzles me is that subsection (2)*(b)* of the amendment applies to

"an aircraft to which this Act applies or a vessel which has so sunk or been stranded".

I am sure that there is a good explanation. Although I am not the most astute reader of legal language, I am not the dimmest either. If the legislation is not clear to me, it will not be clear to many of our citizens, and so may cause a lot of trouble.

Is there not an inconsistency between subsections (1) and (2)? Subsection (2) gives powers to the Secretary of State to make an order within the area covered by that subsection, but subsection (1) says that the area covered involves only aircraft, not vessels. Thus, subsection (2) says that the Secretary of State can make an order about a vessel which is now, as a result of subsection (1), outside the ambit of this part of the Bill.

I am sorry if what I am saying sounds complicated and jargonish, but the whole Bill is like that. Moreover, why is subsection (4)*(a)* confined to a "crash, sinking or stranding" that occurred less than 200 years ago? That seems to be an arbitrary cut-off point and I wonder why it was chosen. There were crashes, sinkings and strandings more than 200 years ago. For example, if the Bill had been enacted a couple of years ago, the Mary Rose might not have been protected. What would the justification have been? There may be other Mary Roses. Bits of Spanish galleons that sailed in the armada are still littered round St. George's channel and round the coast of south-west Wales. Does that mean that they are not protected? If so, why?

I have read amendment No. 2 four times side by side with the original text. I cannot for the life of me see what change has been made or what the purport of it is. I cannot understand its effect. It would be helpful to the House and to the people who will be affected by the legislation if the Under-Secretary of State would tell us what has been changed.

Under clause 2(3), in certain circumstances

[Mr. Ian Mikardo]

"An excavation or diving or salvage operation is prohibited by this subsection—

(a) if it is carried out"—

on

"any remains of an aircraft or vessel which are comprised in a place"

which is wholly or partly a controlled site. I have, to some extent, translated the text. Amendment No. 8, in page 3, line 42, is to leave out "is, or". Under the original text, the provision applies to remains in an area that is wholly or partly controlled, but, under the amendment, it applies only to remains in an area that is partly controlled. That puzzles me no end. If the site is controlled, what does it matter whether it is wholly or partly controlled? Surely we want the provision to apply equally in both cases.

In respect of amendment No. 11 I shall repeat the point that I put on amendment No. 2. I do not believe that the proposed wording as a different import from the original wording. It is only a little longer and more involved. The House should be given an explanation.

Finally—we do not want to spend more time than is necessary on this—I shall refer to amendment No. 26. Proposed subsection 9(1B) lays down the criteria against which it is decided whether

"an aircraft or vessel shall be regarded as having been in military service"

at a particular time. That definition is necessary because many of the Bill's provisions hinge on whether an aircraft or vessel was in military service at a particular time. This is puzzling. Under proposed paragraph *(a)* an aircraft or vessel is defined as being in military service if it is in service with

"the armed forces of the United Kingdom or any other country".

That is simple and obvious. Under proposed paragraph *(b)* an aircraft that is not in service with any of the armed services but is in transit on the way to being put into service with the armed forces of this or any other country shall be deemed to be in military service. That, too, seems to be sensible. Why does that provision not apply equally to a vessel? It applies only to an aircraft. The first three lines of the proposed new subsection (1A) refer to "an aircraft or vessel". Why, then, does it not cover proposed paragraph *(b)*? For example, if an aircraft which had been on its way to service in the Falklands campaign had, unhappily, crashed, its remains would be covered by the Bill. If a ship on its way to service in the Falklands had, unhappily, sunk, its remains would not be covered by the Bill. What is the difference in principle? If the principle that an instrument of war in tranist to a place where it will be used in military operations is deemed to be in military service, why does it not apply to all instruments of war —ships as well as aircraft?

I understand from the hon. Member for Hampshire, East that the Government are responsible for the amendments. I shall not, therefore, burden the hon. Gentleman with the task of replying to my detailed questions. I shall be grateful to the Under-Secretary of State if he will give some guidance in these matters. Indeed, it is necessary that he should do so.

Mr. Denzil Davies (Llanelli): My hon. Friend the Member for Bow and Poplar (Mr. Mikardo) has, as usual, with his sharp eye for these matters picked out a number of difficult parts in the Bill. I mean no disrespect to the hon. Member for Hampshire, East (Mr. Mates), but the Bill seems to be a Government Bill.

Mr. Mates *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Davies: I would not call it a hybrid Bill because it is not "hybrid" in the parliamentary sense. The Bill is somewhere between a private Member's Bill and a Government Bill. However, that is not an important point.

In the main, we welcome the Bill. We understand the sensitivity of these matters and the difficulty involved, as my hon. Friend the Member for Bow and Poplar has shown, in drafting once one gets down to trying to provide in legislative form the type of protection that we all wish to see.

I think it is fair to say that the Bill went through its earlier stages quickly. I am not blaming anyone for that. I do not know why it happened. There was concern in some circles about the Bill in its original form. There is always a conflict between the desire and necessity to protect military remains of this kind and the commercial interests involved in legitimate work. I would not pretend to be an expert on the Bill, but it seems to me, having looked at it quickly late last night, that to some extent these conflicts have been resolved.

My concern in respect of the amendments is with jurisdiction. This perhaps goes to the heart of the Bill. This concern was expressed by various organisations, although I do not argue their case. Amendment No. 1 which is an amendment to clause 1, states in subsection (2)*(b)* that the Secretary of State may make a statutory instrument designating an area as a controlled site

"(whether in the United Kingdom, in United Kingdom waters or in international waters)"

Reading that without looking at the background I thought what a powerful Secretary of State we have who can designate anything he likes in international waters. That seems to be a contradiction because, by definition, we have no power to designate anything in international waters. However, no doubt Acts of Parliament can do almost anything. As Professor Jennings has told us they can deem a man to be a woman or a woman to be a man. Therefore, I suppose it is possible to deem that international waters shall be covered by the Bill.

10 am

The amendment is in respect of clause 1, but, as I understand it, we then have to refer to clause 3 because if an area in international waters is designated as a controlled site, and presumably we are talking about an aircraft or a ship, the Secretary of State has to do something in respect of that. Presumably the intention of the Bill is to protect that piece of hardware in international waters whether it is a ship or an aircraft. However, the writ of the Secretary of State does not run to international waters, it runs only to Britain. And that is where we have a problem. Clause 3 "Extraterritorial jurisdiction" seems to be the heart of the Bill. Clause 3 talks about offences where there is a contravention of subsection (2). It says

"a person shall be guilty of an offence".

That is a serious matter. Parliament is not just legislating about protection, but laying down criminal offences. No doubt people could go to prison or be heavily fined. I have not seen what the actual penalties might be, but that does not matter. The penalties apply

"if the acts or omissions which constitute the offence are committed in the United Kingdom, in United Kingdom waters".

The writ of the Secretary of State does run to the United Kingdom and to United Kingdom waters. It goes on:

"or on board a British-controlled ship".

Therefore, the wide intention of the first part is confined because the Secretary of State does not have any powers in international waters.

Mr. Mikardo: Can my hon. Friend tell us—I am not too clear about this—whether the provision of the Bill would be in conflict with the law of the sea treaty?

Mr. Davies: My hon. Friend asks an interesting and difficult question. Of course, we know that there has been a treaty, but I do not think that the Government ratified that treaty. I think that, rather shamefully, the United Kingdom Government followed the United States and refused to ratify the new law of the sea treaty, which took about 10 years of intense work to negotiate. Whether this is in conflict with the general body of the law of the sea I would not know. I suppose, again, we can do whatever we want to do in an Act of Parliament.

The jurisdiction for the offence is confined under clause 3(1)*(a)* to acts committed in United Kingdom waters. However, that is not the point I am making. We now have to look at international waters. We are talking about whether the offences are committed on board a "British-controlled ship", which is presumably defined somewhere, in international waters. Therefore, any British-controlled ship in international waters which transgresses or contravenes the provisions of the Bill is subject to a fine.

Clause 3(1)*(b)* states:

"in a case where those acts or omissions are committed in international waters but not on board a British-controlled ship".

The offence is then confined even more because the person who commits it has to be

"a British citizen, a British Dependent Territories citizen or a British Overseas citizen".

The law of nationality was never my strong point and I would not wish to try to go down that road. These may be precedents for establishing offences that British dependent territories citizens or British overseas citizens can be convicted for and a law passed in the House. There are new citizenship rights, if they can be called rights. It seems to me that they are derogations of rights.

Mr. Mates: They are five years old.

Mr. Davies: Yes, they are five years old, but I merely, ask whether there is a precedent for making those people guilty when they are not here. Perhaps our legislation does cover people who are British overseas citizens.

Mr. Mikardo: Is there not also another point? Would it not be possible for a British citizen to contravene the provisions of the Bill by employing a Frenchman or American to do what it would be illegal for him to do himself?

Mr. Davies: That is a good point. The Bill says only if the offence is committed

"on board a British-controlled ship".

The person committing the offence may be too clever to do it from a British-controlled ship so it may be on a French-controlled ship. It also says that the act must be committed by a "British citizen". Maybe the British citizen could be said to be an acccessory before the fact. I do not know whether one can be an acessory to an offence which is not an offence, if that is not a roundabout way of saying it. I shall come back to that point later.

That is taken a little further by amendment No. 2. My hon. Friend the Member for Bow and Poplar referred to that. I find it slightly difficult. Amendment No. 2 states:

"but no place in international waters shall be a protected place by virtue of its comprising remains of an aircraft or vessel which has crashed, sunk or been stranded while in service with, or while being used for the purposes of, any of the armed forces of a country or territory outside the United Kingdom."

Obviously, we are not protecting other countries' ships or aircraft.

What protection is there? It seems that British companies—I use the phrase generally because there are closer definitions—will be confined or prevented from carrying out these acts on British aircraft or ships or aircraft or ships that have been in the military service of the United Kingdom in international waters. I am not saying that that is wrong because we agree with the Bill. However, it seems that foreign companies are not so confined. I wonder whether that was the intention of the Bill. It is probably the effect of the Bill because I do not know how that can be stopped. My hon. Friend the Member for Bow and Poplar mentioned the law of the sea treaty. He is absolutely right. The only way in which these things can be dealt with adequately is by international convention or treaty, through the numerous law of the sea agreements that have come down over the years. It is not the case of arguing for commercial interests. It seems strange, however, that British companies will be prevented, apparently, from making money out of these remains while other companies—French, American or Japanese, for example—can go ahead and disturb the remains. Is that the intention of the Bill? Are the Government concerned about that? Are the Government trying to do something in collaboration with other countries so that the Bill does not remain British in its scope, limited, and ineffective to some extent in its jurisdiction? What are the Government's views on these matters?

It seems that the central problem has not been resolved. We have been told that certain assurance have been given. I have read the report of Lord Sandford's speech in another place and he seemed confident that assurancess were coming from left, right and centre. It seems that people did not get as far as reading Lord Trethgarne's reply in full. The assurances which have been given seem not to cover the possible activities of non-British companies and perhaps they cannot. I shall not continue to advance the argument as it is fairly straightforward and clear. I shall be grateful if the Minister addresses himself to it.

Mr. Alfred Dubs (Battersea): I welcome the Bill, but I wish to make a few brief observations and to ask some questions. One of my most poignant childhood memories is when, during the war, an RAF Lancaster crashed on a hillside near to where I was. I remember the agony and concern over the aircrew who were unfortunately killed and who had to be removed from the wrecked aircraft. I remember the Lancaster being guarded by troops.

I fear that there is a flaw in the nationality provisions as set out in the Bill. There is an omission which I accept did not apply when the Bill started its passage through Parliament. However, since the recent Order in Council on Hong Kong, one might have expected the point to be covered. I refer to the concept of British nationals overseas, who are not included, as I understand it, in clause 3. As recently as yesterday evening the Outer Space

[Mr. Alfred Dubs]

Bill was before the House, a measure which contains similar provisions covering citizenship and nationality. There is a reference in the Outer Space Bill to British nationals overseas. I refer to clause 2(2)(a).

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. Perhaps I am not following the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Dubs) with sufficient care, but I would be grateful if he would tell me to which of the Lord's amendments he is referring.

Mr. Dubs: I fear that you have caught me out, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in trespassing on your tolerance. There is no Lord's amendment to the issue that I am raising. I have taken it up because my right hon. Friend the Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) mentioned it. The omission of British nationals overseas is a minor matter but a real one.

I move on swiftly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to the amendments. I shall refer particularly to Lords amendment No. 1, and develop briefly the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Bow and Poplar (Mr. Mikardo) on time limits. As I understand it, the concept of the 200-year period applied, although in a different form, in the original version of the Bill as it appeared in another place. The reference to 4 August, 1914 has been added and it is that which causes me to be puzzled. I am puzzled also about the 200-year period. We are all aware of the tragic war that began on 4 August 1914, but it is not clear to me why that date, and that date alone, should enable some of the Bill's provisions to be brought into being. I have studied the amendments and I cannot understand the thinking behind that date and the 200-year period. For example clause 1(3)(a) states:

"unless it appears to the him" — that is the Secretary of State — "that the vessel sank or was stranded on or after 4th August 1914".

The House will be aware that there are vessels such as the Mary Rose, and there may be many in that category. It is difficult to understand why the date 4 August 1914 has been selected. It seems that no such time limit should have been necessary, given the spirit of the Bill, and that respect for the remains of people should apply to dates before 1914.

10.15 am

I am concerned also about the change in the definition of military service. The original version of the Bill referred, in clause (1)(1)*(b)* to

"while in the service of the Ministry of Defence of or any other authority which at the time exercised functions in relation to anyof the naval, military, or air forces of Her Majesty".

That passage has been dropped, and we now have the expression "while in military service". By changing the terminology are we not excluding certain aircraft or vessels which would otherwise have been covered by the Bill? I would think that the definition "military service" is more limited than

"while in the service of the Ministry of Defence or of any other authority".

I have no doubt that the Minister will advance the argument that if a civilian aircraft were to be used to take soldiers from one part of the United Kingdom to another, it would be covered by the term "while in military service", but I wonder whether "Ministry of Defence" does not go wider than "military service". Perhaps the Minister will elaborate on that.

Thirdly, there is the phrase

"armed forces . . . outside the United Kingdom",

which appears in Lords amendment (1)(4)*(c)*. That is a reference to the

"armed forces of a country or territory outside the United Kingdom".

I am not sure about the intention behind that. Will there be definitional difficulties in referring to other armed forces? I understand that if an aircraft carrying American soldiers who were based in the United Kingdom were to crash, the intention would be for the Bill to cover such an event. Perhaps the reference to other armed forces goes wider than that. If that is the intention, it would be helpful for the Minister to provide clarification.

I apologised earlier, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for referring to something which was not covered directly by the amendments. I took up the matter because I was genuinely puzzled and because there will be no further opportunity to question the Government on these matters after the consideration of the Lords amendments has been completed. I apologise, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for having gone beyond the bounds of the amendments.

Mr. Chris Smith (Islington, South and Finsbury): I do not wish to detain the House for long as I wish the Bill to take its proper place on the statute book within a reasonably short period. However, there is one matter which concerns me about Lords amendment No. 1, which relates to the extent of the controlled site designated by the Secretary of State. We have before us two alternatives, one of which is contained in the Bill. Clause 1(4) says that the Secretary of State

"may by order made by statutory instrument designate as a controlled site so much of that area as he considers it appropriate so to designate for the purpose of protecting or preserving any remains comprised in that place."

That wording seems to be clear and unambiguous, and seems to cover all possible parts of territories which the Secretary of State might wish, for the purposes of the Bill, to designate as a controlled site. However, the other place has somewhat expanded on that definition, and by subsection (5) of amendment No. 1 appears to wish to substitute for that wording a rather more complicated wording which, on my initial reading, does not add very much to the possibilities open to the Secretary of State. It also includes the strange phrase:

"or on account of the difficulty of identifying that place".

My concern can perhaps be exemplified by one particular crashed aircraft of which I know. As some hon. Members may know, I spend considerable amounts of the little free time that I have walking the hills and mountains of Scotland, and an extremely pleasant and healthy exercise it is. There is one particularly beautiful part of Scotland, in Torridon, where a mountain called Beinn Eighe has, at the back of it a coire called Coire Mhic Fhearchair, one of the most spectacular spots in the mountains. It is contained on three sides by mountains with a lochan at the foot of it and at the back three triple buttresses of about 1,000 ft., in height, which provide an extremely popular rock climbing ground.

Back in the 1950s, sadly, an RAF aircraft flew, by mistake, into the coire and before it was able to rise sufficiently to clear the summit of the mountain it crashed near the top of the triple buttresses. The wreckage spread — tragically, because everyone involved was killed — right the way down the cliff face and into the floor of the

coire. In the context of the Bill, the problem is that the wreckage is spread over a considerable area. My concern is over the definition of the controlled area.

Mr. Mates: I think that I recall this case. Were not all the bodies recovered, which would mean that the Bill would not apply?

Mr. Smith: I think that most of the bodies were recovered, but I am not certain whether the hon. Gentleman is correct. Even if he were, my point would none the less apply on a general basis, because there are other similar examples.

The terms of the Bill are very stringent. No one can move or tamper with any of the parts of a crashed aircraft or wrecked ship. That might place restrictions on people, for example, walking in the mountains. I am concerned that the controlled area should be no greater than what would be required to effect the purposes of the Bill.

The wording of the Lords amendment seems to offer rather greater scope than the wording of the Bill and might lead to unnecessarily large areas being designated as a controlled site and to particular restrictions being put on that which not necessarily be needed to pursue and promuwitylgate the purposes of the Bill. They might then be to the detriment of some of our citizens. I shall be glad to hear from the Minister some of the thinking that might be leading the Government to accept the new wording rather than the wording of the Bill.

Mr. John Prescott (Kingston upon Hull), East): The proceedings surrounding the Bill have been deplorable. I know that it is the practice for Departments to seek the assistance of hon. Members to promote private Bills, and that practice has been followed by both sides of the House. I am not complaining, because the process can be of advantage to the House. However, I have been watching the progress of the Bill with care for some time. I am one of the few hon. Members who dive on wrecks, and I have some knowledge of the problems that are likely to be brought about by the Bill.

The Bill started with some controversial principles. Some are embodied in the amendment — for example, how we extend British jurisdiction into international waters. I notice that this provision will apply only to British ships and British personnel on British vessels in international waters. However, I am told by international authorities that it is extremely difficult to define this problem, and that it discriminates between British and foreign companies involved in salvage operations. Perhaps we shall hear from the Minister about this.

The other place made considerable changes, and has made the Bill better, but it has transformed a private Bill into a Government Bill, because all the amendments are Government amendments. The substance of the change, particularly that made by amendment No. 1, is considerable. I intervene now, but I hope to catch your eye at a later stage, Mr. Deputy Speaker, after the Minister has spoken. We are asking questions when it might be better for us to hear first what the Minister has to say on the changes that have been made.

The Bill came from the other place only two or three days ago, and I have been watching for it to appear on the Order Paper. Unfortunately, as this is a private Bill, it does not come in our normal notice of business. Therefore, I did not appreciate that it was on the Order paper this morning, due to something that happened last night. Therefore, we are expected to consider many amendments, involving important principles, at short notice.

Amendment No. 1 says that a statutory instrument will be laid before the House. That is an improvement. The original provisions of the Bill, which was rushed through its stages here, meant that the Department had total powers of designation for just about any vessel or aircraft. At least the statutory instrument, which seems to be a major change, now applies to aircraft. The Government must bring forward a statutory instrument designating a particular aircraft or vessel. If that is the case, it is to be welcomed. I hope that the Minister will confirm that when he gives the Government's view.

What will be the process of designation of a controlled site? Will it be by statutory instrument? The rather global approach that the Department adopted before meant that any area could be so designated, provided it fitted in with the date restriction of after 1914 and the 200-year qualification. Every hon. Member would want to do everything possible to protect the burial remains of military vessels. Nobody wants to interfere with that important priciple. However, anybody who dives knows that one finds a ship not in its complete state, but in bits and pieces buried below or resting on top of the sea bed. Not often does one find a whole vessel. I recall diving on the Mary Rose in the early 1970s. I had to put my hands through the mud to find the timber.

The Bill, as originally drafted, meant that even to move or tamper with any vessel became an offence. Unless one had done a great deal of research, one would not know whether a vessel was used for military or commercial purposes. The situation is quite different from the vessels that were sunk in Scapa Flow. Ironically enough, though, under the Bill one would still be able to dive and do salvage work on the Scapa Flow vessels, because I understand that everybody escaped from them and no bodies are associated with them. Therefore, a certain amount of flexibility is associated with salvage operations.

10.30 am

When those who are associated with the industry first became aware of the Bill, their first reaction was to oppose it. In reality, the Bill came before the House without the industry having been consulted about it. The Department decided that something must be done. However, it did not consult anybody; it simply produced a Bill and asked the hon. Member for Hampshire, East (Mr. Mates) to introduce it because it was a worthy cause. I understand why he would want to co-operate with that particular cause. Therefore, he must have been surprised by the vehemence of the reaction to the Bill. The number of amendments that this House has been asked by the other place to consider — amendments on very important issues — should make us very cagey about listening to Government Departments that want Bills containing perhaps only a few sentences to be introduced by Back-Bench Members.

The reason for the introduction of the Bill was to allow the Department to deal with the problems created by people who want to dive on vessels and carry out salvage work. A case in my constituency is particularly relevant to this amendment. Shell were found on a vessel. As a commercial operation, people wanted to dive on this vessel, which was sunk in 1914. There has been one heck

[Mr. John Prescott]

of a hassle with the Department as to whether, these shells having been found, they can be used to commercial advantage.

The Bill would prevent that kind of hassle. I had to intervene on behalf of certain of my constituents who had found these empty shell cases and wanted to use them, because they had found a profitable market for them. The Government took the shells into safe keeping, but somebody burgled them, using 4-tonne lorries. Nobody has been able to find out where the shells went, after having been in the safe custody of the Government. After all the fuss that I had with the Department, the purpose of the Bill was to try to solve all those problems and to designate any area that it was thought should not be dived on or tampered with.

Many major matters are covered by the Bill, but it is an unsatisfactory way of dealing with them. In the other place the industry battled intensively against the Bill. As a result, we are considering these amendments. I hope that the Minister will be able to give us a clear indication of the Government's attitude towards them. If the Minister would do that, we could consider his reply and make points upon it later in the debate.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. Roger Freeman): I am grateful for the Opposition's contributions and I shall deal with the points that have been made. First, however, I ought to underline the fact that the purpose of the Bill is to protect military remains—that is, aircraft which have crashed or vessels which have been sunk with human remains on board. The purpose of the Bill is to treat them as war graves. This is a serious and important subject. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Hampshire, East (Mr. Mates) on introducing the Bill, looking after its passage through the House of Commons and speaking to it this morning. It is an important and serious Bill and I shall seek to answer all the Oppositions contributions, which I think I have interpreted correctly as points of detail rather than as objections to the Bill.

I intend to comment briefly on the Lords amendments and with your permission, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I shall deal briefly with the other Lords amendments that are grouped for debate later, because, already, the debate has ranged widely. All but one of the 28 amendments were put forward by the Government. No fewer than 22 of the 28 amendments relate to a change to the designation of a regime for vessels, as opposed to designating vessels as a class—those that were in military service but were sunk and that are believed to contain human remains. A major change in the procedure was introduced in the other place, and the Government accepted it as a sensible response to some of the points that have been referred to this morning by hon. Members. Military vessels will no longer be protected as a class. They will need to be individually designated by an order made by statutory instrument. The reason for this is simply because of the difficulty of defining a class of military vessels. The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott), referring to diving interests, in particular sub-aqua interests, put his finger on the problem: that if one is interested in diving to observe but not to interfere with a vessel, how does a diver or the Ministry of Defence know for certain whether a particular vessel was being used for military or civilian purposes?

In wartime, many merchant vessels are commandeered and used for military purposes. Therefore, the dividing line between the civilian and military use of vessels is not so clear as it is in the case of aircraft. It is much easier and simpler to identify a crashed aircraft as having been fulfilling a military purpose and role as opposed to a civilian role.

Vessels can now be so designated, even where their exact location is not known. I shall deal later with that point when answering the question that has been raised in relation to controlled sites. The change was made to reduce the uncertainties for divers about whether particular vessels were covered by the Bill, which I am sure both sides of the House hope will soon become an Act.

Amendment No. 5 redefines the offence involved in the protection of military vessels and aircraft. The prosecution now has to show tht the person believed or had grounds for suspecting that the vessel was in military service. The effect of amendment No. 5 is slightly to change the onus of proof and it is an intelligent and sensible response to the representations. It is designed to draw a clearer distinction between the intention to commit an offence and an offence that might be committed unwittingly and without particular intent or purpose.

Amendment No. 6 removes the offence of boarding and defines that of entering. The purpose of the amendment is to introduce an offence that is not so strong as boarding. This amendment was introduced partly in response to representations from diving interests. The act of entering and interfering with parts of a vessel is covered now by the Bill, as a result of amendment No. 6.

Amendment No. 14 provides that no offence will be committed by those exercising statutory powers. I am sure that that amendment will commend itself to the House. Amendment No. 20 relates to the powers of boarding by authorised officers and makes it clear that the Secretary of State and authorised officers can authorise persons not only individually but also by description—for example, naval officers. Amendment No. 28 enables the provisions to be extended to the Channel Islands by Order in Council.

I am grateful for the tribute that was paid by Lord Sandford in another place to the Government's efforts to protect the interests of British salvage companies and others who may be affected by the Bill. We have agreed to issue licences to reputable British salvage companies to enable them to salvage protected vessels in international waters, provided that they adhere to a code of practice designed to minimise disturbance to any human remains.

Mr. Prescott: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Are all the amendments being moved in one block?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. We are following the amendments listed on Mr. Speaker's provisional selection list. The Minister made a passing reference to an amendment that is not in the group that we are discussing, but as I thought that it might be helpful to the House I did not comment. The other amendments will be dealt with as we reach them in the proper order.

Mr. Prescott: I am grateful for your advice, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Minister referred to reputable salvage operators. How will he judge what is reputable? Quite frankly, many

of them are little more than pirates. What criteria will the Minister use? Will they be non-members of certain associations or bodies?

Mr. Freeman: If the hon. Gentleman will bear with me, I shall deal with that matter later. I confirm that I am addressing the first group of amendments, but I thought that it might help the House if I touched briefly upon the purpose of other amendments.

On Second Reading, the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) expressed concern that the interests of fishermen should be safeguarded. My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement wrote to him saying that we would issue a general licence for fishermen that would protect them from prosecution under the Bill if they exercised reasonable care. Preliminary discussions have been held with fishing organisations on the content of the licence, and we believe that they are satisfied.

The hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) expressed concern about sports divers. Indeed, other hon. Members have received letters from their constituents on that matter. The Government's amendments have been welcomed by sub-aqua associations, and I hope that they are now reassured that the Bill will not restrict the activities of divers who respect the sanctity of war graves.

The Government have been heartened by the expressed view of all concerned that, despite the problems, the Bill is worthy. I hope that, in due course, the House will approve the Lords amendments, all of which the Government fully support.

The hon. Member for Bow and Poplar (Mr. Mikardo), in welcoming the clarity that the Lords amendments bring to the Bill, raised a number of points. His first related to what he believed to be inconsistencies in amendment No. 1. The hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Dubs) also make that point. He courteously informed me that he would have to leave the debate, but I understand that he is returning later.

10.45 am

Amendment No. 1 is the key amendment and its purpose is to change the policy from designating a class of vessels to designating specific vessels. The Bill still retains a provision to designate classes of military aircraft. this group of amendments enshrine our change of policy from blanket protection to a procedure that involves a great deal more work. However, I hope that that means a great deal more clarity, especially for such interests as divers. Vessels will be designated by statutory instrument, and I will explain the procedure later.

The hon. Member for Bow and Poplar also asked about the 200-year provision, which is not covered by the Lords amendments. He specifically asked about the Mary Rose, as did the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East. Certainly the Mary Rose foundered and sank more than 200 years ago, but she was protected by the Protection of Wrecks Act 1973, which protects vessels of historic or archaeological interest. Therefore, there is sufficent protection for any vessel that sank prior to 1914. The Bill deals with those involved in the great war, the second world war and subsequent conflicts where the classifications historic or archaeological would not be appropriate.

Mr. Prescott: Why include a date of 1914—why not leave it open and bring in a statutory instrument, as the Minister explained, to deal with specific military vessels? The state of the ship is not really relevant.

Mr. Freeman: We are seeking to respond to the reasonable request of the diving fraternity and others who want clarity of purpose. The designation procedure will involve considerable effort. For the sake of clarity, good order and procedure, we intend to start from August 1914 and work to the present day. We are satisfied that existing legislation is sufficient to deal with vessels that sank earlier than that—even if there are human remains—because they would be regarded as of historical or archaeological interest.

The hon. Member for Bow and Poplar asked me the purpose of a number of amendments. Amendment No. 2 simply relocates, with minor drafting changes, clause 1(2). That technical change is required if dealing with the amendments as a whole. Amendment No. 8 removes provisions rendered unnecessary by amendment No. 1, which changes policy from a class to a designation regime.

Amendment No. 11 puts beyond all possible doubt that where it is claimed that an act was done in accordance with a licence, the onus is on the defence to prove that it was. Amendment No. 26 inserts a definition of military service that is already used elsewhere in the Bill.

The hon. Gentleman asked why vessels being delivered to the Royal Navy were not covered by the Bill. We are not aware of any such vessel that was sunk or severely damaged during military conflict, so there was no reason to include them in the Bill.

The right hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) generally welcomed the Bill, but he posed a number of questions to which he wants satisfactory answers. The kernel of the hon. Gentleman's points concerned jurisdiction. He asked why we are considering designating particular vessels or controlled sites in international waters, if we have no jurisdiction over foreign companies or individuals. He asked whether we were not disadvantaging our nationals and British salvage companies. That is a perfectly fair point, but before I respond to it, I confirm that there are specific procedures regarding vessels. The intention is to designate a few controlled sites. They could be mainly or, even exclusively, in territorial waters, and would be specifically designated by geographical co-ordinates. Within them no diving would be permitted. That would be where there was an important national war grave. Designated vessels could be either in territorial waters or international waters.

We are responding to representations made by salvage companies which are worried that if we prevent them from entering into controlled, sensible, salvage operations in international waters, they will be disadvantaged by companies from other countries. We have responded that we shall permit them to carry out controlled salvage on most designated vessels by issuing a licence to reputable companies. I shall deal with the definition of reputable in a moment. However, there will be a few vessels where we would not like any salvage to occur and they will form a restricted class. I hope that that assurance will be satisfactory to the salvage interests.

We shall not seek to restrict a designated vessel some time after the designation of that vessel. In other words, when we designate the vessels by statutory instrument we shall not subsequently, after the salvage company has put

[Mr. Freeman]

great effort, trouble and money into preparing the salvage operations, tell that company that the vessel falls within the exclusion subcategory of designated vessels. I hope that that assurance will satisfy the hon. Gentleman. I think that it has satisfied salvage operators thus far.

Mr. Prescott: In the case of the Edinburgh the Government had a great of interest in salvaging the gold and presumably, as seamen were on it, it could be designated as a burial site. Under these regulations, would the Government designate it as a war grave, which presumably would be legitimate, and then allow a salvage operator to salvage the gold so that they could get their greedy hands on it, getting over the principles of interfering with a burial site?

Mr. Freeman: That raises a specific question and I hope that the hon. Gentleman will allow me to answer it in writing in due course. It depends on whether we would intend, under the provisions of the Bill, specifically to designate a particular vessel. He is asking questions about a specific controlled site or vessel, and I hope he will permit me to answer subsequently.

Mr. Mates: Ministers cannot give specific answers, but I remember the case, as I followed it closely. Edinburgh was a designated war grave. There were remains of the crew on board and before the Government gave permission for the salvage operation to take place, the most detailed stringent arrangements were made about not disturbing those remains. A long period of negotiations between the salvage company and the Government took place before permission was granted. I have no doubt that if the same position arises any future Government will take the same care to ensure that the remains are not disturbed.

Mr. Prescott *rose*——

Mr. Freeman: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will let me make a little progress and then I shall be happy to give way again.

Mr. Prescott: I understand that the Minister may not know all the details of the case. That is normal and I make no criticism of it. But we are dealing with a fundamental point. The Government may designate sites in this legislation, whether or not it is a private Member's Bill, and that then becomes law. The Government will have to decide which areas they wish to designate as burial sites, for which a statutory instrument may be tabled and discussed in the House. Therefore, the Government's view is relevant. Are we to assume from the evidence that it is possible that the Government will judge that an area deemed a burial site, for example the Edinburgh, would be allowed for salvage operations so long as it is done carefully, the bodies are not disturbed and the gold is salvaged? Is it possible that a deemed burial site can still be a site for salvage operations?

Mr. Freeman: The intention is to permit reasonable, sensible, salvage operations and to issue licences to specific named salvage companies to salvage on——

Mr. Prescott: Burial sites?

Mr. Freeman: If the hon. Gentleman will allow me to complete my sentence, he will have an answer. We shall judge salvage companies to be reputable according to their past performance, experience, ability and behaviour to carry out salvage. The intention would be to permit as broad an activity of salvage as possible. I can assure the hon. Gentleman that the intention is not necessarily to restrict legitimate salvage operations.

Mr. Denzil Davies: As I understand it, the Government are saying that it is a crime to carry out salvage operations in territorial waters, but that they will license some people to carry out a crime in international waters. That is the point about jurisdiction. Although it is a crime, if one is reputable and goes along with the Ministry of Defence, one can be licensed to commit a crime. That is an extraordinary attitude.

Mr. Freeman: The representations of the salvage companies were that in international waters we have no power to prevent a foreign company from carrying out salvage operations on a sunken vessel, and that if they do not carry out the work some other company will. Our response has been to draw a balance. We have said that we will issue licences to reputable salvage companies so that they are not put at a disadvantage. I appeal this morning to foreign companies and citizens to respect the purpose and intent of the Bill, which we hope will shortly become an Act. Although our jurisdiction does not cover them, we hope that they will respect the legislation.

Mr. Denzil Davies: The Government are making a certain act in international waters a crime but the crime will apply only to British citizens, residents, ships and so on. The problem is that foreigners can do those acts and cannot be stopped. Are there any moves towards an international agreement because, obviously, that is the real solution? Now the Government are telling us that there is a genuine problem caused by the drafting of the legislation, and to get round it they will give some people, no doubt nice people whom they like, a licence to commit what would be a crime if somebody else did it. Perhaps there are other precedents in legislation for that.

Mr. Mates: There are.

Mr. Davies: It is certainly not to be encouraged that the Minister of Defence or any other Ministry, with no disrespect to them, can decide who commits a crime and who does not.

11 am

Mr. Freeman: Obviously, this Parliament can legislate only for its own citizens, but I hope that foreign companies and citizens will respect the intents and purposes of the legislation.

The hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) asked about controlled sites, which are dealt with in clause 1. The provision will cover all vessels within a specific prescibed area of the sea. All diving within that controlled site will be prohibited. It will be an offence to dive in that controlled site, but the intention is to designate by statutory instrument only a few such sites.

I hope that I have satisfied the hon. Gentleman that named vessles will be disignated. It will be an offence to enter—board is too strong a word—to damage, remove or disturb the contents of a maritime war grave.

The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East made two implied criticisms. He welcomed the Bill, but he stressed that it was a private Member's Bill. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Hampshire, East on introducting the Bill. The Government support the Bill strongly and warmly. The hon. Member for Kingston

upon Hull, East is not against the Bill's principles, but he is worried about the speed with which the Bill is being examined. This morning we are considering Lords amendments and the hon. Gentleman will agree that they do not affect the purposes of the Bill.

Mr. Prescott: I was complaining about the speed with which the Bill is being considered. It went through all its stages in one go. It has set some precedents in the speed with which it has been rushed through the House. Today's debate is revealing the difficulties involved in considering the Bill in this way. Once the Minister sits down we cannot intervene to question some of the essential points that he is making in his reply. That is not satisfactory, but we have to operate under the rules of the House.

I have already asked the Minister about international jurisdiction. I am sponsored by the National Union of Seamen, the members of which are concerned. When a vessel in international waters is designated, a British salvage company can operate with protection under the law because it will have a licence. That applies to British companies and British seamen. However, salvage is an international industry.

Some members of the NUS sail on ships flying foreign flags. British divers might have to work from a ship flying a Greek flag. They will be commiting an offence under the legislation because they are British citizens. They will be affected by the Greek law. What protection does a British seaman have under these circumstances?

Mr. Freeman: The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East is thinking on his feet and I am impressed with the speed with which he is doing that. He is asking important questions. The hon. Gentleman will appreciate the dilemma. The Bill's purpose is to protect military vessels with human remains on board. We are talking about war graves. Some such vessels sank outside British territorial waters. In a reasonable and constructive way we are seeking to indicate during the passage of the Bill how seriously we take war graves and to provide a limited procedure for the control of British salvage companies when salvaging such vessles.

We intend to issue licences to reputable British companies so that they can operate in competition with foreign companies.

Mr. Prescott: The Minister has made some important comments about British citizens. I appreciate his difficulty, but I ask him again, what advice can he give to British seamen on a ship ruled by the law of another country because it bears the flag of that country? What happens if the British seaman disobeys the law of that country? Does he face prosecution under British law or Greek law? What advice can the Minister give to members of the NUS in that dilemma?

Mr. Freeman: I understand the hon. Gentleman's anxiety. His question is more than hypothetical. The hon. Gentleman accepts the principles behind the Bill. I hope that the dilemma that he describes will not occur. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman's union will be able to give its members guidance.

The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East also asked me how a controlled site will be designated. This will be by statutory instrument in which the House will be involved. That provision is contained in clause 1(2).

The hon. Gentleman also asked about Scapa Flow. I assume that he has in mind the tourist attraction which that has become. We are talking about German ships which were scuttled, not sunk, with human remains on board. I confirm that those German vessels will not be covered by the legislation so there will be no problem for divers or for the tourist industry.

I commend the amendments to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Subsequent Lords amendments agreed to.

Clause 10

SHORT TITLE, COMMENCEMENT AND EXTENT

Lords amendment: No. 28, in page 9, line 31, at end insert

"any of the Channel Islands or"

Mr. Mates: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Mikardo: It is clearly right that the Channel Islands should be included in the Bill, but why has the Isle of Man not been added?

Mr. Prescott: We have arrived at the last amendment, which proposes to add the Channel Islands to the areas where the Bill will apply.

I was not prepared to vote for the previous amendment that we discussed, although the Minister assured me that he would write to me about the difficult problem that I presented to him. It seems that British seamen could also be affected by amendment No. 28. The house has a resonsibility to look after the citizens of this country and I do not believe that the Minister can give me a satisfactory answer to the questions that I asked him.

Amendment No. 28 is also in conflict with international law. The law of this country can apply only to our ships and citizens in British areas. The Bill proposes — uniquely, I think; I should be interested to hear whether the Minister knows of any other such case — to cover areas outside our jurisdiction.

Jurisdiction in international waters was to have been dealt with by the law of the sea conference, but opposition by the Americans and by our Government prevented a satisfactory solution.

I shall hope to use the Minister's letter to me to advise NUS members, many more of whom now serve on foreign flag ships, how to deal with salvage operations. I hope that the Minister will confirm that he will write to me. We shall let the Bill go on its way, on the understanding that the Department will look at the problem and give us some advice.

Mr. Freeman: I confirm that I understand the point that has been put with great force by the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott). I shall write to him.

The hon Member for Bow and Poplar (Mr. Mikardo) asked why the Isle of Man was excluded from the Bill. The Isle of Man Government have advised us that the permissive extension clause — clause 10 — would not be appropriate in their case, because responsibility for making orders in respect of wrecks of ships and aircraft on the seabed of the territorial waters of the island is vested in the Isle of Man Harbour Board under the Wreck and Salvage Act 1979 of the Tynwald.

We are advised that if any military wrecks are discovered within the territorial waters of the Isle of Man the Government would no doubt favourably consider a

[Mr. Freeman]

designation order under Manx legislation in respect of that site. I hope that that satisfies the hon. Member for Bow and Poplar.

Question put and agreed to.

Protection of Children (Tobacco) Bill

Lords amendment considered.

Clause 2

AMENDMENT OF SECTION 18 OF THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PERSONS (SCOTLAND) ACT 1937

Lords amendment: No. 1 in, page 2, line 21, at end insert—

"*(d)* after subsection (5) there shall be inserted the following subsections—

"(6) For the purposes of subsections (1) and (2) of this section, any substance sold in a container (whether sealed or not) shall, subject to subsections (7) to (9) of this section, be presumed to conform to the description of the substance on the container.

(7) Where a prosecutor (within the meaning of section 462 of the Criminal Procedure (Scotland) Act 1975) intends to rely on subsection (6) of this section, he shall give notice of his intention to the accused or his agent not less than 14 days before the commencement of the trial.

(8) The accused shall not be entitled to challenge the presumption in subsection (6) of this section, unless he or his agent gives notice to the said prosecutor of intention to do so not less than 7 days before the commencement of the trial.

(9) A notice under subsection (7) or (8) of this section shall be by recorded delivery letter, and the execution of the recorded delivery shall be sufficient evidence of the date of posting and of intimation of the notice, which shall be presumed to have been intimated to the addressee on the day after the day on which it was posted, except that, in the case of a notice posted on a Friday or a Saturday, it shall be presumed to have been so intimated on the Monday next following."."

11.15 am

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

This is a technical amendment, which applies only to Scotland. It arises because of the rules of evidence applicable to a criminal trail in Scotland. A prosecutor must prove the nature and contents of a container, such as a bottle or a tin, and evidence would require to be led of scientific analysis of the contents having been carried out by two forensic scientists. That is so even when the contents are specified on a label on the container or where the nature of the contents is not a matter of dispute between the Crown and the accused.

The amendment will do away with the need for full scientific examination in every case by creating a presumption, for the purposes of any trial, that any substance in a container, whether or not the container is sealed, shall be presumed to conform to the description of the substance in the container.

It is important to emphasise that that is a rebuttable presumption and does not compromise the accused's position. When the matter is contentious the accused can insist on full scientific proof. Under subsection (7) the prosecutor must give notice to an accused person of his intention to rely on the presumption, and thereafter it is open to the accused to give counter-notice of his intention to challenge the presumption.

The use of the presumption is, therefore, expected only in cases when the matter is not in dispute. In such cases, much time and expense will be saved in proceeding to trial without needing full scientific evidence. I understand that there are precedents for that principle.

The amendment would do away with the need for a procurator fiscal in Scotland to have the contents of packets of Skoal Bandits or cigarettes chemically analysed if all parties agree that the packet contains what it says it contains. I am grateful to the Lord Advocate for introducing this useful technical amendment in the other place, because it should further simplify the prosecution of those who sell tobacco products to young people under 16, but it will not prejudice the fundamental rights of the defendant.

I do not wish to delay the House, in view of the importance of our next business. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) on his excellent Bill for the benefit of disabled people and I am pleased that I was able to assist him during its Committee stage. However, I shall dwell on my own Bill for another couple of minutes, because the amendment provides a useful opportunity to press the Minister on the enforcement of the Bill when, as we hope, it comes into effect in about three months' time.

The Bill has two fundamental purposes. The first is to make it easier to prosecute those who sell cigarettes to youngsters. It is a national scandal that this poisonous trade is being carried on to the tune of £90 million a year. A new generation is getting hooked on the lethal addiction to nicotine and we expect the Government and the prosecuting and police authorities to take action to deter the trade when the Bill comes into effect.

The most recent Government figures show that fewer than 50 prosecutions a year are made against those involved in the £90 million trade. It is clear that the old legislation has become a dead letter. My Bill should make it possible to crack down on that trade and I hope that the Minister will confirm that that is his intention.

The second intention of the Bill is to extend the ban on the sale of tobacco to youngsters to include tobacco for oral and nasal use, which specifically includes the notorious Skoal Bandits. Many of us would like to ban these dangerous products altogether, and it is nonsense that the people who produce them have been able to escape the ban on sales to youngsters. They are exempt from tobacco duty, they do not yet have to carry a Government health warning on the products and the United States tobacco company that manufactures them has even had a Government grant to establish a factory in East Kilbride.

I hope that my Bill will be the beginning of the end for Skoal Bandits in Britain. I am grateful to the House for supporting this measure to deal with a serious problem, and I am grateful to my noble Friend Lord Pitt of Hampstead for piloting the Bill through another place.

We must stress that legislation is not enough. It must be enforced, to deter the unscrupulous people involved in this trade. I hope that the Minister will confirm that the Government intend to crack down on this trade as soon as the Bill comes into effect.

Dr. John Marek (Wrexham): The Opposition welcome the amendment. It is useful, in that it will speed up justice and save time and administrative costs in a number of cases. In the past, prosecutions may not have been successful because the evidence has not been proved beyond doubt or because it was suggested that the contents of a box were different from those described on the label. Do the terms of the amendment already apply in England? If not, why has a similar procedure not been introduced to save the public analyst's time when a dispute arises?

Finally, I again congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) on bringing the Bill forward. It will be a useful addition to our legislation. Under-age smoking is one of the most serious questions before us, and if this small step helps young people not to become addicted to nicotine before the age of 16, as I am sure it will, all hon. Members will welcome the Bill, and I hope that it will receive Royal Assent as soon as possible.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Allan Stewart): The hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) has rightly pointed out that this is a technical amendment that arises because of the rules of evidence applicable to a criminal trial in Scotland. The amendment applies only to Scotland, and I can tell the hon. Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek) that I understand a similar problem does not arise in England. The hon. Member for East Lothian spelt out clearly the reasons for the amendment and it would serve no purpose for me to repeat them.

The hon. Gentleman asked about the Government's intention regarding enforcement of the Bill. Clause 3(3) states that the Act will come into effect three months after the day on which it is passed. I can assure the hon. Gentleman that it is our intention to have a wide-ranging publicity campaign through the Scottish Information Office, to educate the public and we shall bring the Bill to the attention of health boards, the police and prosecuting authorities in Scotland.

I am sure that the passing of the Bill and the publicity which it receives will have a substantial deterrent effect on those who may be tempted to sell tobacco or tobacco products to young people below the statutory age. Clearly there is limit to the extent to which chief constables can deploy resources to combat the problem, but I am sure that they will have due regard to it within the competing demands on their resources.

Finally, I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on steering the Bill so successfully through and I assure him that Ministers with responsibility for health will use their best endeavours in the current discussions with United States Tobacco to ensure that Skoal Bandits are not sold to anyone below the appropriate age.

Question put and agreed to.

Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Bill

Lords amendments considered.

New Clause

APPOINTMENT OF AUTHORISED REPRESENTATIVES OF DISABLED PERSONS

Lords Amendment: No. 1, before clause 1, insert the following new clause:

"—(1) In this Act "authorised representative", in relation to a disabled person, means a person for the time being appointed by or on behalf of that disabled person (in accordance with regulations made under this section) to act as his authorised representative for the purposes of this Act.

(2) The Secretary of State may by regulations make provision with respect to the appointment of persons to act as the authorised representatives of disabled persons, including provision—

(a) for the manner in which the appointment of a person as an authorised representative is to be made; and

(b) for any such appointment to be notified to the relevant local authority (as defined in the regulations) if made otherwise than by that authority.

(3) Any such regulations—

(a) may provide for the parent or guardian of a disabled person under the age of 16 or appoint himself or some other person as the authorised representative of the disabled person (but shall not permit a person under that age himself to appoint a person as his authorised representative);

(b) may provide for the appointment of a person as the authorised representative of a disabled person who is a child in the care of a local authority to be made by that authority in such circumstances as may be specified in the regulations;

(c) may, in accordance with subsection (4), provide for the appointment of a person as the authorised representative of a disabled person to be made by, or under arrangements made by, a local authority in a case where the disabled person appears to the authority to be unable to appoint a person as his authorised representative by reason of any mental or physical incapacity;

(d) may contain such incidental or supplementary provisions as the Secretary of State thinks fit.

(4) Regulations under paragraph *(c)* of subsection (3) may make provision—

(a) for requiring a local authority, for the purpose of enabling them to determine whether a disabled person is unable to appoint a person as his authorised representative as mentioned in that paragraph, to obtain the opinion of a registered medical practitioner;

(b) for authorising a local authority, where they determine that a disabled person is so unable, either—

(i) themselves to appoint a person as the disabled person's authorised representative, or

(ii) to make with any voluntary organisation, person or persons approved by them for the purpose of such arrangements as they think fit for such an appointment to be made by the organisation, person or persons concerned;

(c) for requiring or authorising a local authority, before determining the question specified in paragraph *(a)*, or (as the case may be) before making any appointment of an authorised representative, or any arrangements, in pursuance of paragraph *(b)*, to consult any of the following, namely—

(i) a person or persons appointed by them for the purpose, or

(ii) a person or persons falling within any class or description specified in the regulations;

(d) for requiring a local authority, in such circumstances as may be specified in the regulations, to review the case of a disabled person whose authorised representative has been appointed in pursuance of paragraph *(b)* (whether by the local authority or under any arrangements made by them) for the purpose of determining whether he is still unable to appoint a person as his authorised representative as mentioned in subsection (3)*(c)*.

(5) Subsections (2) to (4) shall apply, with any necessary modifications, in relation to the termination of the appointment of a person as an authorised representative as they apply in relation to the making of such an appointment.

(6) It is hereby declared that any person exercising under Part II of the 1983 Act or Part V of the 1984 Act—

(a) the functions of the nearest relative of a disabled person, or

(b) the functions of the guardian of a disabled person received into guardianship under that Part of that Act,

may, if appointed as such in accordance with this section, also act as that person's authorised representative."

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): With this it will be convenient to consider the following Lords amendment: No. 2, in page 2, line 10, at end insert—

"(2A) In relation to a disabled person whose authorised representative has been appointed by virtue of subsection (3) of section *(Appointment of authorised representatives of disabled persons)*, subsections (1) and (2) above shall each have effect as follows—

(a) if the appointment was made by virtue of subsection (3) *(a)* of that section, the words "the parent or guardian of" shall be inserted after the words "if so requested by"; and

(b) if the appointment was made by virtue of subsection (3)*(b)* or *(c)* of that section, the words "if so requested by the disabled person" shall be omitted."

No. 3, in page 2, line 24, at end insert—

"*(da)* in hospital accommodation provided by the Secretary of State under section 3(1)*(a)* of the 1977 Act or, in Scotland, in hospital accommodation (other than accommodation at a State hospital) provided by the Secretary of State under section 36(1)*(a)* of the 1978 Act, or"

No. 4, in page 2, line 45, at end insert—

"(4A) In paragraph *(b)* of subsection (4) "voluntary organisation" in relation to England and Wales includes a housing association within the meaning of the Housing Associations Act 1985."

No. 5, in page 3, leave out lines 1 to 34.

No. 6, in page 3, line 37, after "appropriate" insert "and such other bodies as appear to him to be concerned"

No. 7, in page 4, line 2, at end insert—

"(9A) An order under subsection (9) may provide for any provision of regulations made under section *(Appointment of authorised representatives of disabled persons)* to have effect for the purposes of the order with such modifications as may be prescribed by the order, and in that event the reference in subsection (1) of that section to regulations made under that section shall be read as a reference to any such regulations as they have effect in accordance with the order."

No. 9, in page 4, leave out line 8.

No. 10, in page 4, line 9, at beginning insert "and"

Mr. Clarke: Before I address the detailed amendments to clause 1, I want to make a few general comments about the progress of the Bill in another place.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will do his utmost to keep in order. We must address ourselves to the content of the amendments before the House.

Mr. Clarke: As one who has witnessed the expertise from the Chair this morning in controlling difficulties on other measures, I shall do my utmost to keep in order. However, it is appropriate to acknowledge the efforts of Baroness Masham of Ilton who steered through almost 100 amendments in concert with the Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security, Baroness Trumpington, to whom warm thanks are also due, especially in view of her other responsibilities.

The small band of civil servants — indeed, key officials — in the DHSS has also laboured hard to improve the Bill. They, in consultation with Mr. Peter Mitchell, Mr. John Healy and Mr. William Bingley, have done a superb job in bringing the Bill to the House in its present shape with the new clause and the amendments. I think that the Minister will agree that they have made our task this morning a great deal easier and we must thank them for it.

I apologise to the House for the reams of Lords amendments, including those that we are now discussing, which need to be considered today. I am sure that all hon. and right hon. Members will appreciate that another place was in many ways compelled to do the Committee work on the Bill that emerged from this House which might will have been done upstairs if Ministers had accepted rather earlier the principles which I am now happy to say they so warmly espouse.

Clause 1 has been split into two for convenience. The new clause contains all the provisions relating to the appointment of authorised representatives by disabled people or on their behalf. Most of the new clause consists of regulation-making powers in relation to the complex balance needed where the disabled person is unable to appoint someone himself.

After five months of intense thought by all concerned, including a seminar held at MIND — to whom the presence of these clauses are largely due — it has been concluded that there are no organisations in the country other than local authorities on which the duty to make the necessary arrangements for these people could be laid in primary legislation. I understand that "double delegation" would have been frowned on by the courts — that is, giving the Secretary of State a free hand to choose the intermediary bodies at a later date and also giving those bodies the power to delegate the responsibility as they wish.

Nevertheless, the local authority will also be the authority providing the services in relation to which the representative will operate. This potential conflict of interest is not wholly satisfactory, as the Minister will probably agree. One of the most important characteristics of the concept of representation or advocacy for disabled people as it has developed in this country and abroad is that the representative owes sole loyalty to the disabled person and is truly independent of the service-providing authority.

Where representatives are perhaps too pushy, too demanding, or too successful, there may be a temptation to get rid of them. It is vital that once the Bill becomes an Act careful consideration is given to the rules that will cover this issue to ensure that sufficient independence is built into the procedure, especially where, under (4) (*b*) (i) local authorities appoint representatives themselves. Therefore, the wording of the amendments explicitly leaves open the possibility that the local authority might set up a panel, or appoint a voluntary organisation, to fulfil this function so that it can remain at arm's length. I wish to make only one other brief comment on the procedures relating to adults who are unable to make an appointment themselves on account of incapacity. The decision whether someone is unable to appoint an authorised representative himself may not be cut and dried, and the amendments include a stipulation that the regulations may require the advice of a doctor. However, they also allow others to be consulted on that question. Those caring full-time for a disabled person may have valid views on this as valid as a doctor, who only sees a person occasionally.

11.30 am

On the detail of new clause 1, I should like to say a word about the arrangements for disabled children. In most cases parents will appoint representatives for their children, but at a late stage the Department expressed concern about parents who had, for example, harmed their children in some way. Therefore, the amendments envisage the appointment of an authorised representative for children in care, to be made by the local authority. Unfortunately, at a stage too late for amendment, it was pointed out that there might be a few children who had neither a parent nor guardian and who were not in the care of a local authority.

Perhaps I may be permitted a mild criticism. Some of the technical problems with what was, after all, the Government's new clause — which was introduced on Report — have been rather late in emerging. Nevertheless, I do not want to appear to be ungrateful or churlish. I am convinced that the new clause provides an adequate framework for achieving the Bill's intentions.

I am sure that you will be pleased to learn, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that there is little to say about Lords amendments Nos. 2 to 10 to clause 1, which are largely consequential. However, amendment No. 3 is most important, and will greatly assist people who are seeking to move from hospital into the community. It allows access for the authorised representative to people in hospital in advance of the general extension of the clause to the NHS. I am rather sorry that it appears there is some accommodation for children in England and Wales — but not apparently in Scotland — excluded from the list. Again, that was discovered rather late in the day. However, I am assured that that will be tidied up in the forthcoming child care Bill, and the Minister may also have something to say about that.

In connection with amendment No. 6, may I ask the Minister when he intends to commence the consultation regarding the extension of the clauses to the NHS and other local authority services. The vast majority of people and organisations, in response to the Government's consultative document on the Bill earlier this year, expressed concern that the Bill recognises the representative only in relation to social services provided by a local authority. As I am sure that the House would agree, one of the main purposes of representation is to prevent disabled people from falling through the net of services that are increasingly provided by different authorities. It makes little sense to limit the scope of a representative to just the social services.

Finally, it might be appropriate if the Minister, when he responds to each group of amendments, could say when he expects to be able to bring each clause into force. I am aware of the Minister's commitment to the principles of

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the Bill, and I welcome that. It was helpful at several stages. I am sure that he appreciates the despondency, not to say anger, that would be widespread in the country if key parts of the Act languished ineffectually on the statute book.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris), whose assistance I most readily acknowledge, just as my fellow sponsors would do, received a letter from the Prime Minister which was rightly widely publicised, and which is relevant to this clause and the amendments. In response to my right hon. Friend's question about resources, she did not appear to be particularly generous. I must admit that that happened at a fairly early stage in our discussions, and so, given the Government's rethink on these matters and the Minister's input, especially in recent months, I hope that it will be accepted that this part of the Bill will lack true meaning unless the necessary resources are provided.

I do not believe that the House or the other place would appreciate any Government who hid behind the Treasury in saying that the resources cannot be made available. After all, both Houses have expressed themselves clearly on the priorities that we hope to identify. Today of all days, on 4 July, it is important to assert the independence of disabled persons. They are intitled to that independence. They are entitled to enjoy the same liberties as the rest of us: true liberty in the meaningful sense of that word. I believe that the Bill will assist in many ways in achieving that objective, which is widely shared by both Houses and by the people of this country. We know that the authorities want to implement the Bill. The message from this House, supported overwhelmingly by the country at large, must be, "Give them the money, and let them get on with the job."

Mr. Ian Mikardo (Bow and Poplar): Unhappily, in the past seven years or so there has been some diminution and erosion of elements of our social services provision, and that has adversely affected some groups of people. Probably no group has suffered more as a result than handicapped persons. My hon. Friend the Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) has, therefore, done a great job in introducing a Bill that at least makes some contribution towards making up for the losses that have been sustained by handicapped persons. He has earned himself much credit in the House, and if there is a heaven he has earned himself some good Brownie points there.

I rise only to ask about some minor points. My right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) has unparalleled expertise in this area, and perhaps he will be able to put me right. Subsection 4(*a*) of the amendment requires the local authority to

"obtain the opinion of a registered medical practitioner"

and would seem to be a sensible provision, but subsection 4(*c*) requires the local authority to consult

"(i) a person or persons appointed by them for the purpose, or

(ii) a person or persons falling within any class or description."

What sort of people could they be if their views were authoritative but if they were not medical practitioners? Why has a distinction been drawn?

Incidentally, there is also a typographical error on page (3) of the Amendment Paper, in that at the end of line 5 there are some closing inverted commas for which there do not appear to be any corresponding opening commas. I just mention that so that the error can be put right when the Bill is reprinted, as it will have to be.

What is the reason for amendment No. 9, which would leave out line 8? Its effect would apparently be to leave that part of the Bill without any definition of a health board. I cannot think why we should want to define everything else except that. But perhaps I have misread it, and if so I apologise.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I shall try to help the House by pointing out that the closing inverted commas to which the hon. Member for Bow and Poplar (Mr. Mikardo) referred are those which appear to follow the opening inverted commas at the beginning of the second line of amendment No. 1.

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): I welcome the fact that the Bill has reached this stage. I hope that within a short time it will complete its passage through Parliament.

I ask for some clarification of the Government's intentions with regard to Amendment No. 1. Proposed subsection (4)(*b*) says that regulations may make provision

"for authorising a local authority, where they determine that a disable person is so unable, either—

(i) themselves to appoint a person as the disabled person's authorised representative, or"

alternatively

"any voluntary organisation, person or persons".

I should be grateful if the Minister would confirm that it is intended to make that a hard and fast provision. Subsection (4) is a permissive provision under which a local authority may appoint a representative. I should like an undertaking that that will happen. We discussed in Committee the position of those who were severely handicapped who could not appoint representatives of their own. Those are the people who most need the Bill's provisions.

Clause 1(9) presents another aspect of concern. I should like confirmation that the changes made in the other place help rather than hinder the progress for which we hope by extending the provisions to health authorities and local authorities where appropriate. Many people feel that such a provision is needed. I hope that there is no diminution in our intention to extend the provision in that direction in due course. Again, subsection (9) is a permissive provision. I should be grateful if the Minister would confirm that he hopes to move in that direction at an early date after the implementation of the Bill.

I congratulate the hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) on his hard work and his achievements in getting the Bill to this stage. I hope that I shall not again detain hon. Members for too long.

Mr. Alfred Morris (Manchester, Wythenshawe): On this important day for my hon. Friend the Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke), who has my warmly renewed congratulations and for whom I am full of admiration, I know that he will join me in paying tribute to the sustained and invaluable help he has received at all stages of the Bill's consideration from my right hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley) who, sadly, is not able, because of constituency commitments, to be with us this morning. My right hon. Friend has played a distinguished part in all our

proceedings on the Bill, and he will be as active in campaigning for the Bill's full and speedy implementation as he has been in its making.

I know that the hon. Member for Exeter (Mr. Hannam) and my hon. Friend the Member for Eccles (Mr. Carter-Jones) regret very much that they cannot be here for these final proceedings. As the House knows they, too, are tried, trusted and widely respected campaigners for disabled people.

11.45 am

This is an important part of the Bill. It brings representation into rehabilitation, which could do much, given the support that it merits, to improve the quality of life of people with disabilities and to ease the strain on families. Much progress has been made over the years in strengthening the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970 and in extending its implementation. Yet all too often the emphasis has been too much on what the providers of help under the Act think best rather than on what its recipients see as most likely to meet their needs. Now we seek to redress that imbalance, and, as the House as a whole must agree, not before time.

Rehabilitation is best defined as giving the disabled person the right help in the right place and at the right time. The disabled person and/or his or her representative have an important role in ensuring this, and I welcome the painstaking work that has been done in another place.

With regard to subsection (4), to which my hon. Friend the Member for Bow and Poplar (Mr. Mikardo) referred, for perfectly acceptable reasons the procedures for the appointment of representatives have not been fully worked out. The clause is, of course, designed to give the DHSS sufficient flexibility in writing the regulations. I am sure that the Minister will want to respond to my hon. Friend's important points.

The most important issue is whether we can extract from the Minister dates for the implementation of each clause and a commitment to allocate the necessary resources. I want strongly to press the issue at this first opportunity.

My hon. Friend the Member for Monklands, West referred to the Prime Minister's letter to me of 24 April, in which she said:

> "The Government have made it clear that, if the Bill is enacted, it would not be possible to make commencement orders to bring into effect the provisions of the Bill which have significant financial implications until such time as the necessary funds could be made available."

That is just not good enough. I hope that the Minister will now give us much better news than that conveyed by the Prime Minister. For this and other key parts of the Bill to lie impotently on the statute book, without being brought into force, would be widely seen as a betrayal of the many thousands of people with disabilities whose initiative and lobbying helped to create this important and humane Bill. I welcome the work done by Lady Masham and others on both sides of the House in the other place and urge the Minister now to give us the best possible guidance that he can on implementation and the provision of resources.

The Minister for Social Security (Mr. Tony Newton): I, too, begin be extending my congratulations to the hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) on his success in steering the Bill to this position, which we hope is almost the last stage before royal assent, to all the hon. Members and people who have been mentioned in the debate who have played an important and supportive part and to my noble Friends, who were rightly mentioned, for their work in the other place.

The hon. Member for Monklands, West made what for him must count, I suppose, as a slightly acid remark about how we might have had fewer amendments in the other place if the Government had behaved differently earlier in the Commons. I do not want to sully this morning's proceedings by engaging in an argument along those lines.

Although this is unquestionably the Bill of the hon. Member for Monklands, West, the Government have clutched it to their hearts with considerable enthusiasm, as reflected in the devoted work of DHSS officials, to which the hon. Gentleman rightly played tribute. I wish to add to that tribute. I was in some confusion when contemplating this debate as to whether the hon. Gentleman or I was supposed to be moving that the House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment. I am sure that it is appropriate that the hon. Gentleman should have done so. That is the spirit in which I and my right hon. and hon. Friends approached the Bill, although I would have been happy to have undertaken that task.

The hon. Member for Monklands, West has already explained that the main substantive change to this part of the Bill, introduced in another place, is that the clause now spells out in more detail the Secretary of State's power to make provision by regulations for the appointment of representatives for disabled people who, because of mental or physical incapacity, are unable to appoint someone themselves. My right hon. Friend the Minister for Health said on Report that further consultation with the Bill's sponsors would be needed on that matter in relation to the Bill as it then stood. I am delighted that those consultations have produced the reasonably satisfactory outcome which we now have before us. We do now genuinely have a sound legislative basis for the provision of representatives for disabled people.

Hon. Members have raised many points during the brief proceeding. Mr. Deputy Speaker, you have kindly spared me the task of pointing out to the hon. Member for Bow and Poplar (Mr. Mikardo) that the inverted commas at the end correspond with the inverted commas at the beginning. That is not a matter which need detain the House for long. For all I know it may be that the hon. Member for Bow and Poplar has some other motives for raising these points which are, at the moment, obscure to me.

Mr. Mikardo: Heaven forbid.

Mr. Newton: I will not speculate further on that.

The hon. Member for Bow and Poplar did raise some other points, especially in relation to subsection 4 of the new clause, about the types of person, other than medical practitioners, whom we might envisage being involved. We had in mind carers and relatives in particular. However, there will be full consultations on the details of the use of the powers in that subsection. He also asked about the reference to health boards and why they were not defined. The reference to health boards was deleted because it has been included in the general definitional clause 12 under amendment 78.

The child care aspect of the clause was raised by the hon. Member for Monklands, West. I used to be, although have not been for some time now, the Minister responsible for child care matters. If one starts to look into the

[Mr. Newton]

complexity of current child care law and the various provisions under which children may be taken into care and the associated provisions, they are of almost incredible complexity. It is a pity that the Department has not spotted every last arcane corner of this aspect in its work, but I cannot say that I am entirely surprised. We shall certainly seek to remedy any defects that there may prove to be in the legislation which, as the hon. Gentleman said, the Government are hoping to undertake in relation to child care law generally. Meanwhile, I accept what he said about the need for careful consultation and we shall seek to meet any of those tidying up points in the way that I have described.

The hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) asked about the proposed Subsection (4)(b) and what we have in mind there. We are not proposing a compulsory duty on local authorities to set up arrangements for appointing representatives for people unable to act. We feel that that should be left to local decision in the light of local priorities. I hope that that does not come as a surprise to the hon. Gentleman because my understanding is that that has been made clear to the Bill's sponsors throughout all the proceedings.

Mr. Wigley: I am afraid that it does come as somewhat of a surprise because, at earlier stages of discussion, we made our belief clear that the right to representation should be a right to a disabled person. If that person, because of his or her disability, cannot exercise that right, it should not be any less of a right. That requires there to be a responsibility either for a local authority or somebody else to make that appointment. I am not splitting hairs as to who should be doing it, but I am absolutely certain that somebody should be doing it.

It comes as a bit of a shock at this late stage to understand that it will be left to the whim of a local authority. The local authority may not use the powers available and disabled people would miss out. It may be too late at this stage of the Bill to change anything in terms of the provisions of legislation but I press the Minister strongly to think further on this matter. It does not put an additional cost on local authorities. It is a duty that can be put on them very reasonably and disabled people would expect that to happen.

Mr. Newton: I note what the hon. Gentleman said and I will think further about it. He knows me well enough to know that it would be my hope and expectation that these provisions should be used. However, we have to think with some care before deciding to go down the track of compulsion against the background of a position in which, whatever resources are made available local authorities will have a range of decisions to make about the balance of priorities and the way in which they use particular provisions and provide services generally. However, I note, not merely as a routine gesture, the comments that the hon. Gentleman has made and the strength with which he feels about this matter.

Mr. Wigley: In case I have misunderstood more in relation to these provisions, could the Minister confirm that a disabled person who is capable of appointing a representative does have that as of right, under the provisions of the Bill? What we are saying is that the right exists without question for people capable of exercising it and it is only those most in need and who are incapable of exercising it who will not have it as a right.

Mr. Newton: That is a slightly tendentious way of putting it. The hon. Gentleman is certainly right in respect of the right of disabled people to appoint representatives. The issue is whether we should impose a duty on local authorities of the kind he described in relation to those unable to appoint representatives for themselves. There is probably very little between us. Indeed, there is probably nothing between us about what we would like to see. However, I would not wish to disguise from the hon. Gentleman that at this moment it is not in our mind to impose that duty on local authorities. I shall reflect further on what he has said although, manifestly, there is now no further opportunity for amending the Bill.

The main thrust of the remarks from virtually every direction, certainly from the hon. Member for Monklands, West and the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris), concerned the question of implementation of this clause and other provisions in the Bill. There is no doubt that the representation provision will have clear resource implications for local authorities and, if the provisions are extended to them, for health authorities. At this stage I cannot attempt to give a precise estimate of what those costs might be because that is something that needs to be assessed in further consultation with the authorities concerned. It would be wrong for me to attempt to second-guess the outcome of that further work in advance.

The House knows already, because it was said on several occasions during the proceedings in the House and, no doubt in the other place, that the total annual cost of implementing the Bill has been estimated to be something in excess of £100 million in a full year. That is not just a figure that the Government have dragged out of the air in order to show some of the difficulties with which we are faced. It rests to a significant extent on the figure that the local authorities have placed on the provisions. It is also clear that the cost of implementing the representation provisions could represent a substantial proportion of that total.

It is only honest for me to say to the House that against that background I cannot, at this stage, give an undertaking as to when resources might be available to bring this part of the Bill into effect. I have already said that I sympathise with and share entirely the wish of hon. Members to press ahead as soon as possible with implementation of the Bill, and I hope to be able to be a little more specific and helpful about some later parts of the Bill that we shall be considering. I have to say, however, that it would be wrong to impose extra burdens on local authorities and health authorities under this part of the Bill and others, which have significant resource implications, until we can ensure that the resources are available to carry them out. It is against that background that we shall have to consider when we are able to bring these provisions into effect.

12 noon

Mr. Alfred Morris: The Prime Minister appeared to say that this and other parts of the Bill requiring extra finance will not be implemented for the forseeable future. Will the Minister say when he expects this part of the Bill to be brought into effect by commencement order?

Mr. Newton: I do not think that I can add to what I have already said, which is that the timing of bringing into effect these provisions must depend upon when we are able to ensure that local authorities, and health authorities if the extension takes place, have the necessary resources to carry through the extension. We shall do our best to ensure that we reach that position as soon as possible. I cannot give any undertaking of what "as soon as possible" means in this context. I mean that we shall be working with a view to making progress as rapidly as we reasonably can.

It is in the light of these considerations that we shall have to consider the timing of further consultation on the possible extension of the representation provision to health authorities and to other local authority services, and on the appointment regulations. It may be that there will be work there that can be undertaken in the course of refining what the cost of implementing the proposals would be. That is something to which we shall give careful consideration.

I am sorry not to be able to be more forthcoming with right hon. and hon. Members. I hope that they will take account of the fact that we have been making progress in a variety of ways. If I were in a different frame of mind, I would take up one of the remarks of the hon. Member for Bow and Poplar. We have been making progress in various ways in improving both benefits and services for the disabled, and most recently in the extension of the invalid care allowance to married women. I resist any implication by anyone on either side of the House that the Government have not shown their concern to maintain the pace of development in this area.

There are several hon. Members who know as well as anyone that the range of demands, requests and pressures, and the scope for developing both services and social security benefits for the disabled is almost infinite. Careful choices and difficult decision are involved. We shall continue to make what progress we can, but I cannot put a date on the particular piece of progress that we are discussing.

I welcome unreservedly the fact that these provisions are to go onto the statute book. I hope that their mere existence on the statute book will have a helpful effect in causing local authorities to think about the way in which they seek to meet the perceived needs and wishes of disabled people in the way in which they provide services.

Question put agreed to.

Subsequent Lords amendments agreed to.

Clause 2

ASSESSMENT BY LOCAL AUTHORITIES OF NEEDS OF DISABLED PERSONS

Lords amendment: No. 11, in page 4, line 15, leave out "On any occasion when" and insert

"Where—

(a) on any assessment carried out by them in pursuance of any provision of this Act, or

(b) on any other occasion,"

Mr. Tom Clarke: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take the following Lords amendments: No. 12, in page 4, line 26, leave out from "(1)" to "the" in line 29 and insert

", or the period mentioned in that subsection has expired without any such representations being made, and the authority have reached a decision on the question referred to in that subsection (having taken into account any representations made as mentioned above)"

No. 13, in page 4, leave out lines 32 to 34 and insert—

"*(a)* either specifying—

(i) any needs of the disabled person which in the opinion of the authority call for the provision by them of any statutory services, and

(ii) in the case of each such need, the statutory services that they propose to provide to meet that need,

or stating that, in their opinion, the disabled person has no needs calling for the provision by them of any such services; and

(b) giving an explanation of their decision; and

(c) containing particulars of the right of the disabled person or his authorised representative to make representations with respect to the statement under subsection (4)."

No. 14, in page 4, line 40, leave out from "services" to end of line 43.

No. 15, in page 5, line 2, leave out from "matter" to "that" in line 3 and insert

"included in the statement supplied under subsection (2)".

No. 16, in page 5, line 6, leave out "further".

No. 17, in page 4, line 6, leave out

"the particular need in question"

and insert "that matter".

No. 18, in page 5, leave out lines 9 to 11 and insert—

"*(a)* consider (or, as the case may be, reconsider) whether any, and (if so) what, statutory services should be provided by them for the disabled person to meet any need identified in the representations; and".

No. 19, in page 5, line 15, after "Where" insert "*(a)*".

No. 20, in page 5, line 17, after "writing" insert

"(or in each of those ways)".

No. 21, in page 5, line 18, after "incapacity," insert

"or

(b) both of those persons are in that position (whether by reason of the same incapacity or not,".

No. 22, in page 5, line 25, at end insert—

"(6A) In determining whether they are required to provide any services under subsection (6) to meet any need of the disabled person or his authorised representative and (if so) what those services should be, the local authority shall have regard to any views expressed by either of those persons as to the necessity for any such services or (as appropriate) to any views so expressed as to the services which should be so provided.".

No. 23, in page 5, line 28, leave out from "both," to end of line 39.

No. 24, after Clause 2 insert the following new Clause—

Services under s. 2 of the 1970 Act: duty to consider needs of disabled person

". When requested to do so by—

(a) a disabled person,

(b) his authorised representative, or

(c) any person who provides care for him in the circumstances mentioned in section 5,

a local authority shall decide whether the needs of the disabled person call for the provision by the authority of any services in accordance with section 2(1) of the 1970 Act (provision of welfare services).".

No. 56, in clause 5, page 9, line 36, at end insert—

"(2) Where that other person is unable to communicate, or (as the case may be) be communicated with, orally or in writing (or in each of those ways) by reason of any mental or physical incapacity, the local authority shall provide such services as, in their opinion, are necessary to ensure that any such incapacity does not prevent the authority from being properly informed as to the ability of that person to continue to provide care as mentioned in subsection (1).

(3) Section 2(6A) shall apply for the purposes of subsection (2) above as it applies for the purposes of section

[Mr. Deputy Speaker]

2(6), but as if any reference to the disabled person or his authorised representative were a reference to the person mentioned in subsection (2).".

Lords amendments Nos. 13, 18 and 24 involve privilege.

Mr. Clarke: We are now considering a group of amendments to the clauses which are concerned with local authority assessments in general, and in particular those under section 2 of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970. My right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) is rightly remembered for his immense contribution in piloting that measure through the House.

Clause 2 was introduced by the Government on Report, and it is fair to say that its substance was widely welcomed when canvassed in the consultation document. On reflection, however, the drafting was seen to be unnecessarily restrictive and would probably have caused more problems for local authorities if there were arguments as to whether a disabled person was entitled to a review.

Broadly speaking, amendments Nos. 11 to 18 ensure that a disabled person or his representative may receive a written statement if they request it after any assessment and may ask for a review of any decision in any circumstances. I shall refer only explicitly to the substantive amendments. Amendment No. 12 gives a right to a written statement even if there had been no representations by a disabled person or his representative before the assessment.

Amendment No. 13 requires the statement to specify the needs of the disabled person as well as the services to be provided to meet them. This may seem a minor clarification but it will prove useful if there is a dispute as to how the needs should be met — for example the common choice between a stairlift or downstairs adaptations on which there is often disagreement between disabled people and the social services. In combination with amendments Nos. 14 and 18, it provides the right of review on anything in the statement.

Amendments Nos. 19 to 23 clarify the right of either a disabled person or his representative to assistance if either or both have a communication handicap. Amendment No. 56 to clause 5 extends this right to communication assistance to carers during a local authority assessment of the disabled person. New subsection (6A), introduced by amendment No. 22, attempts to meet some of the concern expressed principally by the British Deaf Association. In determining both the need for communication assistance and the nature of that assistance the local authority must have regard to the views expressed by the disabled person or his representative, who are, of course, uniquely qualified to identify what is required.

During the passage of the Bill through both Houses there has been some confusion over the right to ask for an assessment for services under the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970, in particular in relation to the carers' clause, where many right hon. and hon. Members believed that it was essential for carers to have the independent right to ask for an assessment of the person for whom they were caring. The purpose of this was to prevent their own possible breakdown and enable the social services to fill the gaps so that the disabled person could continue living in his own home on the basis of genuine shared care.

To be frank, I never really understood Ministers' objections to the original carers' clause, and I said so at the time; but, being a reasonable person, despite the acid comments which I might make from time to time, I accepted the half loaf that the Government offered on Report and rested content with three and a half of the four key points I was asking the House to accept then. During discussions since then, however, the Department agreed to introduce the new clause after clause 2. Happily it is one of the most comprehensible clauses in the Bill and puts beyond doubt the duty of a local authority to assess the need of a disabled person for any of the services listed in section 2 of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970 on request of the disabled person, his or her authorised representative or the carer as defined in clause 5.

Apart from the carers' issue a problem has arisen, certainly for lay people and even for some lawyers, from the complex drafting of section 2 of the 1970 Act. Although the best legal advice and, indeed, the departmental circular issued in August 1970, has always maintained that a local authority has a duty to make an assessment, this is not stated clearly in that section, and as recently as February 1986 a disabled person received a letter from a chief executive's department which flatly denied that the duty existed.

Baroness Masham quoted at length from this letter when moving this new clause in another place, and I shall not repeat it here. I shall only restate my thanks to Ministers for responding to the concern expressed. I can now claim to have at least three and three quarters of what I was seeking on Report—and even a bit more.

However, there are still some fears, among disabled people that clause 5 could be misinterpreted and encourage local authorities to look to residential care as a solution rather than to provide the domiciliary help specified in the 1970 Act. I hope that the Minister will give an assurance that his Department's circular will be explicit on this point, and state unreservedly that the purpose of the Act is to enable disabled people to remain living in their own homes as long as they wish to do so.

Finally, on implementation, the new clause should come into force immediately as it is simply a confirmation of the existing law. There should be no difficulties. Not to do so might increase the confusion as some people might think assessments were not necessary until it was in force. I also hope that clauses 2 and 5 could come into force next April, as there is nothing totally new involved. Many local authorities, all of which have been widely consulted, will have to make only minimal adaptations to their procedures, although some will obviously have to take their responsibilities under the existing law more seriously and thereby incur greater expense.

Mr. Mikardo: I am bound to say, with all the charity that I can muster, that amendment No. 11 is nonsensical. It replaces one definition with another that says exactly the same thing, but takes much longer to say it. We can always be sure that when departmental lawyers start to draft amendments they will ensure that the revised wording is a good deal longer than the wording that went before, even if it says the same thing.

In this case, four words are replaced by 23. Let me paraphrase what the two versions say. The first says, "on any occasion". The second one says, "on any particular occasion or any other occasion." Can anybody tell me, in terms of the well of English, pure and undefiled, what difference there is between those phrases? I can find no difference,. What would be the difference between a ticket from London Transport that said, "This ticket entitles you to travel to any station on the system", and one that said, "This ticket entitles you to travel to Piccadily Circus or any other station on the system."? What would be the difference between my referring to every hon. Member and referring to the hon. Member for Bow and Poplar and any other hon. Member? This is just a piece of normal, legalistic verbal diarrhoea that comes from the recesses of departmental meetings.

Amendment No. 14 is the only one of their Lordships' amendments with which I disagree, but because I do not wish to waste any time I shall not press my strong disagreement to a Division. The amendment takes away the obligation, when a disabled person has authorised representations that have been turned down, for information that he has the right to make further representations to be given to him. I cannot see any justification for that. It is contrary to all our traditions.

12.15 pm

I can take a parallel from the Minister's Department. If an insurance officer rejects a claim, the notification of the rejection of the claim is accompanied by a notification that the claimant is allowed to appeal against that rejection. In some cases, for example in applications for immigration or entry certificates under the immigration rules, the rejections of representations have the notification that an individual is allowed to make representations to another authority.

Do we not want handicapped people to exercise their rights? What is the good of giving them rights if we do not facilitate the exercise of those rights? We must remember that we are talking about people who are badly handicapped. In the nature of things, many handicapped people and their representatives will not know, when their application is turned down, that they have a right to come back. Why should we not tell them? This is an infringement of civil liberties. If we had been in other circumstances than midday on Friday, I should have wanted to divide the House against the amendment.

As in the previous group of amendments, if this group is implemented, it will involve some expenditure, perhaps more than that occasioned under the previous group. When dealing with that group, the Minister said — doubtless he will say the same thing on this group when pressed — that he could give no guarantees about implementation. It is a little hollow for him to congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) on all the work that he has done and his achievement in getting the Bill so far if he will not provide the wherewithal for the Bill to be effective. My hon. Friend cannot provide the wherewithal. It must come from public funds. Although local authorities are involved, we know that with the inextricable weaving of local and national finances, the extent to which the Bill will be implemented, if at all, depends on the extent to which the Minister can chisel a bit more money out of one who is probably the most uncaring Chancellor of the Exchequer this century.

Unless the Minister is prepared to have a bash at the Chancellor, his congratulations to my hon. Friend are hollow. It is only my charitable nature that prevents me from using a more perjorative word than that. I urge the Minister to try to put money from the Chancellor where his mouth is.

Mr. Alfred Morris: I intervene to support what my hon. Friend the Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) said about implementation of clauses 2 and 5 and to endorse his submission that the clauses could and should come into force at the beginning of the next financial year, in April 1987. We are at the beginning of the Public Expenditure Survey Committee annual round. There is thus plenty of time for additional money needed by local authorities to be built into the rate support grant. Will the Minister be pressing for that to happen? In the words of my hon. Friend the Member for Bow and Poplar (Mr. Mikardo), will he be tryng his best to influence the Treasury fully to implement the Bill at the earliest possible date?

There are some who feel that the local authority associations have been "bidding" up the costs of clause 2 for wholly understandable reasons. They see a close parallel with the Government's *volte face* over the invalid care allowance. As soon as the Government were forced by the European Court to extend the benefit to married women, the cost of doing so fell both inexplicably and dramatically.

I am convinced that once the Bill becomes an Act and the local authorities and the Department of Health and Social Security start serious negotiations, within the scope of next year's social services expenditure, the hon. Gentleman will end up with an estimate of its cost which he will be able to persuade his colleagues is both acceptable and excellent value for money. Certainly it would be far better value for money than most of the substantial amounts that his Department currently pays out in board-and-lodging payments to rather dubious private homes.

The Government have cut social security spending by £11.1 billion, while giving £4.4 billion in tax cuts to those earning more than £30,000 a year. When they came to power, the Government promised to "single out" disabled people for special help. Yet all of us, on both sides of the House, know from our mail bags and from our meetings with disabled people that many of them complain today of being "singled out" for special hardship.

My hon. Friend the Member for Monklands, West referred to new subsection (7), which meets some of the concern that has been expressed by the British Deaf Association. In determining both the need for communication assistance and the nature of that assistance, the local authority must have regard to the views expressed by the disabled person or his or her representative. I am extremely glad that there has been some, even if still an inadequate, response to the very important representations made to all hon. Members by the British Deaf Association.

I turn to clause 4, which is about services under section 2 of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970. This clause, inserted in the other place, confirms the right of a disabled person to an assessment of his need for any of the services listed in section 2 of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The right hon. Gentleman is now anticipating matters that are set down for debate later on. He will note that amendments Nos. 34, 35 and so on deal with clause 4, but we have not yet reached them.

Mr. Morris: I am very grateful to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. My purpose was to respond to the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Monklands, West, who told the House of a letter that was written to a disabled person by a chief executive, in which he said that there was no duty to assess. My hon. Friend was right to emphasise his deep concern about that letter. There is a duty to assess, and clause 4 puts the matter beyond doubt. It also confirms the right of a carer to ask for an assessment of a disabled person for whom he is caring, which goes some way towards restoring the essence of the original clause 5, which the Government insisted upon deleting on Report in this House.

I hope that the Minister will respond to the point made by my hon. Friend and that he will return to the vital questions of implementation and resources.

Mr. Newton: The hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) has very clearly and helpfully set out the purpose of the various provisions that we are discussing and I shall not attempt to go over the same ground. As he made clear, a written statement can now be requested, whether or not the disabled person made representations before the assessment was made, and subsequent representations can now be made if the local authority has indicated that it is prepared to meet some but not all of the needs which the disabled person himself or herself has identified.

I shall take note of what the hon. Member for Bow and Poplar (Mr. Mikardo) said in one of his engaging and frequent interventions during our proceedings this morning about amendment No. 14. However, if he studies the affects of amendments Nos. 11 to 18 he will see that representation rights, far from being reduced, as he half implied in his remarks, have been extended by the work that has been undertaken in another place in the co-operative spirit that has pervaded most of our proceedings. I am sure that every right hon. and hon. Member will welcome that.

I welcome in particular the amendment that, as has been acknowledged, has been made largely in response to representations by the British Deaf Association not least because, as the Scottish or near-Scottish hon. Member who is present in the Chamber will be interested to hear. The hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) recently made a substantial expedition to Rothesay on the Isle of Bute for two hours on one morning to address the triennial congress of the British Deaf Association. I am well aware of the importance that it attaches to some of these provisions and to improving the rights of disabled people generally. It is good that we have been able to respond to its interests and representations. That provision requires local authorities, when considering whether interpretation services are required, to have regard to the views of the disabled person on the need for such services and, if considered appropriate, what they should be.

I apologise for having commented in the absence of the hon. Member for Bow and Poplar on his first point, but the other point that he raised with me related to the reason for the drafting of amendment No. 11 in that particular way. I have been advised to say that——

Mr. Mikardo: The hon. Gentleman does not believe it, does he?

Mr. Newton: I do not think that I am qualified to comment on the draftsman's choice of words. What is apparent, though, is that neither I nor my officials have the faintest notion of why the draftsman chose to draft the amendment in that way. I shall not, therefore, attempt to go further, other than to say that, so far as I can see, it does not damage anyone's interests. It may improve the interests of lawyers by making the legislation slightly more complex than otherwise it would have been. I shall draw the attention of the draftsman to the hon. Gentleman's observations. May I pay a small, informal tribute to the hon. Member for Bow and Poplar for the remarkable skill with which he focuses his mind on some of these points, at what I take to be reasonably short notice, and then comes out with some remarkably good points.

On the implementation of clause 2, as the hon. Member for Bow and Poplar expected, I have to repeat what I said about clause 1. There will be substantial resource costs for local authorities. I resist the suggestion that the Government's approach is in any sense hollow. I hope that I carry those Opposition Members who are concerned with the Bill with me on the proposition that, throughout, the Government have made it clear that their co-operation with the Bill necessarily rested on the need for commencement orders which the Government would have to consider in the light of when resources could be made available. There has been no deception or disingenuousness about that approach throughout the Bill. The Government have proceeded on that basis.

The right hon. Member for Manchester Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) referred to the basis on which local authorities made their estimates. Whatever else may lie between us, we clearly need to have a fairly good estimate of the likely costs before deciding when to make commencement orders. I shall not speculate whether the right hon. Gentleman is right in his virtually explicit suggestion that local authorities have exaggerated the costs of the clause. However, it would be helpful to refine those estimates and reach ones that he would be prepared to accept as more realistic and we regard as reliable. We must have a reasonably reliable estimate before we can decide whether to bring the clause into effect.

I hope that I made it clear earlier that I shall, with best endeavour, attempt to ensure that we reach that stage as soon as possible. The right hon. Gentleman cannot seriously expect me to discuss the nature of any exchanges within central Government that might underlie that process.

I am pleased to say that I can be more forthcoming about the new clause. It puts beyond doubt that local authorities have a duty to consider the need of the disabled for services under section 2 of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act, if so requested by the disabled person, his representative or his carer. Some concern has been expressed that the current law is not entirely unambiguous. We were pleased to co-operate with the Bill's sponsors in drafting the new clause to put the matter beyond doubt. We intend to bring the provision into effect at the earliest convenient opportunity. I understand that local authorities may, unless there is good reason, find it convenient for those parts of the Bill that can be

implemented soon to be brought into effect together at the beginning of the next financial year. We shall aim at a date of 1 April, 1987, which is what the sponsors want.

Clause 5, which relates to carers, was discussed at length on Report. I undertook to consider whether its intention could be clarified by changes in the drafting. After careful consideration we decided that the suggested changes would substantially widen the effects of the clause. I understand that the Bill's sponsors accept that the wording should remain substantially unchanged. However, I note the helpful comment of the hon. Member for Monklands, West, who said that he thought that he was getting three and three quarters out of the five that he wanted.

Following the commitment given by my right hon. Friend on Report, an amendment has been tabled to ensure that interpretation services are provided if carers are unable to communicate because of disability and the local authority needs to communicate with them to determine whether they can continue to provide care. I hope that it will be possible to implement that clause not later than April 1987, in line with the sponsors' request.

The hon. Member for Monklands, West asked about clarifying the general purpose of clause 5. The aim is not to encourage residential care, but to help people who so wish to stay in their own homes, if that is the best solution to their problems. I emphasise that the overall objective of this clause, together with all provisions relating to services for the disabled, is to ensure that we find the best answer to the problems of the individual. Although we all accept that more often than at present people should stay in their own homes, that cannot always be the case. The Bill cannot eliminate the need for residential care, and I am sure that the hon. Gentleman was not implying that the disabled should be kept in their own homes regardless of considerations that might mean that they should be in residential care. The general thrust is to improve the opportunities and services for people to stay in their own homes if that is what they want, so there is no difference of opinion between us on that.

The right hon. Member for Wythenshawe strayed into the somewhat more contentious area of alleged cuts in social security and the position of the disabled. I simply do not accept what he said, but I shall not spend much time on that argument. Far from there having been cuts, the social security budget has risen substantially in real terms, as has the overall value of benefits paid to the disabled for a variety of reasons, including the increased numbers of disabled people receiving benefits, the real value of which have increased. The Government have made a number of significant improvements, not least in the real value of mobility allowance, by removing the invalidity trap that affected many people on supplementary benefits, by introducing the severe disablement allowance and by extending the invalid care allowance. Therefore, although I do not wish to turn the debate into an argument about Government policy, I felt that I had to explain why I simply could not accept what the right hon. Gentleman said.

I welcome and endorse the Lords amendments and hope that the House will approve them.

Question put and agreed to.

Subsequent Lords amendments agreed to. [Some with Special Entry.]

Clause 3

PERSONS LEAVING SPECIAL EDUCATION

Lords amendment: No. 25, in page 6, line 27, leave out subsections (3) and (4) and insert—

(3) Where an opinion has in pursuance of subsection (1) or (2) been given in the case of a child that he is a disabled person and it subsequently appears to the responsible authority—

(a) that the child will cease to receive full-time education at school on a particular date and will not subsequently be receiving full-time education at a further education establishment, or

(b) that the child will cease to receive full-time education at such an establishment on a particular date,

and (in either case) that he will be under the age of 19 on the relevant date, the authority shall give to the appropriate officer written notification for the purposes of subsection (4) of the date referred to in paragraph *(a)* or *(b)*; and any such notification shall be given not later than the relevant date and not earlier than four months before that date.

In this subsection "the relevant date" means the date falling 8 months before the date referred to in paragraph *(a)* or *(b)* above.

(3A) If at any time it appears to a local education authority

(a) that a person has on a particular date ceased to receive full-time education as mentioned in paragraph *(a)* or *(b)* of subsection (3) or will cease to do so on a particular date falling less than 8 months after that time, and

(b) that no notification of that date has been given to the appropriate officer under that subsection with respect to that person, but

(c) that, had that or any other authority (as the responsible authority for the time being) been aware of his intentions 8 months or more before that date, they would have been required to give notification of that date under that subsection with respect to him,

that authority shall, as soon as is reasonably practicable, give to the appropriate officer written notification for the purposes of subsection (4) of that date.

(4) When the appropriate officer receives a notification given with respect to any person under subsection (3) or (3A), he shall (subject to subsections (4A) and (4B)) make arrangements for the local authority of which he is an officer to carry out an assessment of the needs of that person with respect to the provision by that authority of any statutory services for that person in accordance with any of the welfare enactments, and any such assessment shall be carried out—

(a) in the case of a notification under subsection (3), not later than the end of the period of 5 months beginning with the date of receipt of the notification, or

(b) in the case of a notification under subsection (3A), before the date specified in the notification, if reasonably practicable, and in any event not later than the end of the period referred to in paragraph *(a)* above.

(4A) If—

(a) a notification has been given to the appropriate officer with respect to any person under subsection (3) or (3A), but

(b) it subsequently appears to a local education authority that that person will be receiving full-time education (whether at school or at a further education establishment) at a time later than the date specified in the notification,

the authority shall give written notification of the relevant facts to that officer as soon as is reasonably practicable; and on receiving any such notification that officer shall cease to be required under subsection (4) to make arrangements for the assessment of the needs of the person in question (but without prejudice to the operation of that subsection in relation to any further notification given with respect to that person under subsection (3) or (3A)).

[Mr. Newton]

(4B) Nothing in subsection (4) shall require the appropriate officer to make arrangements for the assessment of the needs of a person—

(*a*) if, having attained the age of 16, he has requested that such arrangements should not be made under that subsection; or

(*b*) if, being under that age, his parent or guardian has made such a request.

(4C) Regulations under paragraph 4 of Schedule 1 to the Education Act 1981 (assessments and statements of special educational needs) may, in relation to the transfer of statements made under section 7 of that Act, make such provision as appears to the Secretary of State to be necessary or expedient in connection with the preceding provisions of this section."

Mr. Tom Clarke: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this we shall discuss the following Lords amendments: No. 26, in page 6, line 42, leave out from beginning to end of line 9 on page 7 and insert—

"the appropriate officer", in relation to the child or person referred to in the provision of this section in question, means such officer as may be appointed for the purposes of this section by the local authority for the area in which that child or person is for the time being ordinarily resident;"

No. 27, in page 7, line 12, leave out "college of further education" and insert "further education establishment".

Mr. Clarke: Although the amendments to this clause are long and complex, they are necessary to give substance to the principle accepted by the House on Report—that there should be a social services assessment before disabled children leave full-time education either at school or a further education establishment.

The notification by LEAs to the social services of the school leaving date must take place not earlier than 12 months after, and not later than eight months before, that date. The social services assessment must be arranged within five months of that notification. Therefore, it should be undertaken at least three months before the young person leaves school, which should give the authorities time to make whatever practical arrangements are necessary.

The great bulk of amendment No. 25 concerns what should happen if it is not possible to give eight months' notice because of a late decision or because a child moves school to another area after the procedures in subsections (1) and (2) have taken place. The same is true of the new clause introduced by amendment No. 33, which requires the local education authority to keep under review the expected school leaving dates of disabled children covered by clause 3 and which, in conjunction with amendment No. 29, specifies that the LEA responsible for a disabled person when he leaves full-time education at school shall remain responsible during his time in further education.

It is fair to say that further education is still a very grey area, especially for disabled people. Further education was omitted from the 1981 Act, partly on the understanding that a review of the legal basis of further education was in progress. That review has apparently evaporated, and the hole identified by the Warnock report is still there. The new clause, however, gives me hope that the DES is beginning to look favourably on maintaining statements of disabled children during further education. Indeed, it is the obvious logical next step.

Only two items have been lost in the transformation of this clause, and I should like to mention them. In the original Bill, the notification could take place only with the consent of the parent or disabled person. Subsection (4B) now allows only the parent or young person to decline the subsequent assessment—the previous notification will be automatic. I hope that LEAs will be encouraged to give parents or the disabled student full information about the Bill's requirements at that earlier stage.

The second loss—I understand for legal reasons—is that students who are over 19 on the date eight months before they are due to leave are excluded from the Bill. I believe that the guidance to LEAs and social services departments should ask them to be included, albeit on a non-statutory basis. I hope that the Minister will be able to comment on this.

I should like to thank the Minister and his officials for their hard work on the complex drafting of this clause. I hope that he will answer any detailed questions on the wording. On implementation, which is also crucial here, it seems to me that, as the whole clause depends on the formal opinion as to whether the child is disabled given by the social services under subsection (1) or (2) soon after his 14th birthday, it is absolutely essential for the clause to be brought into force immediately so that the whole process can begin.

I remind the House that the purpose of subsection (1) was simply to exclude non-disabled children from the later procedures—in most cases it will be obvious to everyone that a child is disabled. I hope, therefore, that severely disabled children now over 14 who may never fall within subsection (1) will not necessarily be excluded from the benefits of notification and assessment. I should have thought that LEAs could be encouraged to operate notification of obviously disabled children and young people informally this autumn, and social services departments could be asked to make assessments before they leave school or college next summer. I shall listen to the Minister with great interest and care.

Mr. Alfred Morris: Although clause 5 has more than doubled in length, the effect of the changes is minor, which will perhaps remind the House of one of the points made by my hon. Friend the Member for Bow and Poplar (Mr. Mikardo). I agree with the Minister's tribute to my hon. Friend. We have had a virtuoso performance from him today.

One slight disappointment that I have is that, for legal reasons, under subsection (3), the clause will apply only to disabled people who are under 19 on the day eight months prior to their presumed leaving date. The Department of Education and Science has informally promised to advise local education authorities to apply the same procedures for people just over 19, and the DHSS has promised to do the same for social services departments whose duties under subsection (4) apply only to those formally notified under subsection (3). It would be helpful if that commitment were to be stated in the House today. I hope that the Minister will do so when he replies.

Mr. Newton: As the hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) explained, the amendments to this part of the Bill, although a further formidable compliment to the powers of the draftsman, basically tidy up the Bill. The most significant change has been to reduce the advance

notification of the expected school leaving date for a disabled child or young person from nine months to eight months.

Many tributes have been paid this morning and perhaps I might add another – to the Department of Education and Science officials who have also worked hard, especially in respect of this part of the Bill. They have undoubtedly contributed to it. The hon. Gentleman referred to the position of disabled young people who remain in full-time education after the age of 19. Formally, clause 3 covers only disabled people in full-time education under the age of 19 on the date that notification is due. However, if they become 19 during the notice period it will not affect the duty of the appropriate officer to make the necessary assessments under the welfare enactments. The reason for that restriction is because full-time schooling under the Education Act 1944 and the making of statements for those at school under the Education Act 1981 is geared to the maximum age of 19 years. It is necessarily within those constraints that the amendments have been drafted.

12.45 pm

However, the Government have no wish to deprive disabled young people who stay on in full-time education after the age of 19 of rights which they would have enjoyed had they decided to leave full-time education at 19. We shall make that clear in guidance to local education authorities and social services departments. I hope that that is a helpful assurance to the House.

I turn to the now hallowed issue of implementation. If possible, we should like to bring the provisions into effect in time to benefit disabled young people leaving full-time education in the summer of 1987, that is by the autumn of this year. We shall be consulting urgently with local authority associations about achieving that. It has been pointed out that children leaving school next summer could not in any case fall within the scope of clause 3(1)*(a)*, which requires an opinion as to whether a child is disabled to be recorded at the first annual review of the statement by the local education authority after his 14th birthday. However, we shall consider with the local authority associations whether any administrative way can be found of enabling children who have already at the time the clause comes into effect had this review to benefit from the notification and assessment provisions provided for in the later parts of the clause. I hope that the House will find that assurance helpful.

The hon. Member for Monklands, West asked about the duty of local education authorities to give parents and young people full information about assessments. I am happy to give him an assurance that we shall aim to cover the point that local education authorities should be encouraged to give full information about assessments to both parents and young people in the guidance which we hope to issue. I hope that that will all be of help to the House and that it will accede to the motion to accept the amendment.

Question put and agreed to.

Subsequent Lords amendments agreed to.

Clause 4

PERSONS DISCHARGED FROM HOSPITAL

Lords amendment: No. 34, in page 7, line 25, leave out "a".

Mr. Tom Clarke: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): With this it will be convenient to take the following Lords amendments:

No. 35, in page 7, line 27, leave out from "discharged" to end of line 35 and insert –

"the managers of the hospital shall give written notification of that date –

(a) to the health authority in whose district or area it appears to the managers that that person is likely to reside after his discharge (unless the managers are that authority),

(aa) to the local authority in whose area it appears to them that that person is likely then to reside, and"

No. 36, in page 7, line 36, leave out –

"where that person will be"

and insert

"in the case of a person".

No. 37, in page 7, line 36, leave out "the age of 19" and insert "the relevant age".

No. 38, in page 7, line 37, after "date," insert "to".

No. 39, in page 7, line 37, at end insert –

"as soon as is reasonably practicable after that date is known to the managers."

No. 40, in page 7, line 42, at end insert –

"the Mental Welfare Commission for Scotland or by".

No. 41, in page 8, line 2, leave out "in a hospital".

No. 42, in page 8, line 5, leave out from beginning to "subsection" in line 7 and insert –

"the managers of the hospital shall give written notification of that person's discharge in accordance with paragraphs *(a)*, *(aa)* and *(b)* of".

No. 43, in page 8, line 8, at end insert –

"(2A) Where –

(a) a health authority receive a notification given with respect to a person under subsection (1) or (2), or

(b) the managers of a hospital from which a person is to be, or is, discharged as mentioned in subsection (1) or (2) are the health authority referred to in subsection (1)*(a)*,

that authority shall (subject to subsection (3)) make arrangements for an assessment of the needs of that person with respect to the provision of any services under the 1977 Act or 1978 Act which the Secretary of State is under a duty to provide; and in making any such arrangements a health authority falling within paragraph *(a)* above shall consult the managers of the hospital in question.

(2B) Where a local authority receive a notification given with respect to a person under subsection (1) or (2), the authority shall (subject to subsection (3)) make arrangements for an assessment of the needs of that person with respect to the provision of any services under any of the welfare enactments.

(2C) A health authority and a local authority who are by virtue of subsections (2A) and (2B) each required to make arrangements for an assessment of the needs of a particular person shall co-operate with each other in the making of those arrangements.

(2D) Any assessment for which arrangements are required to be made by virtue of subsection (2A) or (2B) shall be carried out –

(a) where the notification in question was given under subsection (1), not later than the date mentioned in that subsection, or

(b) where the notification in question was given under subsection (2), as soon as is reasonably practicable after receipt of the notification."

No. 44 in page 8, line 9, leave out subsection (3) and insert –

[Mr. Deputy Speaker]

"(3) A health authority or a local authority shall not be required to make arrangements for an assessment of the needs of a person by virtue of subsection (2A) or (2B) if that person has requested them not to make any such arrangements.

(3A) Nothing in this section shall apply in relation to a person who is being discharged from a hospital for the purpose of being transferred to another hospital in which he will be an in-patient (whether or not he will be receiving medical treatment for mental disorder); but any reference in subsection (1) or (2) to a person's having received medical treatment for mental disorder as an in-patient for the period mentioned in that subsection is a reference to his having received such treatment for that period as an in-patient in one or more hospitals (any interruption of that period attributable to his being transferred between hospials being disregarded)."

No. 45, in page 8, line 16, leave out "is" and insert "are".

No. 46, in page 8, line 16, after "authority" insert "or, in Scotland an education authority".

No. 47, in page 8, line 17, leave out "its" and insert "their".

No. 48, in page 8, line 18, after "authority" insert "or (as the case may be) education authority".

No. 49, in page 8, line 20, after "where" insert ", in England and Wales,"

No. 50, in page 8, line 20, leave out "is" and insert "are"

No. 51, in page 8, line 22, at end insert—

"health authority"—

(a) in relation to England and Wales, means a District Health Authority, and

(b) in realation to Scotland, means a Health Board;"

No. 52, in page 8, leave out lines 23 to 33.

No. 53, in page 9, line 3, leave out

"within the meaning of the 1978 Act"

No. 54, in page 9, line 19, at end insert

"and "the relevant age"—

(a) in relation to England and Wales, means the age of 19; and

(b) in relation to Scotland, means the age of 18"

No. 55, in page 9, leave out lines 20 to 23.

Mr. Clarke: Clause 4 has perhaps seen more changes of substance, as opposed to drafting, than any other clause in the Bill, so I shall spend rather more time explaining individual amendments than I have on other clauses. I should first, however, like to remind the House of the changes to the clause during its passage through this House. In the original Bill the requirement was for hospital managers to inform the social services 28 days before anyone was discharged who had

"been receiving medical treatment for mental disorder as an in-patient for a period of, or periods totalling not less than, six months in the preceding twelve months."

The social services were then required to make assessment of their needs within 28 days.

On Report the Government produced a clause which simply required notification of discharge by hosptial to social services — a procedure described by the Association of Metropolitan Authorities as a waste of paper. I had already reluctantly agreed to drop the totalling of short periods and tabled a new clause which required hospital managers to arrange an assessment before a person was discharged. It had been agreed in discussions with the associations that the initiative should be taken by the hospital. My new clause was accepted by the Government and the House.

As the Minister for Health said, there were certain illogical aspects in the drafting, although the purpose was clear. In particular, the clause as it stood required the hospitals to arrange an assessment of a person's social services needs, but there was no duty on the social services to co-operate.

It would, perhaps, have been easy for the Minister to have taken a minimalist approach; but I am delighted to say he did not do so. Encouraged by the associations — the Association of County Councils, the Association of Metropolitan Authorities and the National Association of Health Authorities — who clearly wanted an effective clause, agreement was reached on the amendments which we are considering.

Amendments Nos. 34, 35, 38 and 39 require the hospital managers to send written notification of the date of discharge to the local authority of the area in which the patient is to live and also to the district health authority and the local education authority if the patient is under 19. I should say in explanation that in most cases the "hospital managers" will be a district health authority and there are exclusions throughout the clause to prevent them informing themselves or consulting themselves if the same DHA will continue to be responsible for the patient.

Following notification, amendment No. 43 ensures that each authority will be required to take action as follows. Under subsection (2A) the district health authority must assess the patient's need for services under the National Health Service Act 1977 in consultation with the hospital managers. Under subsection (2B) the social services department must assess the need for services under the "welfare enactments" and, of course, in this case clause 2 will also apply.

Subsection (2C) also places the additional duty on each of these authorities to co-operate with one another in making the arrangements for assessments. In many cases authorities may wish to undertake joint assessments; but it was not felt right to tie their hands in primary legislation and tie the practical arrangements to a precise formula which may not be credible or operable in all circumstances.

Subsection (2D) requires both these assessments to be undertaken before the discharge, or as soon as possible after discharge, following the order of a mental health review tribunal or, in Scotland, the Mental Welfare Commission or the sheriff. Where a discharge is properly planned there should be no fear of it being held up by this clause. As the Mental Health Act Commission asserted in its first biennial report in 1985:

"Discharge should be a process, not an event."

Where the temptation might be to make an overnight decision to discharge someone, the clause will ensure adequate planning for that person. In any event, subsection (3) in amendment No. 44 allows patients to waive their right to an assessment.

The duty on the local education authority is not so clear. I understand that if the patient is under 16 the procedures under the Education Act 1981 will apply. The LEA will either initiate an assessment of the child's special educational needs or amend an existing statement. What will happen if the patient is over 16 but under 19 is less clear, but perhaps the Minister can clarify this in his speech.

Subsection (3A) in amendment No. 44 is a technical amendment to stop assessments being triggered by transfers between hospitals and also to confirm that time spent in different hospitals will be added together for the purpose of the six months mentioned in subsection (1).

The remainder of the amendments are either technical or are necessary for the application of the clause to Scotland.

The clause introduces significant new duties to make assessments and in view of the dearth of provisions for people who are mentally ill in many parts of the country there will — rightly — be a knock-on effect on services and some authorities will need to incur substantial expenditure. Nevertheless, I am sceptical about some of the estimates that I have seen which seem to involve building new mini-institutions for people with mental illness. I say again in connection with this clause that there will be dismay around the country if excuses are made for delaying its implementation, since the principle has now been accepted.

Assessment is fundamental to the successful discharge of long-stay patients into the community. The clause is needed immediately; indeed, it is long overdue.

Mr. Alfred Morris: We owe a special debt of gratitude to another place for its work on this part of the Bill. I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) will join me in that tribute.

We are dealing with an extremely important provision. If there is a failure properly to assess a disabled person leaving hospital, he or she is all too likely to end up back in hospital rather than in the community. I know that the Minister will appreciate the importance of this part of the Bill and will do all that he can to ensure its implementation at the earliest possible date.

There has been repeated emphasis on the two vexed issues of implementation and resources. We shall return time and again to those issues to make absolutely certain that this extremely important Bill is implemented fully at the earliest possible date.

Mr. Newton: As the hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) has explained, following our extensive debate on the clause on Report, another place has helped us to get the provisions into what is generally accepted to be a satisfactory form. I am particularly grateful for the hon. Gentleman's warm acknowledgement of the fact that we have all sought to get the provisions into an acceptable form and have not adopted what he calls a minimalist approach. I should certainly not wish to see such an approach.

Health authorities and social services departments are to be required to make arrangements for an assessment of the needs of a disabled person for their respective services. When they receive notification that a long-stay patient is to be discharged, the authorities and departments will be required to co-operate with each other in making the arrangements.

The hon. Member for Monklands, West asked about the duties of local education authorities if they are notified under clause 4(1)*(b)* of the discharge from hospital of a child or a young person aged under 19. The general purpose of the subsection is to ensure that local education authorities are in a position to discharge their responsibilities either under the Education Act 1981 or clause 3 of the Bill.

The hon. Member rightly said that in the case of a child who is at school the local education authority will be required to consider whether amendments are needed to the terms of any existing statement of special educational needs or, if no such statement exists, to consider whether the child's education needs should be assessed with a view to making a statement.

The hon. Gentleman asked me to say a little more about those over school leaving age. In the case of a child over 16 who is already subject to a statement and transfers to a full-time course of further education, the local education authority is no longer obliged under the Education Act to maintain the statement, but it will be under a duty, under clause 3, to inform the social services department in due course of the child's leaving date.

In the comparatively rare cases of children who are subject neither to the Education Act 1981 nor to clause 3 — children who are not, or have not been, subject to a statement and who either transfer to further education or cease full-time education — it will be for the social services department, under clause 4, to assess their needs.

I know that this is a slightly complex issue, but I hope that my explanation will help hon. Members and those outside the House who are following our proceedings carefully.

Predictably and understandably — I make no complaint about it — the hon. Member for Monklands, West and the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) returned again to the implementation of an important clause which I am pleased to see in the Bill.

1 pm

On Report, the hon. Member for Monklands, West said that he was prepared for the implementation of this clause to be delayed slightly longer than other clauses in the Bill — although I realise that he would not expect that to be a long time — in order to allow adequate preparation. He said that he hoped that the target date would be set no later than 1988-89. I regret that, once again, I must be a little less forthcoming than I have been on one or two other clauses that we have discussed recently. As always, we are once again back in an area where resources are an important factor.

As yet, we have not come to a common view with the local authority and health authority associations on how, if at all, changes introduced to the Bill on Report, as subsequently refined in another place, will affect the overall costings. In other words, there is still a good deal of uncertainty about costings in this area and it inescapably follows from that that it is impossible for me to make any useful comments at this precise point in time about when the clause will be implemented.

However, we shall continue discussions to try to make sure that we obtain the best and most reliable estimates of what is involved as soon as possible. Then, as I have already said, we shall be looking for ways forward to achieve the speediest possible implementation, subject always to the availability of the money—in other words, finding the resources to make sure that local authorities and health authorities have them.

Mr. Alfred Morris: The Minister talked of the Bill costing an estimated £100 million. He talks about costs; we talk about net costs. Clearly, there will be savings on this part of the Bill if the right action is taken at the right time. If a person leaving hospital is not properly assessed, he or she is likely to return to hospital at far greater cost to the taxpayer than if adequate help is provided in the

[Mr. Alfred Morris]

community. Can we be assured that full consideration will be given to the savings that will accrue if disabled people are given the right help in the right place at the right time?

Mr. Newton: The right hon. Gentleman makes an entirely legitimate point about the potential savings that might arise from some forms of expenditure under the clause. But, in doing so, he will, as I hope he will acknowledge, have to bear in mind some of the difficulties in achieving a good estimate of the cost of such provisions. Making estimates of the kind which he implies are required is a difficult and complex matter. I cannot add to what I have said. The Government are approaching the matter in the spirit of wishing to make progress as soon as possible, but I am unable to give a precise implementation date at this stage. We shall do what we can to get into a position to make a better assessment of the costs as soon as possible, which, in turn, will enable us to make a better assessment of when we may be able to make a commencement order.

Mr. Wigley: May I press the Minister a little on this because it is obviously important? I do not want any delay in the introduction of the clause to be a reason for not pressing ahead with the integration of people from long-stay hospitals into the community. There may be some who believe that it would be preferable to wait until better safeguards are available but that would be detrimental. The Under-Secretary of State wrote to me last month telling me that the average cost in England for a stay in hospital for mentally handicapped people is £227 a week and for mentally ill people, £255 a week. That shows the fairly considerable costs that there are and I should have thought that, following what the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) said a few moments ago about achieving a balance between the figures, we should try to make rapid progress in this matter.

Mr. Newton: I understand what the hon. Gentleman is saying and I can assure him that the Government are not looking for ways to diminish progress towards care in the community in the sense that he is talking about. Indeed, I think that it is fair to claim that that has advanced rapidly under the Government, especially in relation to those who were formerly in long-stay hospitals for the mentally handicapped, and, not least, in respect of children in such hospitals, where the drop in numbers has been dramatic during the past few years. We are all anxious to see that momentum sustained.

One of the other complicating factors is that much of this assessment work already goes on. It is not the practice suddenly to decant children, or indeed adults, from long-stay hospitals for the mentally handicapped without taking a look at what their needs will be in the community, and making provision for them.

Thus it is quite a complex business to assess what additional resources will be involved in implementing the clause. However, we shall be doing so as soon, and as effectively as possible. But I think that the hon. Member for Monklands, West will recognise that the task is complex. We shall not drag our feet, but I am not in a position to be more specific today.

Questions put and agreed to.

Subsequent Lords amendments agreed to [one with Special Entry.]

Clause 9

AMENDMENT OF SECTION 29(2) OF THE CHRONICALLY SICK AND DISABLED PERSONS ACT 1970

Lords amendment: No. 64, in page 11, line 3, leave out "Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970" and insert "1970 Act".

Mr. Tom Clarke: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to discuss the following Lords amendments:

No. 65, in page 11, line 10, after "persons" insert ", or"

No. 66, in page 11, line 12, leave out

"under section 12 of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968"

and insert

"to whom section 12 of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968applies".

No. 67, in page 11, line 14, leave out subsection (2) and insert

"(2) In section 2 of the 1968 Act (social work committees and functions referred to them) in paragraph (*a*) of subsection (2) after the word "Act" there shall be inserted the words "as read with sections 1 and 2(1) of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970 and the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986".

(3) The foregoing provisions of this section extend to Scotland only.".

No. 68, after clause 9, insert the following new clause

Persons leaving special education: Scotland—

"9A.—(1) Before an education authority make a report under section 65B(1) of the 1980 Act on a child they shall require the appropriate authority to give an opinion as to whether or not the child is a disabled person.

(2) Where the appropriate authority have given an opinion that the child is a disabled person, the education authority shall make a note of this opinion in the Record kept under section 60(2) of the 1980 Act and in the report made under section 65B(1) of that Act.

(3) Where an education authority—

(*a*) intend to record a child or young person under section 60(2) of the 1980 Act (recording of children with special educational needs) after the period mentioned in section 65B(2) of that Act; or

(*b*) after making a report under the said section 65B(1) on a child or young person who was not at the time of the report a disabled person, become aware of a significant change in the mental or physical condition of the child or young person giving them reason to believe that he may now be a disabled person.

they shall before opening the Record or, as the case may be, on becoming aware of the change, require the appropriate authority to give an opinion as to whether or not the child or young person is a disabled person and if the appropriate authority give an opinion that he is, this opinion shall be recorded in the Record and (where applicable) the report.

(4) Where the appropriate authority have given an opinion that a child or young person is a disabled person it shall be the duty of that authority to make an assessment of the needs of that child or young person with respect to the provision by the authority of any statutory services for that person in accordance with the welfare enactments, and for that assessment to be carried out—

(*a*) in the case of a child in relation to whom a report is made under section 65B(1) of the 1980 Act, within the period mentioned in section 65B(2) of that Act; and

(*b*) in the case of a child or young person who is considered to be disabled under subsection (3) above, as soon as is reasonably practicable (but, in any event, not later than 6 months from the time the appropriate authority was asked for an opinion as to whether or not the child or young person was a disabled person),

and to make a report thereon.

(5) Where the appropriate authority have given an opinion that a child or young person is a disabled person and it subsequently appears to the education authority—

(a) that the child or young person will cease to receive full-time education at school at a particular date and will not subsequently be receiving full-time education at a further education establishment; or

(b) that the child or young person will cease to receive full-time education at such an establishment on a particular date,

the education authority shall, not later than 6 months before that date, record the date in the report or (if no report has been made) give written notification of the date to the appropriate authority.

(6) If at any time it appears to the education authority—

(a) that a child or young person who has been recorded as being disabled has ceased to receive full-time education; and

(b) the authority did not at the appropriate time—

(i) record that date in the report made under section 65B of the 1980 Act; or (as the case may be)

(ii) give notification to the appropriate authority; and

(c) a copy of the report has not been sent to the bodies mentioned in section 65B(6) of the said Act,

they shall, as soon as is reasonably practicable, record the date in the report and send a copy of the report to the appropriate authority or (if no report has been made) give written notification of the date to the appropriate authority.

(7) The education authority and the appropriate authority shall keep under consideration the cases of all children and young persons on whom a report has been made under section 65B of the 1980 Act or, as the case may be, under subsection (4) and shall at such times as they consider appropriate review the information contained in the report.

(8) Nothing in subsection (4) shall require the appropriate authority to make an assessment of the needs of a child or young person—

(a) if having attained the age of 16, he has requested that such an assessment should not be made under that subsection; or

(b) if, being under that age or unable to make such a request by reason of any mental or physical incapacity, his parent has made such a request.

(9) In this section "appropriate authority" means the local authority for the purposes of the 1968 Act falling to perform functions in relation to the child or young person; and expressions used in the 1980 Act have the same meaning in this section as in that Act.

(10) The foregoing provisions of this section extend to Scotland only.".

No. 69, in clause 10, page 11, line 15, leave out "Education (Scotland) Act 1980" and insert "1980 Act".

No. 70, in clause 10, page 12, line 26, after "persons" insert "—*(a)*".

No. 71, in clause 10, page 12, line 30, at end insert—

"*(b)* in subsection (2) before paragraph *(a)* there shall be inserted—

"*(aa)* a decision of an education authority not to record the young person or, following a review under section 65A of this Act, not to continue to record him;";".

No. 72, in clause 10, page 12, line 32, after "paragraph *(a)*" insert "—*(a)*".

No. 73, in clause 10, page 12, line 33, at end insert—

"*(b)* for the words "(2)*(a)*" substitute "(2)*(aa)* or *(a)*".

No. 74, in clause 11, page 12, line 36, leave out from beginning to "of" in line 38 and insert—

"In relation to disabled persons the duty under section 13 of the 1978 Act".

No. 75, in clause 11, page 13, line 6, at end insert—

"(2) The foregoing provisions of this section extend to Scotland only."

Mr. Clarke: We now come to the Scottish part of the Bill, and I am happy to say that most of the amendments are technical. Perhaps I should say that I have reached the "exclusively" Scottish part, as all the Bill applies to Scotland except clause 3, whose Scottish equivalent is the new clause represented by amendment No. 68. Its construction is significantly different from the English clause, because of the very different and, dare I say better, construction of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980, which seems to bridge the gap between school and further education that I mentioned in relation to clause 3.

The establishment of a future needs assessment has already been represented as a method of improving the lot of youngsters before they leave school, in that it offers an opportunity for all involved with the child's education to consider progress to date and to plan for the future. Yet in many parts of the country, including in my constituency, improvement has not been effective because the agency that must take responsibility for helping the young person in the next stage of his life, the social work department, has not been involved.

The new clause will avoid that break in the link and will provide an opportunity for improving the considerable progress that has been made over the past few years. If any right hon. and hon. Members have detailed questions to ask about the new clause, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland will no doubt be delighted to reply.

Hon. Members will recall that on Report a clause relating to joint planning in Scotland was deleted after the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Argyll and Bute (Mr. MacKay), promised to arrange for the introduction of a clause in the other place to provide reserve powers to put joint planning in Scotland on a statutory basis. He wished, as we all did, to include the elderly. But the powers that be have decreed that it is impossible to make the necessary amendment to the long title.

Consequently, Lord Skelmersdale repeated a committment given to me privately that the Government would introduce the amendment to the National Health Service (Amendment) Bill. I find that arrangement entirely satisfactory. My aim is to see the legislation that we all want on the statute book and in force, and not to pack all and sundry into this Bill in order to boost the status of the so-called Tom Clarke Bill. I am sure that the Minister will appreciate that view.

Although I should like to place on record my appreciation for the Government's action on this matter, I must at the same time express some reservations. I am sure that the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland will convey them to his hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security. My reservations reflect the concerns expressed to me by the care in the community working party, which brings together a wide range of voluntary and professional organisations in Scotland. It is concerned that the Scottish Office has not been able to produce the relevant clauses for discussion. Its attitude has been in sharp contrast to that of its English colleagues, who have devoted time to consulting my advisers on the most effective means of improving the legislation.

I hope that the time scale for the implementation of the Bill in Scotland will be similar to that, or perhaps shorter than it is in other parts of the United Kingdom. At an earlier stage, I wondered whether the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland—the hon. Member for Argyle and Bute—and the Minister for Health were Mr. Nice and Mr. Nasty. I hope that they will prove themselves to be

[Mr. Clarke]

Mr. Quick and Mr. Speedy and that the Minister for Social Security will show the same urgency in implementing the Bill. They may be sure that my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) and I and many other hon. Members on both sides of the House will pounce on any signs of lethargy or lack of application.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Allan Stewart): The hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) has explained the reasons for these amendments with his customary excellence and clarity.

I emphasise that the Government share the concern of the Bill's sponsors that effective joint planning arrangements should operate in Scotland and that voluntary organisations are brought into the process, because they have their proposals to contribute.

The hon. Member referred to specific provisions and the reasons why no amendment to clause No. 11 had been moved. I confirm that, when a suitably comprehensive clause is included in the National Health Service (Amendment) Bill, a motion to delete clause 11 will be tabled.

The hon. Gentleman asked me about commencement. I confirm that it is likely that the Government will wish the various provisions of the Bill to commence simultaneously throughout the country. However, we must recognise that commencement will depend in practice on a number of factors, including the availability of resources. That point was made clear during proceedings in the House and in another place. I can fully assure the House, however, that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State has every intention of implementing the Bill as quickly as that can be done in the circumstances prevailing at the time and in the light of consultation with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities. However, the resources available may be subject to different pressures and priorities north and south of the border. A facility for separate commencement is therefore clearly necessary.

I add my congratulations to those of other right hon. and hon. Members to the hon. Member for Monklands, West.

Question put and agreed to.

Subsequent Lords amendments agreed to. [one with Special Entry.]

Clause 12

INTERPRETATION

Lords amendment: No. 76, in page 13, line 18, at end insert—

""the 1980 Act" means the Education (Scotland) Act 1980;".

Mr. Tom Clarke: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to discuss the following Lords amendments: No. 77, in page 13, line 23, leave out "1(5)" and insert

(Appointment of authorised representatives of disabled persons) (1)".

No. 78, in page 13, line 32, at end insert—

"guardian" (except in section *(Appointment of authorised representatives of disabled persons)* (6))—

(a) in relation to England and Wales, means a person appointed by deed or will or by order of a court of competent jurisdiction to be the guardian of a child; and

(b) in relation to Scotland, means a person appointed by deed or will or by order of a court of competent jurisdiction to be the tutor, curator or guardian of a child;

"Health Board" means a Health Board within the meaning of the 1978 Act;

"hospital"—

(a) in relation to England and Wales, means—

(i) a health service hospital within the meaning of the 1977 Act, or

(ii) any accommodation provided by any person pursuant to arrangements made under section 23(1) of that Act (voluntary organisations and other bodies) and used as a hospital; and

(b) in relation to Scotland, means a health service hospital within the meaning of the 1978 Act;".

No. 79, in page 13, line 41, leave out "sections 1 and 2" and insert

"section 1, as read with section 2,".

No. 80, in page 14, line 2, at end insert—

""modifications" includes additions, omissions and amendments;

"parent"—

(a) in relation to England and Wales, means, in the case of a child who is illegitimate, his mother, to the exclusion of his father; and

(b) in relation to Scotland, means, in the case of a child whose father is not married to the mother, his mother, to the exclusion of his father;"

No. 81, in page 14, line 3, at end insert—

"special hospital" means a special hospital within the meaning of the 1977 Act;

"State hospital" means a State hospital within the meaning of the 1984 Act;

"statutory services"—

(a) in relation to England and Wales, means services under any arrangements which a local authority are required to make by virtue of any of the welfare enactments, and

(b) in relation to Scotland, means services which a local authority find it necessary to provide themselves or by arrangement with another local authority, or with any voluntary or other body, in connection with the performance of the local authority's functions under the welfare enactments;

"voluntary organisation" means a body the activities of which are carried on otherwise than for profit, but does not include any public or local authority;".

No. 82, in page 14, line 10, after "and" insert "sections 7 and 8 of".

No. 83, in clause 14, in page 14, line 17, leave out "made by statutory instrument".

No. 84, in page 14, line 19, at end insert

", and different provision may be made under this subsection for England and Wales and for Scotland".

No. 85, in page 15, line 21, after "and" insert "(except in the case of an order under subsection (2))".

Mr. Clarke: Inevitably, all these amendments are consequential. The definitions in particular have been moved around the Bill and a number of new definitions have been added. As clause 14 concerns both commencement orders and extent, I should like to put on the record my pleasure at the statement in the other place by Baroness Trumpington on behalf of the Government to the effect that consultation on how the Bill might be translated to Northern Ireland will be put in hand if the Bill is enacted. This was much more positive and constructive than earlier ministerial statements. I am

delighted that the Government now accept that the benefits of the Bill should be afforded throughout the United Kingdom to people with disabilities.

As we come to the end of our deliberations may I take the opportunity to thank the ministerial team which has been responsible for the Government's input into the Bill? I would also like to thank my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) and my right hon. and hon. Friends for the work that they have done in taking the Bill this far. There has been an enormous amount of commitment, especially on the part of organisations for the disabled and many others. I believe that the strength of support for those organisations led the Government to many of the decisions they have taken in the course of the Bill's passage through both Houses.

1.15pm

We have had a most interesting debate. My hon. Friend the Member for Bow and Poplar (Mr. Mikardo), in the characteristically generous manner we have come to expect from him, predicted that one day I might find myself in heaven. I hope that that will not be too soon because I am not sure that my constituency Labour party would welcome a by-election at this early stage. If that ever happens I am sure that the hon. Member for Bow and Poplar will be there in his rightful place, at the very least as Chairman of the Select Committee on Standing Orders. I do not know whether there is a St. Ladbroke up there but if there is not I am sure that he will deal with that matter as well. My hon. Friend the Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) gave magnificent help during the progress of the Bill and I know that that is appreciated by everybody on both sides of the House.

We have reached the stage at which I would like to move the amendments before the House. In the spirit of the ministerial statements that we have heard from the Dispatch Box on other causes, may I say that I have no doubt that the discussions in both Houses and outside the Palace of Westminster that have led to this comprehensive view of the problems of disability show that the British people have set a clear priority.

I accept, as I did on Second Reading, that it will be necessary to consider implementation on the basis of phasing. Nevertheless, I believe that in this clause, as in others, the British people and the House will not accept that resources cannot be made available. We believe that even the figure that the Minister has given on several occasions today does not represent something which is extravagant in the extreme.

We believe that disabled persons and their carers, mentally handicapped persons and families up and down the country have experienced serious problems. The Bill attempts to right some of those problems, although not all of them. However, given the commitment on the part of the Government and the House, which has been shown almost unanimously at every stage, recognised and reflected at the Treasury, the Government are compelled to recognise the strong feelings and make sure that resources are made available.

Mr. Newton: I shall respond to the remarks of the hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) by saying that in my judgment the Government have shown, persistently over six or seven years, their commitment to the needs and interests of disabled people in a variety of ways, including the improvements and extensions of social security benefits in the way I described a little while ago. We shall continue to do everything we can to ensure that that progress is more than maintained. It is in that spirit and against the background of what we have already been able to achieve that we shall approach the consideration of the implementation of those parts of the Bill with significant effects on resources.

If you will allow me, Mr. Deputy Speaker, since you inadvertently cut me off without a word on the previous group of amendments and I had some modest news to impart, I should like to impart that good news now. I am talking about clauses 6 to 8. On the matter of timing and implementation, I hope, subject to discussions with local authority associations and other bodies concerned, that it will be possible to bring clauses 6 and 7 into effect no later than April 1987.

Clause 8 deals with reports to Parliament. We shall consider the possibility of bringing the clause into effect this autumn, and making the first annual report on the basis of 1985 data before the end of the year. I hope that the House will find that helpful. We should be able to produce a more informative report when what is known as Körner data — that is improved information about the Health Service — become available, but that will not be until 1988.

Perhaps those undertakings and hopes give some further emphasis to what I said about the Government's commitment to continue the progress of improvements for disabled people in a variety of ways.

I wish to pay my last tribute in these debates to all those who have been connected with our proceedings. I add my words to the kind remarks that have been made about the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley), whose performance has been such that I think that he would be well qualified to be a Government Whip, bearing in mind the efficiency that he has shown in organising the proceedings of the House. But perhaps he would regard the prospect of being elevated to the post of Government Whip as a fate worse than death. However, his efforts in organising our proceedings have been of significant assistance to us all. I am grateful to him for what he has done to support the hon. Member for Monklands, West and us all in achieving the happy position in which we find ourselves. We hope that Royal Assent will be only a short time away.

Mr. Alfred Morris: Many who are present congratulated my hon. Friend the Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) at the outset of today's proceedings. I have reserved my congratulations to this final stage so as to be absolutely certain that the Bill is bound for the statute book. This is an extremely important measure and my hon. Friend has been skilful and tireless. He has been wholly superb throughout the proceedings on the Bill.

I hold it to be the bounden duty of the Minister — as a member of a Government who have given over £4·4 billion in tax relief to those earning over £30,000 a year — to press upon his colleagues the point that implementing this Bill must now be a priority of priorities.

Again, I most warmly congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Monklands, West. He will be thanked by disabled people everywhere for nudging things

[Mr. Alfred Morris]

forward on their behalf. I hope that we shall be rejoicing very soon about the full implementation of his legislation.

Question put and agreed to.

Subsequent Lords amendments agreed to.

Incest and Related Offences (Scotland) Bill *[Lords]*

Not amended (in the Standing Committee), considered.

Clause 1

INCEST AND RELATED OFFENCES

1.24 pm

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): I beg to move amendment No. 1, in page 2, line 40, leave out 'under the age of 16 years'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): With this it will be convenient to take the following amendments: No. 2, in page 2, line 41, after 'offence', insert 'if that step-child is either under the age of 21 or has at any time before attaining the age of 18 lived in the same household and been treated as a child of his or her family.'.

No. 3, in page 3, line 2, leave out '16' and insert '21'.

Mr. Walker: In Committee, my hon. Friend the Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth) and I voted against the Bill as it stands. That is the reason for the amendments. Due to some confusion, which I have not yet managed to unravel, or a misunderstanding, my name was not printed as a supporter of the amendment along with that of my hon. Friend the Member for Stirling.

This is not a simple matter. To a non-lawyer, it seems to be complex and legal. The Bill, which has not been amended, may improve one area of Scots law. I do not think that anyone would argue with that. However, if the amendments are not accepted, it will bring about what some non-lawyers may believe to be a legal and moral conflict, which in the end will be likely to create greater social and moral problems. This conflict would be created by problems arising from this Bill and the Marriage (Prohibited Degrees of Relationship) Act 1986.

If one takes the view that marriage is more than just a legal matter—that it is ordained for the procreation of children, as the marriage service says—how can it be right for our law to allow an act that could result in the procreation of children, but not allow that act to take place within the institution of marriage? That is an impossible position.

I am sympathetic to what the Bill is trying to do, but I find it impossible to support a law that would allow an individual to sleep with his stepdaughter over the age of 16 provided that the stepdaughter gives her consent. She would probably become pregnant in the circumstances that one envisages, but, provided that she gives her consent, it is all right for her to become pregnant and have a child. As the law stands, and if the Bill is passed unamended, she will be the mother of a child, the father of which cannot, in law, become her husband. Surely that is nonsense. It is wrong to ask Parliament to put such a measure into legislation unamended. That is why these amendments are so important.

I recognise, as I am sure that everyone else recognises, that many reforms are required to put right the anomalies in Scottish law. However, is it right for us to write into law that it is in order for a stepfather to sleep with his stepdaughter and produce children, but not legally right for him to marry the 16-year-old, or older, girl? If so, we are saying that fornication and adultery are preferable to marriage.

One-parent families are a growing public concern. No one doubts that this matter is causing concern for those involved in social work and activity, those concerned with the churches and anyone who cares deeply about our society. If the Bill is anamended, it will make a positive contribution towards the creation of more one-parent families. The House cannot approve of that.

More important — and it is to this issue that we must turn our attention — are the children who are likely to result from such a relationship. Does anyone really believe that children conceived in this way would not at least have a real prospect of becoming what is known as problem children — another concern for our modern society? The important aspect is what it does to the children, but another aspect is the attendant cost for the public purse and taxpayer if the situation were to get worse.

Does anyone believe that bastards conceived between a stepfather and a stepdaughter aged 16, 17 or 18 can hope to be anything other than, at best, a curiosity to other children and other members of the community where they live? We all know that children can be very cruel, and often that makes life extremely difficult for sensitive youngsters. We have a duty and responsibility to them to think about the children who may be conceived as a result of the provisions of the Bill. At best, they will be a curiosity to other children and other members of the community in which they live. At school they will be abused and given, I have no doubt, hideous and horrendous names. Does anyone seriously believe that this is a recipe for a happy and stable home life? Does anyone seriously believe that the legal prevention of marriage between father and mother can make any kind of contribution to a stable home life for either the mother or the child.

It is difficult for those of us who have a good home life and who enjoyed a good home life as children to envisage anything like this. If a stepfather finds, after his stepdaughter's mother dies, that his stepdaughter is attractive, although she does not find him attractive, does anybody believe that considerable pressure will not be exerted on the child? I do not have the slightest doubt that incest is committed. I do not know how frequently it is committed and I do not know how large the problem is, but it is reasonable to envisage circumstances in which, because of the conditions in the home, the stepdaughter has to comply with the invitation or the order — depending upon how one views it—to get into bed with the stepfather.

I understand that it is extremely difficult to prove whether or not consent was given, demanded or accepted and that the circumstances become terribly fraught and difficult. However, our duty is to examine the areas of possibility, to find out which of them are likely to be areas of probability and then to reach a decision. Recently a Bill was introduced to prohibit marriage under the age of 21. If this Bill is passed, we shall be saying that provided the 16-year-old stepdaughter has agreed, this is acceptable in law. That would create a huge anomaly. If a stepfather forces a child against her will to get into bed and have intercourse with him, another member of the family has to provide evidence that that has happened. Somebody else is needed to clype—in other words, to tell.

We have to reach a decision against that background. All this happens within the family home, where there is the real danger of abuse. We are considering legislation that is designed to deal with such abuse. As I said earlier, I am not a lawyer; I am not qualified to deal with complex and difficult legal matters. However, I know that it would be extremely difficult for me to accept that it is all right to have intercourse and to produce children but it is not all right for those children to be given a legal father.

I believe that these amendments are essential. If it were to be left unamended, the Bill would be an affront to the Christian beliefs of the people of Scotland. Does anyone seriously believe that they can defend the Bill unamended? Could anyone attend church in Scotland on a Sunday and defend a position where marriage between a stepfather and stepdaughter is prevented

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): Is the hon. Gentleman aware that the Bill in its unamended form is substantially the product of a Bill put forward by the Scottish Law Commission, which invited comments from various authorities, including the churches? Only one of the many denominations raised any objection to the Bill. The others welcomed it.

Mr. Walker: I do not argue with that, but the hon. Gentleman must agree that that was before the Act prohibiting such marriage reached the statute book. It is the relationship between and the difficulties and anomalies that arise from those two Acts that present the problems.

Mr. Chris Smith (Islington, South and Finsbury): The hon. Gentleman has the privilege to be the constituency Member of Parliament for my parents. I have considerable sympathy with his point. Can he explain the specific wording of amendment No. 2 which, because of the word "or" in line 2, appears to do rather more than the purpose he has outlined? It could mean that a stepchild of any age — even above 21 — who had lived in the same household while under the age of 18 could be caught by the provisions. Will he address himself to that minor but important point?

Mr. Walker: I take the hon. Gentleman's point. The object of the word "or" is to prevent someone saying, "But she is no longer living with us." It is well known in Scotland that one of the most common lines of defence when going before the courts is to say, "I didna ken", to which the judge might reply, "Well, you ken noo." If the hon. Gentleman's parents have the good fortune to live in the beautiful part of the world that I represent, they will well understand that.

I want to know how anybody could go to church on a Sunday and defend a position where marriage between a stepfather and his stepdaughter is prevented by law, although it is perfectly in order — if the Bill is unamended — for them to live together, sleep together and produce children. That question must be answered. I know that I would find it impossible — as, no doubt, would any hon. Member—to persuade the elders of the kirk that somehow that was acceptable.

I do not pretend that we are dealing with a simple matter. We are not. But that is no excuse for putting into law another anomaly, especially one which, in my judgment as a non-lawyer, in practical terms could have an horrendous impact on the children produced from such a liaison. We must think about the road along which we are travelling and where we are going. Those who support the Bill and reject the amendments will be saying that fornication and adultery are preferable to marriage. In the old days, the minister would stand up in the pulpit and point out the sinners. That practice has long since passed.

Mr. Ian Mikardo (Bow and Poplar): There are too many of them now.

Mr. Walker: I accept that. Who can throw stones? Probably nobody can today. I am concerned about the children who can be produced from such a liaison. Although the minister can no longer stand up in the kirk and point to the sinners, we should not think that the congregation do not look around and comment. We can all imagine them asking, "Have you heard?" The children will be born out of wedlock, but we are saying that that is preferable to their being born in wedlock. That must be unacceptable for anybody who supports the Christian teachings and values of the Scottish Church.

The Scots will not take kindly to being lectured on fine points of law. Many, especially those who go to church, will point to God's law. That law will be in conflict with the Bill if the amendment is not made.

Ms. Jo Richardson (Barking): I have two apologies to make. The first is that this is the first time that I have had the temerity to speak in a debate on Scottish law. I have to confess that I do not understand Scottish law, although I have heard many hon. and learned Members say on other issues that Scottish law is in many respects simpler than English law. That may not be true here, however. There is, I suppose, good and less good on both sides of the border.

My second apology is that I am not terribly clear of my stance on the amendments. I think that I support the general thrust of the Bill, which seems to be to bring Scottish law into line with English law concerning a stepfather having a relationship with his stepdaughter over the age of 16. I understand that the Bill would make that not an incestuous relationship.

I did not quite follow what the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) was saying about marriage. I am aware that the two are tied up in that there can be issue from a relationship such as we are discussing. He went on at some length about the problems of such children. We are all concerned with them, but the debate is more narrow and concerns only whether a relationship between a stepfather and a stepdaughter over 16 is incestuous. I understand that the amendment would increase the age from 16 to 21. I have mixed feelings about that. I have been forced to be interested because of the increasing and, in many ways, welcome discussion about incest, which until fairly recently has been swept under the carpet. We should all welcome the fact that now both men and women are beginning to discuss these problems, which are particularly difficult for the girl or young woman involved in what amounts to violence against her by a member of her family. I am talking about the normal incestuous relationships about which we hear. It is time that the House, not necessarily this afternoon but on some other occasion, debated the difficulties that face girls and young women who are forced into this type of relationship.

1.45 pm

My ambivalence about the amendments arises from my belief that basically young women at the age of 16 should be able to decide on their own relationships. Generally, I would be unwilling to increase the age limit to 21 except in respect of incestuous relationships between a stepfather and stepdaughter. That must be considered in a different light.

I am sure that hon. Members will have had cases to deal with. I have had several. I do not know whether it is that women feel more able to talk about incest to a woman Member than to a male Member, however sympathetic and receptive he is. Many women of all ages have told me of the pressures on them from their fathers, stepfathers or, in some cases, their elder brothers to develop a relationship. It can start at an early age when the young girl does not know what is happening, is frightened, and knows that something is wrong but does not know what. She is threatened by her father, stepfather or the boyfriend of her mother who may say to her, "You must not say anything about this because your mother would be very angry and it would hurt her." Some of those women have told me that, despite that, they have a curious attachment to that person because of the secret between them. They do not like it. Indeed, they are often ashamed and worried about it. My ambivalence about the amendments arises I am worried whether 16 is the age at which a young woman with such a history of pressure, in this case from her stepfather, can make up her mind whether she has a proper relationship which she wishes to perpetuate into marriage with that man.

At some stage we should clarify the matter in a much better way. A year ago I read a piece in *The Sunday Times* about the complex legal barriers to marriage. It is time that we faced that and, perhaps, the Bill will lead to our facing it. Certainly it is wrong that a stepfather and stepdaughter, at whatever age, with a genuine relationship, should not be able to get married, if that relationship is properly established. Marriage-enabling legislation is usually considered in the House of Lords. I remember reading about a 62-year-old widower who was allowed to marry his 58-year-old stepdaughter through such legislation. Those people would not be included in the categories covered by this Bill. It is wrong for such cases to be decided at personal expense, because they can be very costly.

The Bill originates because sex between a stepfather and stepdaughter is prohibited by the Incest Act 1567. I am sorry that I am not more of an expert in the subject, but I was interested to hear that the roots of that Act are to be found in the book of Leviticus which describes a husband and wife as being "of one flesh".

It is interesting that we still have on the statute book legislation based on a doctrine which is obviously out of line with English law. In this case I think that English law is best. It seems that the doctrine dates back 2,000 years.

I support the thrust of the Bill, but I have to say something which is not often said in the House of Commons—I honestly do not know what to do about the amendment. Perhaps my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) can help me.

Mr. Chris Smith: I am afraid that I cannot help my hon. Friend in her dilemma. The Scottish Law Revision Committee recommended the amendments which the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) is proposing. However, the Criminal Law Revision Committee for England and Wales, after initial hesitation and considerable thought, recommended that we should go further than the Scottish Law Revision Committee and adopt the argument presented by the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker). There is a clear difference between the two law committees. The issues are difficult and sensitive. Arguments exist on both sides. The difficulty has been considered in great detail.

Ms. Richardson: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. He is right to say that two different conclusions were reached. That gives me strength to say that I still do not know the answer. If they cannot agree, who am I to decide?

If I have to take a view, on balance I think that I am in favour, marginally, of increasing the age to 21, on the ground that incest is such a difficult subject. But I am open to argument. Incest can begin with such violence — that is what worries me — and at such an early age. If such a relationship has gone on for a long time I wonder whether at 16 a young woman — however much she might feel that she is consenting, and no matter what affinity she has with her stepfather — has had a chance to discover her own feelings. However, that applies to marriage rather than to making the relationship incestuous.

We are not suggesting, as the hon. Member for Tayside, North seems to suggest, that everyone over the age of 16 who is affected in this way should marry. We are debating whether the law should say that with young women over the age of 16 the act is incestuous. I think that I am talking myself into remaining where I was on the age of 16.

I apologise for my rather confused remarks, but I am pleased that we have had a brief opportunity to discuss the Bill. I hope that it will lead to a more leisurely and better attended debate — perhaps a thoughtful and philosophical discussion — about incest, on which there has been much research by many bodies.

It is time that the House faced up to the fact that there is considerable violence against young women and children by members of their own families, whether step-relatives or otherwise. I suspect that almost every family knows someone who has suffered. We ought not to sweep the issue under the carpet. We must see whether we can help children and, I hope, their parents.

Mr. Bill Walker: I hope that the hon. Lady is not suggesting that anything that I said was condoning incest or suggesting that the subject should be swept under the carpet. I find it so horrendous and horrible that I want all aspects of it properly and fully debated.

I keep coming back not to the father, but to the mother and the child, because they are the important people and we must give them adequate consideration and protection. That is the purpose of the amendments.

Ms. Richardson: In a sense, the hon. Gentleman is saying that extending the age to 21 would give a young woman more protection. However, the Bill says only that with young people under the age of 16 an act should be regarded as incestuous and that if they are over the age of 16 there will not be an incestuous act. I cannot see how extending the age to 21 would help the young women.

Would not it be better for the children about whom the hon. Gentleman was talking not to know that they were born of an incestuous relationship? Perhaps I am not making myself clear. If so, it is too late for me to apologise now. This is a confusing issue in a confusing Bill. Even our wonderful Library, while perhaps not finding the Bill confusing, found it difficult to follow. I hope that in the not too distant future we shall have a wider discussion of the problem.

Mr. Wallace: My name appears on the amendments for a procedural reason. The Public Bill Office and those advising me on the Bill did not expect that we would have an opportunity to debate it and, so that it could be deemed to be unopposed and, therefore, agreed to, I added my name to the amendments.

These are not wrecking amendments. The Bill could live with them, but I should strongly prefer them not to be accepted.

Let me try to put the amendments into context and perhaps clarify matters for the hon. Member for Barking (Ms. Richardson). The present law on incest in Scotland is based on the Act of the Scottish Parliament in 1567, which, in turn, is based on the 18th chapter of the book of Leviticus in determining the persons between whom sexual relations would be deemed to be incestuous and criminal.

Mr. Mikardo: I know nothing about Scottish law, but I know the book of Leviticus and the passage to which the hon. Gentleman refers contains no reference to a stepfather.

Mr. Wallace: With due respect to the hon. Gentleman, whose knowledge of Leviticus I do not dispute, over the years the Scottish courts have deemed that the step relationship is covered by one of the verses of Leviticus. I regret not having come armed with the Bible and, more particularly, for the purpose of the Act, the 1562 Geneva translation. My point is that the chapter includes relationships, both affinity and blood, and the substantial thrust of the Bill is to decriminalise relationships by affinity.

2 pm

The related offences which are referred to in the Bill's title give protection to certain categories of persons who are not related by blood—stepchildren under the age of 16 and children under the age of 16 for whom an adult is in some position of trust. Some parts of the criminal law already give protection, but the Bill extends the sanctions that can be imposed if, for example, there is a breach of that trust. Indeed, if a case is brought on indictment in the High Court, it allows a sentence up to life imprisonment. One should be under no illusion about the seriousness which Parliament, and, indeed, society, attach to such offences.

The age of 16 was arrived at by the Scottish Law Commission after much deliberation. I, too, gave considerable thought to whether it should be 18 or 21. Indeed, it was only after I had discussed the matter at considerable length with the Scottish Law Commission that I accepted that 16 was the appropriate age.

I was guided by the fact that we are dealing with consensual intercourse between two people. If it were not consensual, it would be rape, for which there are the full penalties and rigours of the criminal law. For a child with a step-parent it may be difficult to prove consent, but that applies below the age of 16 as well as above. In fact, one might say that above the age of 16 it is a lot easier to prove because the person concerned is more likely to be forthcoming or to go to the police if he or she—it is more likely to be she—is subjected to undue pressure.

Mr. Bill Walker: I think that the hon. Gentleman will accept that the age of 16-plus is still extremely difficult in the circumstances that can exist surrounding this horrendous situation. I have a 16-year-old daughter at home and I can imagine situations in which she would find it extremely difficult to speak out in any forms against her

[Mr. Bill Walker]

father who in no way behaves in the manner that we are talking about. A person of 16 is still a child. We must recognise that the circumstances of the domestic home impinge on the ability of the child who is the victim to say anything because that child may end up out on the street.

Mr. Wallace: I never sought to minimise the difficulties. Under the age of 16 it is even more difficult for the child to speak out.

A woman in her thirties may marry but soon separate from a man in his twenties and the man could fall in love with that woman's 17-year-old daughter. That relationship would be caught by the Bill and it would be a criminal offence if this amendment were to be accepted. They are not related by blood. Parties may have parted and after many years the stepfather and his stepdaughter may meet. If the stepdaughter had lived in the house and been treated as a member of the family, even if when they subsequently met he was 39 and she was 35, that would still be criminal and subject to life imprisonment.

Mr. Bill Walker: We are more likely to be dealing with a child who lives at home passing the age of 16 and who is exposed to this problem than with the delightful, romantic but theoretical proposition that the hon. Gentleman has outlined. I believe that we should deal with what is likely to happen.

Mr. Wallace: I was merely pointing out what the consequences of the hon. Gentleman's amendment might be. We are giving protection to the child of a step relationship. However, if the parties have not married, a girl in a similar position, who might be subject to similar pressures, could well find that she does not have that protection. Therefore, there are arguments to be made on the ground of consistency.

As I have pointed out, only one denominational church, one of the free Presbyterian churches, has expressed any objection. It has been said that that was before the Marriage (Prohibited Degrees of Relationship) Bill was passed. But that suggests that the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) has not given much thought to his proposals. That Act makes the situation less anomolous than it would have been at the time when the church did not raise any objections. Then there was no provision for a marriage between a step-parent and a step-child. Now there is, subject to certain conditions. However, the hon. Gentleman has sent me a note saying that if I reject the amendments, he will talk out the Bill on Third Reading. I do not want that to happen, because if this Bill is lost after the Marriage (Prohibited Degrees of Relationship) Bill has been enacted, it would be perfectly legal for parties to marry, but it would be criminal for them to have sexual relations with each other. Undoubtedly, that is what the hon. Gentleman would achieve. Interestingly enough, however he would not protect adopted children.

At present, it is believed that the law of incest does not apply to adopted children. This Bill covers that. Perhaps the hon. Member for Tayside, North would like to appear in church on Sunday to tell his congregation why he wanted to stop a Bill that would protect adopted children. At present, the law does not protect illigitimate children either. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman would like to tell his congregation why he did not want to protect them.

Mr. Bill Walker: I shall always be happy to stand up in church, or anywhere else, and say that I have not supported legislation that I deem to be so flawed and faulty that I cannot accept it. That is really what we are talking about.

Mr. Wallace: I think that I have made my point. I ask the hon. Gentleman to reconsider whether he wishes to press the amendment, or whether it might be better to withdraw it. Some highly anomalous cases might come up, and people may find themselves facing criminal sanctions although the vast majority of people would not think that any criminality attached to their behaviour.

Two married people may indulge in an adulterous relationship. They are not free to marry, but the law does not make their relationship criminal. I do not support or encourage the sort of relationships to which the hon. Gentleman referred; nor does the Bill. The Bill means that they would not be deemed criminal relationships. The hon. Gentleman used the example of a child of a relationship not having protection. I accept that, but that could happen now. Today the parties could also find themselves in prison. What would happen to the child then? We are not giving our moral approbation. After all, adultery is not morally approved by society, but for many years we have not thought fit to make it a criminal offence.

If the amendment is passed, at least we shall have the satisfaction of knowing that, under the law in Scotland, the Lord Advocate's consent is needed for every prosecution. I am sure that he will have the good sense, if anomalies arise, not to consent to prosecution.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Allan Stewart): The House will have listened with interest to the debate between my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) and the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace). I should like to make it clear—I do not think that those hon. Members dispute this—that we all have a clear interest in ensuring that the Bill is passed with, or without, the amendment tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North. Under the Marriage (Prohibited Degrees of Relationship) Act 1986 there are a number of relationship in which marriage can now take place but where marriage partners would be commiting incest if they consummated the marriage.

The Government remain neutral on the Bill's details. As my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North told the House, the effect of the amendment would be to prohibit intercourse with a stepchild under 21 or for all time if the stepchild before attaining the age of 18 had lived in the same household as the accused and had been treated as a child of the family. This matches exactly the conditions laid down for marriage in the 1986 Act.

The hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland put forward strong reasons why the amendments should not be accepted. He said that they were at odds with the existing law on the age of consent and created a serious criminal offence in circumstances where it seems inappropriate to invoke the criminal law—for example, where a man has intercourse by consent with an adult woman of, say, 20 with whom he has never lived in family but who happens to be the daughter of his wife or former wife. The hon. Gentleman rightly pointed out that prosecution would remain a matter for the Lord Advocate.

I hope that I have fairly summarised the arguments. The Government are neutral on the details of the Bill. I hope that it will pass through all of its stages this afternoon.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendments made: No. 32, in page 12, line 41, after 'offence', insert

'if that step-child is either under the age of 21 or has at any time before attaining the age of 18 lived in the same household and been treated as a child of his or her family.'.

No. 3, in page 3, line 2, leave out '16' and insert '21'. — *[Mr. Wallace.]*

Order for Third Reading read.

Motion made, and Question proposed, That the Bill be now read the Third time. — *[Mr. Wallace.]*

2.12 pm

Mr. Allan Stewart: I should like to take this opportunity to speak more generally about the Bill, which has been put forward by the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace). He discussed its background during the previous debate on the amendments tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker). As the hon. Gentleman rightly emphasised, the Bill follows a report of the Scottish Law Commission. He is to be congratulated on putting forward this legislation. As the hon. Member for Barking (Ms. Richardson) said, it is a complex Bill.

The Bill deals with a matter of importance which can arouse fairly strong feelings. The House will have listened with considerable sympathy to my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North who referred to the reservations expressed by my hon. Friend the Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth) and himself in Committee. Hon. Members were concerned about the difference between the marriage and the incest legislation and about the pressure which could be brought to bear on a stepchild over 16.

I think that it is fair to report that my hon. Friend the Member for Stirling expressed a worry in Committee that the Bill would allow intercourse between step-relations who, in terms of the marriage legislation, would not be able to marry. He pointed out that if intercourse led to conception it would prevent the father of the child in that union marrying the mother.

Should the Bill fail to secure a Third Reading we shall be faced with a situation where, if and when the Marriage (Prohibited Degrees of Relationship) Act 1986 is commenced, persons in a step-relationship marrying under that Act will, if they consummate the marriage, be committing incest.

I congratulate the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland on bringing forward the Bill and I commend it to the House.

2.15 pm

Mr. Wallace: I thank the Minister for his kind words. It is only fair to say that the real hard work in regard to the Bill was put in by the Scottish Law Commission in terms of the consultative document it initially sent out, which was the product of a considerable amount of work. Indeed, as the hon. Member for Barking (Ms. Richardson) said in the previous debate, this is a serious subject that evokes emotions and has sociological aspects. In the Scottish Law Commission's work on this some of those aspects were looked at. The Scottish Law Commission certainly drew on the work that has been done by many sources in dealing with the serious problem of incest.

We are grateful to the Scottish Law Commission and I am grateful to the officials in the Scottish Home and Health Department. Although the Government were neutral in the matter the Scottish Home and Health Department was obviously concerned that if legislation was going through it should be in a good and proper form and it assisted me in that aim.

In some respects it is rather sad that, if the Bill proceeds to get the Royal Assent, the previous Act will cease to exist. I do not think that we will ever again pass legislation that says:

"quhatsumever persoun or personis they be that abusis thair body with sic personis in degre as Goddis word hes expreslie forbidden . . . as is contenit in the xviii Cheptour of Leviticus salbe puniest . . ."

Draftsmen these days seem to have a more simple and colourful way of putting things forward. It is certainly simpler than the previous Act. If the Bill becomes an Act I believe that it will improve the position of criminal law in Scotland and I commend the Third Reading to the House.

Mr. Bill Walker: I congratulate the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) on seeing the good sense of accepting the amendments. Like him, I cannot pretend that everything is as we would have wished but it is an improvement on the present position. I believe that, with the passage of time, the amendments will be seen to have been of considerable value.

This will not be the end of the debate on this delicate, important and often distressing and disturbing matter. I am confident that we shall return to it again at a later stage because some aspects still need to be tidied up. I was never opposed to what the hon. Gentleman or the Scottish Law Commission were attempting to achieve but I believe that they were exposing individuals unnecessarily to a situation that ought not to happen. That was why I tabled the amendment.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed, with amendments.

Obscene Publications (Protection of Children, Etc.) (Amendment) Bill

Order read for resuming of adjourned debate on Question [25 April].

Amendment No. 12 proposed: In page 3, line 17, leave out '18' and insert '16', instead thereof. — *[Mr. Dubs.]*

Question again proposed, That the amendment be made.

2.20 pm

Mr. Ian Mikardo (Bow and Poplar): I think that hon. Members will be aware that this is the third time I have attempted to say a few words in support of this amendment which was moved many moons ago by my hon. Friend the Member for Battersea (Mr. Dubs). On the first occasion on which I endeavoured to explain why I thought that my hon. Friend was right to move the amendment I was brutally cut short after 28 seconds. Therefore, I was not able to deploy any substantial arguments in favour of the amendment. However, a later opportunity arose. On that occasion I was cut off after only 17 seconds, which included an intervention from the hon. Member for Surrey, South-West (Mrs. Bottomley).

I must ask the permission of the House to start from scratch. The argument is a simple one, and in dealing with it I shall address myself indirectly to amendment No. 14, which has also been selected. It is an argument about the minds of young men at the ages of 16 and 17 years. The concept of the Bill as it now is is that lads of 16 and 17 do not know anything about what used to be called euphemistically the facts of life, or sometimes called even more euphemistically the birds and the bees. The Bill contends that, against that background, we must not let 16 or 17-year-olds see anything which it would be all right for my hon. Friends, myself and Conservative Members to see. That is because it is assumed that we know about the birds and the bees and 16 and 17-year-olds do not.

That is a nonsensical proposition. When my four grandsons were teenagers about a decade ago, I used often to talk with them about the facts of life. That was because I learned a great deal from them. They were far more advanced in their mathematics than the mathematics which I learnt many years ago and so they were much more advanced than their old fogey of a grandfather in knowing about things that go on.

The idea that we old fogies can attend this place on a Friday and solemly profess to know—I am old and the Minister is preternaturally old—what is in the mind of a youngster of 16 or 17, and even worse, to profess to know what it is that will tend to corrupt and deprave a youngster of that age, is a piece of monstrous intellectual arrogance on our part.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): I am sure that we are all listening to my hon. Friend with considerable interest and that we shall all agree with him. However, is he as surprised as I am that the Bill's sponsor has not seen fit to be with us today to see his Bill on its way? Is he surprised that the hon. Member for Daveyhulme (Mr. Churchill) has not seen fit to join us? Does that not display some arrogance and even lack of interest on his part?

Mr. Mikardo: It would not be for me to pass moral judgments on another hon. Member. The sponsor was not present when we last discussed the Bill and nor was he present on the occasion before that. I suspect strongly that his enthusiasm for his Bill has waned rapidly. Those who have followed the progress of the Bill will recall that he has knocked it down as if it were a Meccano set and rebuilt the bits into a different structure on three occasions during the Bill's consideration.

The hon. Member for Daveyhulme (Mr. Churchill) started with fine intentions. He started with a realisation that the present law on obscenity is nonsensical. I utterly agree with him about that. I do not know any reasonable person who could disagree.

Having drawn his place in the ballot, the hon. Member for Davyhulme thought that, as the existing law was nonsense, he would try to bring in a measure that would improve it. I believe that he set out seriously to do that, and I think that he did his best, which is why I do not want to be condemnatory of him. However, he discovered, as many others have discovered before him, that when one gets into this branch of the law, one walks straight into a minefield. The difficulties of definition are so ineluctable that one is better off leaving the thing alone, for all its faults.

I voted for a Second Reading, although I thought that it was an awful Bill in its first draft. Hon. Members will recall that it had what came to be called the laundry list. It was a nonsensical Bill, which would have prevented the showing of King Lear as obscene. It would have prevented a travelogue of the city of Brussels if it included a picture of the statue of the Manneken Pis in Le Grand Place. It would have prevented the showing of many great classical works of the Italian, Flemish and other schools. Why did I vote for this nonsensical Bill? Because I hoped that in Committee we could find through our collective wisdom, a way of turning the Bill into a decent Bill.

The hon. Member for Davyhulme kept trying. When somebody told him that something would not do, he tried something else and when they said that that would not do either, he tried something else, and he got browned off in the process. In answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden), that is why the hon. Member for Davyhulme is not here. He has come to the conclusion that he has suffered enough, and my guess is that he will not even be putting his name in the ballot for private Members' Bills next Session, least he should be tempted to venture again into this, or any other, minefield.

Look where the hon. Member has got in the end. After going round and round the houses, he has come back, in subsection (3) to the tendency to "deprave and corrupt". He has adopted the very criterion, the very form of words to which he objected so much, and his objections to which, in the first place, made him introduce the Bill.

Mr. Chris Smith (Islington, South and Finsbury): Does my hon. Friend agree that in clause 2, to which his amendment relates there is in effect a new definition being brought into the law, that of a tendency to "deprave and corrupt" persons under the age of 18? The amendment being supported so ably by my hon. Friend would replace that age limit with one of 16. Would that not be of benefit to the Bill, as it is easier to prove such a tendency to "deprave and corrupt" persons under the age of 16, than it is to prove such a tendency for persons of the age of 16 or over?

Mr. Mikardo: I do not go along with my hon. Friend. I do not believe that I can estimate what would tend to deprave and corrupt him, and he could not estimate what

would tend to deprave and corrupt me. It is even more clear that neither of us can remember our youth so well as to make any estimate or any judgment that is worth a farthing of what would tend to corrupt or deprave a lad of 16, 17 or 18. We are too far removed from that. My heart bled for the hon. Member for Davyhulme as I watched his agonised process or retreat from one redoubt to the next redoubt. Despite all that agony, now we have reached, in an effort to improve——

It being half past Two o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Debate to be resumed what day? No day named.

Private Members' Bills

EMPLOYMENT (AGE LIMITS) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Not moved.

TOBACCO PRODUCTS (TELEVISION BROADCASTS) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Not moved.

IMMIGRATION ACT 1971 (AMENDMENT) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Second Reading what day?

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): I did not hear an objection.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): This is an abuse of the procedures of the House.

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton (Fife, Central): Shut up.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. There are about 35 Bills on the Order Paper that have still to be considered. We seem to be gathered for what is to be the July massacre of all those private Members' Bills by virtue, I suspect, of a grey and anonymous Whip uttering in a very muffled way the word "Object".

You will recall that on other occasions when Bills that would have provided considerable benefits to worthy sections of the community have been killed in this way we have protested that those who wish to kill them should at least have the guts to identify themselves, so that their names are on the record as opposing those measures.

Many months ago a Bill that I introduced was accepted without opposition, but it was later killed off by somebody who uttered in a very quiet voice the word "Object". I raised this matter on that occasion, and I ask you again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to require the person who objects to a Bill — in this case merely to give somebody who is refused entry to this country the right of appeal — to identify himself. If the rate of refusals continues as at present, 20,000 people will be refused entry to the United Kingdom this year. The only right of appeal that they have is when they leave——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must not go into the merits of the Bill. I understand his point of order and I shall deal with it.

Mr. Skinner: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is high time that those who shout "Object" behind cupped hands should be identified in *Hansard*. When somebody shouts "Object" in the House of Commons, the whole House should hear it, not just Mr. Speaker, or Mr. Deputy Speaker. An objection must be heard by every hon. Member. The fact is that the hon. Member who is sitting close to you, the millionaire hon. Member for Hove (Mr. Sainsbury), was the person who shouted "Object" to this Bill, and he has shouted "Object" on previous occasions. He objected to the removal of standing charges for pensioners, and he ought to be ashamed of himself. It is time that pensioners boycotted Sainsbury's stores.

[Mr. Skinner]

It is time that you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, did not fall prey to the nonsense of those who whisper "Object" instead of letting the whole House hear them so that the names go into *Hansard*. They should have the guts to make plain what they are doing — that they are ripping off pensioners and objecting to a Bill relating to immigration that has been introduced by my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden).

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It ill-behoves the hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt) to keep muttering from a sedentary position about these Bills, some of which deal with employment, when Cleveland has the highest rate of unemployment in the country.

Like my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), on a number of occasions I have been the victim of a ruling from the Chair that some of my more eloquent contributions from a sedentary position should not be recorded in *Hansard*. Indeed, my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) was involved in a little altercation a few weeks ago about what is or is not recorded in *Hansard*, should the person making the contribution not be on his feet.

About 30 Bills have come before the House towards the end of the Session—I am a supporter of the Bill that we are now discussing—and it is our last chance to pursue them. I ask you to rule that if it is good enough for the occupant of the Chair to say that a joke by my hon. Friend for Bolsover or myself cannot be recorded in *Hansard* because we have not stood up and identified ourselves, similarly any hon. Member objecting to Bills should not have his objection registered in *Hansard* unless he—in this case the hon. Member for Hove (Mr. Sainsbury)—stands and identifies himself as killing the Bills on behalf of the Government.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I understand the points of order raised by the three hon. Members. As they said, this matter has been raised on previous occasions. I have taken the opportunity to study past procedures and precedents, and it might be helpful to the House if I describe the procedure. As I said, similar points have been raised on many occasions over a number of years, and Procedure Committees have considered the practice.

The practice of the House does not require an hon. Member to rise to signify an objection. If there is no objection to a Bill when the title is read, its opponents can easily preserve their anonymity and still secure the deferral of the Bill by giving their voices as "No" when I put the Question. Hon. Members have never been required to rise to give their voices when any Question is put to the vote.

I understand that the current work of the Procedure Committee includes consideration of the arrangements for private Members' Bills. Hon. Members may wish to put their points to the Committee. Until the House approves any change, I am bound to follow current practice.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It might be helpful of you were aware that there is a conspiracy by three hon. Members. who are skulking behind the Clerk's Table, who appear to have come to the Chamber with the pre-ordained purpose of destroying every one of the private Members' Bills. If they did the decent thing and stood up and said who they were and what they represented, the problem would be solved and we would know exactly what interests were being served in destroying these very important private Members' Bills.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I cannot add to what I have already said. I have reminded hon. Members that if they are dissatisfied, as clearly some of them are, with the existing procedures and current practice, they can put their points to the Procedures Committee.

Mr. Nellist: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Without challenging the precedent that you have explained, and respecting your suggestion of correspondence with the appropriate Committee, may I ask you to confirm that it is open to Government Whips, should they so wish, to stand and identify themselves as Government Whips when they make an objection? Were they interested in openly declaring that it was the Government's decision, and not the decision of individual hon. Members, to block the private Members' Bills, they — for example, the hon. Member for Hove (Mr. Sainsbury) — could stand and identify themselves as Government Whips.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I have made it clear that there is no obligation on any hon. Member to rise when he wishes to signify an objection.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Further to the point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I do not wish to tax your patience on this matter, because you have sat through many similar protests that Back-Bench Members have raised on Fridays when Bills are slaughtered by the Government.

I was not sure whether you responded to the point that my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) made about taking an objection, and whether it is only the Chair that has to hear the objection. One can only assume that the three Whips, who have moved very close to you, have done so so that they can make their objection known quietly and without drawing attention to their wider shame. If the Whips who object on behalf of the Government do so loudly enough, we might be able to identify them, even though they are sitting down.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Chair has to hear the objection. I heard objections to the Bills that have already been dealt with.

Mr. Robert N. Wareing (Liverpool, West Derby): Further to the point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I do not want to tax you further either, and you have been in the Chair often when this matter has been raised, but this is an important issue for the House. I understood you to say—please correct me if I am wrong—that the practice is based on precedent. Precedents can be changed. What original authority gave rise to this custom or usage in the House? Hon. Members have raised this matter at 2.30 pm on a Friday so often that it is quite clear that if there is any room for the Chair to make a decision which changes our practice, without the matter going to the Procedure Committee, you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, Mr. Speaker and others who can advise might well look into this issue.

Mr. Ivor Stanbrook (Orpington): Further to the point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. In considering this matter, can it please be borne in mind that the practice to which Opposition Members so strongly object was followed consistently by the Labour party when it was last in power?

Several Hon. Members: We were not here then.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. We had better not get into a debate about how this procedure has been used in the past. Perhaps I can deal with the additional point that has been raised. What I said is based on current practice, but it also stems directly from Standing Order No. 1, and it might be helpful if I deal with that.

The opportunity of objecting to items of business is not confined to private Member's Bills. Under Standing Order No. 1, any item of business taken after the moment of interruption — 10 pm on Monday to Thursday and 2.30 pm on Friday — which is not specifically exempted by Standing Orders or by a business motion can be blocked by any indication of objection. I might add that Government motions are not infrequently blocked by this procedure late at night.

Mr. Nellist: Further to the point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I apologise for rising again, but, as your rulings are coming out they are triggering queries in my mind. As I understand it, if I were successful—I have not been so far — in making an application under Standing Order No. 10 to have an emergency debate on the detention of trade unionists in South Africa, you would ask the House whether I had leave for such a debate, and you would require 40 hon. Members to rise in their places to show that the specified number of hon. Members backed the application. Does it not seem equitable that, as hon. Members are required to demonstrate support by standing on their feet for an application under Standing Order No. 10, Government Whips should stand up to identify themselves when they kill off Bills? Should not the Procedure Committee consider that?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Gentleman is making a point that he can put to the Procedure Committee, but he will not tempt me into making comments on the procedures and Standing Orders of the House. It is my job to ensure that they are observed and correctly carried out, and that is what I am endeavouring to do.

Mr. Gregor MacKenzie (Glasgow, Rutherglen): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It strikes me that this practice has obtained for a long time. When I was a member of the Government, it also happened. Many of us, whether members of the Government or Back Benchers, have undoubtedly not liked the practice. I suspect, although I shall not ask whether it is the case, that it causes considerable embarrassment to the occupant of the Chair that he must rule in this way. Concern about the practice is undoubtedly growing, and I ask that colleagues write to the Procedure Committee and that you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, direct the Clerk of the House to report our exchanges this afternoon to the Procedure Committee, so that it may discuss the matter at some length and make recommendations to the whole House.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It is not for the Chair to direct the Procedure Committee on its business. However, I feel sure that the hon. Gentlemen who have raised these points will put the matter to the Procedure Committee. As I said earlier, I understand that it is on its terms of reference at present, so the opportunity is there. I hope the House feels that we have had a good run on this and that we should proceed with our business.

Before the points of order, the Second Reading of the Immigration Act 1971 (Amendment) Bill was objected to and I was about to say: Objection taken, Second Reading what day?

Second Reading deferred till Monday next.

ANIMAL WELFARE (ROYAL COMMISSION) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Not moved.

STANDING CHARGES (ABOLITION) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Corbyn: With the permission of the hon. Member for Hove (Mr. Sainsbury), who I understand is objecting to the Bill—he can disagree with me if that is not so—Monday next.

Second Reading deferred till Monday 7 July.

RIGHT TO CO-OPERATE BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Not moved.

INDECENT DISPLAYS (NEWSPAPERS) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Corbyn: With the permission of the hon. Member for Hove (Mr. Sainsbury) and *The Sun* newspaper, we would like to have the Bill debated on Monday next.

Second Reading deferred till Monday 7 July.

RENEWABLE ENERGY SOURCES (PROMOTION) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Monday 7 July.

FREEDOM OF SPEECH (UNIVERSITIES AND INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: What day? No day named.

RIGHT TO INTEREST BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Not moved.

UNFITNESS TO PLEAD BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Not moved.

SHOPS (SUNDAY TRADING AND WORKERS PROTECTION) BILL

Order for Second Reading Read.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Not moved.

PUBLIC SAFETY (INFORMATION) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Not moved.

CO-OWNERSHIP OF FLATS BILL

Order for Second Reading read.
Read a Second time.
Bill committed to a Standing Committee pursuant to Standing Order No. 42 (Committal of Bills).

ACCOMPLICE EVIDENCE (NORTHERN IRELAND) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Not moved.

TOBACCO PRODUCTS (HEALTH WARNINGS) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Not moved.

ROAD TRAFFIC ACCIDENTS COMPENSATION FOR VICTIMS BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Not moved.

POLITICAL PARTIES (INCOME AND EXPENDITURE) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Not moved.

POLICE COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE (AMENDMENT) (No. 2) BILL

Hon. Members: Object.
Second Reading deferred till Tuesday next.

CONCESSIONARY TELEVISION LICENCES FOR STATE RETIREMENT PENSIONERS BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Skinner: If no one else will get up, I will.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: What day? No day named.

COMPANIES BILL

Adjourned Debate on Second Reading [18 April]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Not moved.

MEDICAL ACT 1983 (AMENDMENT) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Not moved.

HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS BILL *[LORDS]*

Order for Second Reading read.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Not moved.

FOOTBALL BETTING LEVY BOARD BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.
Second Reading deferred till 10 August.

CROSSBOWS (RESTRICTIONS) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.
Second Reading deferred till Monday next.

TOBACCO PRODUCTS (SPORTS SPONSORSHIP) BILL

Adjourned Debate on Second Reading [21 February]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Not moved.

REPRESENTATION OF THE PEOPLE (AMENDMENT) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.
Second Reading deferred till Monday next.

PENSIONERS' RIGHT TO HEAT, LIGHT AND COMMUNICATIONS BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Corbyn: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Several hon. Members are competing to object to the Bill——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. All that the hon. Gentleman can do is to name a day.

Mr. Corbyn: I wish the Bill to be debated next Tuesday, and I hope that the hon. Member for Hove (Mr. Sainsbury) is unable to attend.
Second Reading deferred till Tuesday next.

UNBORN CHILDREN (PROTECTION) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Not moved.

SHOPS (No. 2) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.
Second Reading deferred till Friday next.

REMANDS IN CUSTODY (COMPENSATION) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.
Second Reading deferred till Monday next.

FAMINE RELIEF IN AFRICA BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Not moved.

FIRE PRECAUTIONS (AMENDMENT) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Not moved.

OWNERSHIP OF THE MEDIA BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Tony Banks: The hon. Member who has objected owns most of the media anyway.

Second Reading deferred till Monday next.

WELSH LANGUAGE BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Not moved.

CUSTOMS CONSOLIDATION (AMENDMENT) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Monday next.

Mr. Corbyn: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Many hon. Members have nominated next Monday as an appropriate day for Second Reading debates on Bills. Will you now call upon the Leader of the House to make time available on Monday so that these important matters can be debated? At least two of the Bills have a significant bearing on 9 million pensioners because of the proposed abolition of standing charges. It is important that we discuss these matters so that arrangements can be made to abolish standing charges before the onset of winter.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That is a good try by the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn), but he knows that it is well established that a day is often named even when the hon. Member concerned knows that the chances of having a debate on that day is extremely remote.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE (ESTIMATES)

Ordered,

That, on the next half day allotted under Standing Order No. 19 (Consolidation of estimates), notwithstanding the provisions of paragraphs (3), (4) and (5) of the Standing Order, Mr. Speaker shall at the conclusion of the debate or at Seven o'clock, whichever is the earlier, put any Question necessary to dispose of the proceedings on the Estimate appointed for consideration on that day.—*[Mr. Neubert.]*

Business of the House

2.54 pm

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a short business statement about the business next week. The business will be amended as follows:

WEDNESDAY 9 JULY—Estimates Day (3rd Allotted Day). There will be a debate on Estimates relating to supplementary benefit payments for private and voluntary residential care for the elderly, followed by a debate on Estimates relating to labour market services so far as they relate to the promotion of tourism. Details will be given in the *Official Report*.

Motions on the Housing (Northern Ireland) Order and the Criminal Justice (Northern Ireland) Order.

Completion of remaining stages of the Finance Bill will be postponed until a later date to be discussed through the usual channels.

[Estimates for debate on Wednesday 9 July 1986

1. Class XV, Vote 2 (Department of Health and Social Security: Supplementary Benefits) so far as it relates to expenditure on supplementary benefit payments for private and voluntary residential care for the elderly; and

2. Class VII, Vote 1 (Department of Employment: labour market services) so far as it relates to the promotion of tourism.]

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): The House will have noted what the right hon. Gentleman said about the change of business on Wednesday 9 July and will recall that it was only yesterday—less than 24 hours ago—that we heard him confidently announcing that the business for Wednesday 9 July would be the completion of the remaining stages of the Finance Bill. That is not an unimportant matter, because it gives legislative effect to the Budget. One would have thought that it was a central part of the Government's programme.

The right hon. Gentleman has not told us why, in the past 23 hours, there has been a change in the most important item—from the Government's point of view—in the coming week. Is it to do with the fact that no fewer than 68 amendments were put down yesterday? Will a further batch of amendments appear on Monday? If so, is this not a classic of muddle and incompetence in the Treasury and the Government in the dispatch of vital business?

The choice of subjects for the debates on Wednesday are certainly matters which we are willing to discuss, because we believe that benefit payments for private and voluntary residential care for the elderly and the promotion of tourism are matters of great importance. However, I should like to hear the response of the Leader of the House to what I said about the reasons for the extraordinary change of business at such short notice and affecting such an important subject.

Mr. Biffen: The right hon. Gentleman will recollect that yesterday the hon. Member for Birmingham, Hodge Hill (Mr. Davis) raised with me the difficulties that he thought might arise on this matter and I told him that I would look into it. When I announced the business for next week it was hoped that the Government would be able to table today all their amendments to the Finance Bill. That has not been possible and, in the circumstances and following

[Mr. Biffen]

discussions through the usual channels, we thought that it would be inappropriate to complete consideration of the Bill next week. Now that we have secured a little additional time, I very much hope that we can proceed in a manner which will be acceptable to both sides of the House.

Mr. Alexander Eadie (Midlothian): The right hon. Gentleman has made his business statement because there has been a change of circumstances. Will he consider making another business statement following the fact that the *Glasgow Herald* reports today that the Allander Institute says that 4,000 miners' jobs in Scotland are to go west and that another 8,000 jobs may go in consequence? Does not the right hon. Gentleman consider that those circumstances require him to make another business statement? It is a matter of urgency and we should have a debate on the matter on Wednesday, because the Scottish people want to know what is happening as a result of the Government's policies.

Mr. Biffen: I shamelessly belong to the old-fashioned school that believes that, ideally, one business statement a week is quite enough. Therefore, I do not hold out—I trust — any early prospect of additional business statements over the next few days. Of course, the point raised by the hon. Gentleman is of undoubted importance to Scotland and to the nation generally, but there will be opportunities between now and the summer recess when these matters can be considered in private Members' time.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): We welcome the deferral of further debate on the Finance Bill for just the reason that the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) has given. The enormous number of amendments would have made it impossible for any justice to have been done to the debate on Wednesday.

If there are to be protests, as we have seen twice in the last fortnight, both resulting in statements to the House saying that matters are to be postponed to a further date, should that not be an encouragement to the Opposition to protest more rigorously and often and thereby to lose further Government business until an indefinite later date —ideally the next side of the general election?

Mr. Biffen: I know that last night's announcement was distressing to the hon. Gentleman It was etched on every Liberal face as they saw the fox writhing in agony, having been well and truly shot. The hon. Gentleman ought not to press me to have many more changes in business, otherwise we shall be here until mid-August or beyond as I acquiesce in every request that is made.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Is the Leader of the House aware that in this parliamentary Session there have been more revised business statements than at any time that I can recall since I came here in 1970? As we have had another today, perhaps he will consider what occurred in the few minutes before Mr. Speaker took the chair. Why not on Wednesday have the Second Reading debate on the Standing Charges (Abolition) Bill which will greatly assist pensioners? We could debate the Immigration Act 1971 (Amendment) Bill, to which my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) referred. We could debate the Concessionary Television Licences for State Retirement Pensioners Bill. Here is a wonderful opportunity for the right hon. Gentleman to do something decent for the pensioners. There might even be votes in it. He should make sure when we have those debates that he tells the hon. Member for Hove (Mr. Sainsbury) to keep out of the way so that we shall have a fair chance of getting someything done.

Mr. Biffen: I always welcome the interventions of the hon. Member for Bolsover because he is now moving into maturity when he tells us how many years he has been in this place and reflects upon how, in all that time, he has never found this, that or the other. But at the same time as he ages, he retains a certain innocence of affairs. The governing of private business that we were discussing earlier this afternoon is conditioned by Standing Orders, and I simply cannot set them aside for next week.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry South-East): Does the Leader of the House agree that, in the same way as he brought a motion before the House a few days ago to increase by one day the allocation of time for private Members' motions following the disgraceful attempt by the Government to carve up and freeze out my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), it is within his authority, particularly as we have lost the Shops Bill and the legislation to privatise the water authorities, which has opened up a gap in parliamentary time, to produce more time for the discussion of private Members' Bills, particularly those about which we have argued today which deal with pensioners? As he has announced a change in Wednesday's business dealing with financial services, the big bang and salaries of £100,000 a year in the City of London and substituted supplementary benefit payments for residential care for the elderly, would it not be appropriate on Wednesday to compare those salaries with the fact that in Coventry, the west midlands and nationally some residential homes charge £40 or £50 a week more than the DHSS will allow pensioners to claim in order to pay for those private residential homes? I should like to draw that comparison on Wednesday.

Mr. Biffen: I shall try to help the hon. Gentleman as best I can. He has just asserted that I have a great deal more time at my disposal because of the announcement to delay the privatisation of the water authorities. That cannot conceivably affect next week's business, or, indeed, the balance of time left for this Session. Therefore, in view of the constraints under which I operate, and which the House will seek if it wishes to rise at some tolerably early time, he will have to make the speeches that he seeks within the disciplines set out for the Estimates day debate, and I am sure that he can do it.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): As you know, Mr. Speaker, before you came in a number of objections were raised about the treatment of private Members' Bills. The Leader of the House has not really answered the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner). There are a number of private Members' Bills largely, but not exclusively, concerning the problems of pensioners in our society, which reflect a real concern that pensioners' living standards should be raised.

Will the Leader of the House rearrange the business for next Wednesday—as he appears to have a day on his hands—in order to ensure that those Bills are properly debated? There is a crying need to increase the living standards of pensioners from the present poverty levels. What proposals is he prepared to put to the Procedure

Committee or to the House so that private Members' Bills, which often reflect growing public anxiety and which require a lot of effort if they are to be enacted, can be properly debated and voted upon, and so that the nonsense of anonymous objectors who try to practise ventriloquy so that they are not identified can be brought to an end? The public would then know who and what interests were trying to destroy important reforms that have been introduced by individual hon. Members.

Mr. Biffen: The provision of time for private Member's legislation is governed by the Standing Orders of the House, and I have no opportunity or realistic ability to set them aside in the week ahead. Any hon. Member who heard this afternoon's transactions, or who has heard similar transactions on previous occasions, knows perfectly well that that issue is a matter of considerable concern to the House. However, it is not something new. Previous Procedure Committees have judged that there are real difficulties in essaying any alternative. However, the Procedure Committee is considering the matter, and I hope that the hon. Gentleman will give his evidence to it directly.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): Should my right hon. Friend drop his guard and allow some chink in his defences over the private Members' business for next week, will he, instead of listening to Opposition Members, give higher priority to the motion of my hon. Friend the Member for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle) on freedom of speech on our campuses and in our universities?

Mr. Biffen: I must be even handed. I can hold out no more hope to my hon. Friend than I held out to Opposition Members.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): I have considerable sympathy with the Leader of the House because he is being compelled to make numerous statements changing the business. If I was him, I might suspect that there was a plot by some of my colleagues in the Treasury, Foreign Office or Department of the Environment to lessen my chances over the leadership of the party. However, let us put that on one side.

Many people look forward in eager anticipation to 23 July. However, I understand that that is also the day when the Social Security bill is likely to leave the other place. If so, the House seems to have little time in which to consider the three defeats that the Government have suffered so far in the other place. I do not know whether the Leader of the House intends to introduce a guillotine motion in order to steam-roller the House into reversing the decisions of the other place. I regret that he was not in the House this morning when I presented a petition on behalf of 1,700 of my constituents, who protested that their incomes would be cut if the Bill was enacted.

We should certainly have a statement next Thursday about the timing of our consideration of the Social Security Bill. The right hon. Gentleman has suffered considerable criticism as a result of his handling of the European Communities (Amendment) Bill. We are to consider that again at a late hour on Thursday. Could we not consider that Bill at a more convenient time, given the grotesque limitations that the right hon. Gentleman has placed on debating the important matters contained in it?

Mr. Biffen: I cannot in any sense help with a comment on the timing of the Social Security Bill in the other place. However, it is clearly a matter of great concern to the House, and it was raised during business questions yesterday. I have nothing more to add to what I then said. In a sense, the same applies to the debate on the European Communities (Amendment) Bill. The Leader of the Opposition made a similar request. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman would not expect me to give him a different answer from the one that I gave to the Leader of the Opposition.

St Andrews University

Motion made, and Question proposed, that this House do now adjourn. —[*Mr. Neubert.*]

3.9 pm

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton (Fife, Central): When the Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science — the hon. Member for Buckingham (Mr. Walden) — replied to a similar debate to this one initiated on by 18 June by my hon. Friend the Member for Dundee, West (Mr. Ross), he said that there was a

"possibility of extra cash for the universities for the 1987-88 and subsequent financial years" —[*Official Report*, 18 June 1986; Vol. 99, c. 1164.]

subject to certain qualifications about better management, especially financial management, the quality of teaching, and so on. The hon. Gentleman went on to use selective statistics to show how grateful Scotland should be for the wonderful advances made in Scottish education in the past seven or eight years. He cited the number of full-time students in higher education, but the debate was not about that. It was about universities. In fact, the number of university undergraduate entrants in Scotland remained virtually static between 1978 and 1985 at between 11,500 and 12,000.

I do not want to play the numbers game, because we have become used to the Government playing that game in health, housing and unemployment and few people believe a word they say. I prefer to use the more reliable test of what those at the sharp end of this operation think and say. On 14 June 1986 the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals of the Universities of the United Kingdom sent a letter to, I presume, all hon. Members. It concluded:

"The universities now face a major crisis. Because funding is too low, protecting excellence involves damaging much that is good."

The Committee offered a remedy — for 1986-87, £15 million should be provided from the contingency fund and for, 1987-88 to 1989-90, there should be

"Enough extra cash to provide genuine level funding and the modernisation of equipment. At least £100 million is needed just to stabilise the system at the depressed 1986-87 level."

Whether that cash becomes available depends on the result of the struggle now going on in the Cabinet on future levels of public expenditure. The smiling face of the new Secretary of State for Education and Science and his skill as a public relations man will be no substitute for that hard cash.

I come to the St. Andrews problem. As I listened on 25 June to the new Secretary of State, I began to wonder, as did many other hon. Members, what the large lobby of university teachers on 12 June was all about. University staff are not, the most militant of people. They are civilised, reasonable men and women. But on 12 June they came marching down to this place from all over the United Kingdom to protest about the crisis in our universities. They came to complain not only about their salary, which is a scandal in itself, but about the overall funding of universities, the cuts they have had to endure over the past few years and the consequential effects of such short-sighted policies.

At that lobby I met representatives from St. Andrews university. Although it is not in my constituency, it affects the whole of Fife, indeed, the whole of Scotland. It draws its students from all over Scotland, the United Kingdom and the world. Those representatives put a case to me which I promised to bring before the House.

Before I do that, I should like to say a word or two about the plight facing all Scottish universities lest it be presumed that St. Andrews has a particular grievance. It is a general grievance. All eight universities in Scotland are facing major cuts in the next financial year. Five universities, Aberdeen, Dundee, Edinburgh, St. Andrews and Stirling face cash cuts even on last year's figures. Although three of the universities have received cash increases, those increases are significantly less than the rate of inflation. Therefore, they are, in effect, real cuts.

The 1986-87 grants in Scotland are, on average, over 5 per cent. less than the minimum needed to maintain the position as it was in the previous year. If one looks at the whole period 1979-80 to 1985-86 the total of University Grants Committee grants to the Scottish universities has fallen in real terms from £191·9 million to £176·08 million, a cut of nearly £16 million. To put that another way, in order to restore the level of grant paid to the Scottish universities in 1979 the 1986-87 recurrent grant settlement would have have needed to be about £220 million, instead of which it is only £182 million. Despite the Minister's denial in an answer to me a few weeks ago and in the debate on 18 June, there is evidence of some regional discrimination in these matters. I shall try to spell out what that is.

I supplied the Minister with some information about St. Andrews which I hope has helped him to prepare a reply to the debate. As a result of the UGC's letters of 20 May and 27 May specifying funding allocation for 1986-87, St. Andrews will suffer a 0·4 per cent. cash cut, which is approximately a 5·4 per cent. cut in real university finance terms. That requires about £400,000 to be added to an already projected deficit for 1986-87.

The grant allocations were presumed to be based on an assessment of the quality of research being done in universities. Each university was examined department by department for the quality of its research. At St. Andrews 14 departments and sub-departments were graded as above average and five as below. However, it suffered a cut in its financial provisions. The reason for that treatment is apparently that the above average performance of St. Andrews was in the arts faculty, which attracts little external income for research. While the UGC and the Government tell the universities to concentrate on their strenghts they penalise universities such as St. Andrews because their recognised strengths are in the arts and there is an inability to attract external finance with such a discipline.

As the universities pointed out, research selectivity is not the main problem. The real problem is what is called the common unit of resource. The UGC has apparently made some calculations on the cost per student for each subject in each university. No university, and certainly not St. Andrews, seems to know how the calculations were made and whether they took account of the different teaching patterns in Scottish universities. It is significant that six of the eight universities in Scotland were told that for 1986-87 the implementation of the common unit of resource had operated to their financial disadvantage. It is important that the universities should know the full details of the criteria on which they are being judged. The UGC has apparently made no judgment of the quality of the teaching in our universities in arriving at its common

unit of resource. I hope that the Minister will agree that the quality of teaching is of no less importance than the quality of the research that is undertaken at our universities.

The overall impact of recent developments at St. Andrews since 1979-80 can be summed up shortly. Since that year there has been a 27 per cent. cut in real income. That has far-reaching effects both long-term and short-term, not least on the threat to jobs, careers and morale. There is also the diminution of opportunities for university education for the increasing number of youngsters with academic qualifications that are sufficient to qualify and entitle them to enjoy them.

In an area of higher than average unemployment, it is especially tragic that these savage cuts are endangering the community and tourist services that the university can offer. I shall give one of two examples. The Crawford arts centre promotes exhibitions, professional drama and concerts, children's activities and community education. It is funded jointly by the university, the Scottish Arts Council and local authorities. Its present annual turnover is £100,000. The university contributes £45,000, the Arts Council £25,000 and the local authorities £4,500. The exhibitions at the arts centre attract over 20,000 visitors annually, covering painting, architecture, photography and other crafts. The university's funding of salaries has been cut. One full-time post has already gone, and it is now planned to cease payment of the director's salary after 31 March next year. Unless external funding of the centre can be found, the centre will be closed.

The Government might take the view, "What does it matter that such a centre should be closed? It has no bearing on the country's economic prosperity and it can be disbanded."

The same argument might be advanced in response to my second example. The department of music was started in 1946 and it now has four full-time teaching staff, all of whom conduct choirs and orchestras and perform on instruments as well as teaching and engaging in research. The concerts of the university's musical society and the chapel choir are open to the public. The department promotes organ recitals on one of the finest organs in Scotland, I gather, and gives a series of concerts in the summer vacation. Apart from providing a full range of music courses, the staff gives extra-mural courses for the adult education department. Again, the Government might brush that aside as having no consequence in the economic battle in which we are now engaged.

The same argument might be applied to my third example, which is the archaeological museum. The museum has a rich collection of Roman and middle east antiquities as well as early Scottish items. It obtains its funds from the university and the local authorities. It is in danger of closing for the same reasons that I adduced earlier.

Another example is the university's botanical garden, which has been built up over the past 20 years into one of the country's great botanical gardens. It is of international renown. There, the effect of the cuts in the past six years has meant that a staff of over 17 is down to half that figure, and is likely to fall still further unless the gardens get more cash.

Overall, the picture is very depressing, to put it no higher. The recent UGC proposals must result in the decline in the number of home students and an increase in overseas students who pay fees, although the university is forced to extract those fees. At a time when the country and employers are calling out for graduates and well-qualified personnel, St. Andrews and other universities are turning away would-be students.

The Scottish universities and the whole educational system have a vital contribution to make to counteract the decline of Scotland's manufacturing industry by the provision of a highly qualified work force and by the stimulation of technological innovation in new industries. The cuts in the finances for teaching and research can only accelerate Scotland's economic decline. We can only hope that the Government will heed the warnings coming from all quarters. They cannot pretend that the evidence is not there. It comes not, from political parties and those with axes to grind, but from people from all walks of life who are urging the Government to invest in our future, which means investing in education and, in this case, our universities.

3.36 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. George Walden): The hon. Member for Fife, Central (Mr. Hamilton) set out his worries about university funding in general and his particular constituency concerns in his own inimitable way. As always, I am grateful. I receive a heavy postbag on higher education matters. Scottish university concerns take at least their fair share of that. We have now had three debates on higher education – including two on Scottish universities – in the last fortnight.

Let me start by restating the current position on access and on university funding. The Government have a very good record on access to higher education. The number of full-time home students is now 77,000 higher than it was in 1979. The proportion of 18 and 19-year-olds entering higher education has increased by more than an eighth and the number of mature entrants is also up by about 15 per cent. These increases contrast starkly with the falls in numbers and participation rates between 1975 and 1979 when the hon. Gentleman's party was in office. This encouraging national picture is fully reflected in Scotland, as those who were present will know from the figures that I quoted when replying two weeks ago to the debate initiated by the hon. Member for Dundee, West (Mr. Ross).

My sensibilities were deeply shocked by the sharp elitist distinction that the hon. Gentleman drew between universities and other aspects of education, such as polytechnics. I advise him to try that line on some of our better polytechnics. The Government's declared aim is to secure still further increases in higher education participation rates. We remain determined to press forward in that direction.

On university funding, matters rest at present with the statement made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, North-East (Sir K. Joseph) on 20 May, to which the hon. Gentleman referred. As announced, the Government are ready to increase financial provision for the universities, provided that they demonstrated real progress in implementing and building on the changes that are needed.

That is the background against which we have to examine the concerns that the hon. Member raised. I readily acknowledge that, like all universities, St. Andrews faces a difficult task in containing its expenditure within

[Mr. George Walden]

the funds available whilst sustaining quality and reshaping its provision in the light of developing national needs. I believe that, like others, it will be up to the task.

I say that with some little confidence because I had the pleasure of visiting Scotland's oldest university last March. It was a fairly whistle-stop tour, I am afraid – partly because of the diversity of the courses on offer—but I was impressed by what I saw. I also had some usefully frank and informative discussions with staff and students.

I want to look for a few moments now at the areas in which we have identified a need for improvement and at possible implications for St. Andrews. First, management. To a significant extent this must start at the top. I know that the principal of St. Andrews, Dr. Steven Watson, unfortunately died recently. I would like to pay tribute to him. He led the university successfully through a great deal of change over a period of 20 years. He was also an accomplished historian, and among other fields, Mr. Speaker, his researches focused on your distinguished office and on the contribution of some of your illustrious predecessors. It is no easy job being a vice-chancellor in today's world. Dr. Watson's work was well regarded and we wish his successor well.

Finally, on management, one issue which I cannot refrain from mentioning is tenure for academic staff. There can be no doubt that tenure in the form in which it is currently enjoyed by many academics is a major barrier to management flexibility and efficiency in the university system. The Government intend to press ahead, as soon as the parliamentary timetable allows, with legislation to limit the nature of tenure which can be granted in future. Therefore, I was very interested to hear of the strong attack by Mr. Stanley Adams, the new rector of St. Andrews, on the vested interest of tenure.

That brings me to the standards of teaching in universities, to which the hon. Gentleman referred. Scottish universities—because of their place within the education system in Scotland and because of their four-year degrees—have long had a reputation for being relatively more concerned about teaching than their counterparts south of the border. I am advised that that distinction is less true than it was, both because of increased recognition throughout the system of the importance of sustaining teaching quality—a levelling up, as it were, to the hon. Gentleman's standards—and because Scottish universities have been giving increasing attention to the need for high quality research.

I understand that the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals will shortly be publishing the final report of its working group, chaired by Professor Reynolds, which has been preparing advice and guidance on the means by which universities should monitor and maintain standards. All universities—English, Scottish and Welsh—will need to give priority to following up this work.

As hon. Members know, the UGC's recent grant allocations were not based, even in part, on an assessment of teaching quality in universities. The hon. Gentleman is right in that respect. I fully recognise that such assessments are very difficult, but I am hopeful that the UGC might be able to make some moves in that direction over the next few years. Judging from what the hon. Gentleman said, that should be a cause of some satisfaction both to him and to St. Andrews.

Let me turn now to selectivity in the funding of research. I regard this as of the utmost importance. This was reflected in the recent grant allocations and is generally accepted as necessary in order to provide more support for high quality research. It is also generally agreed that, on the whole, the UGC has done a good job. Not a single academic to whom I have talked about the question of selectivity has challenged the principle, although most of them challenge the result in this or that area. Many people will have the odd quibble. I have just said that nearly every academic to whom I have talked has the odd quibble, and it would be very surprising if that were not so. But without doubt there is no other body that could have tackled the job anywhere near as effectively as it has been tackled by the UGC, in very close consultation with some very distinguished people.

What the hon. Gentleman said about the number of sub-departments at St. Andrews with high research ratings was slightly misleading. I hope that he will not object to my putting it in that way. In fact, the University of St. Andrews emerged from the exercise with a broadly average rating. Six of its 13 main subject areas were assessed as average, three as above average and four as below average. In terms of individual subjects, research in psychology, art, history, classics and Russian was judged to be outstanding by international standards.

The key question now is the extent to which universities, including St. Andrews, pursue selectivity through their own internal arrangements—giving extra support to high quality work and taking a hard look at that which is below average. The UGC will be keeping all this under review over the next few years—refining its own procedures by experience and watching closely what individual universities do. It will be interesting to see how much changes.

In some, though by no means all, cases, lower quality work is a consequence of departments being small. I emphasise that I am not making a particular reference to St. Andrews. Where there are only one or two members of academic staff in a particular discipline it is that much harder to sustain high quality teaching and research cost-effectively. One solution which is appropriate in some cases is departmental rationalisation. St. Andrews, is, I know, already treading this road in co-operation with Dundee university. I hope that this can be actively pursued and that yet more universities will recognise the potential benefits from such changes.

Those are the directions in which Government policy is pointing. In none of them is a finger particularly pointed at St. Andrews or the Scottish universities generally. It is not our aim to disadvantage universities in Scotland; nor, despite the hon. Member's implications, has the UGC adopted grant allocation arrangements that are prejudicial to Scotland. The committee does not discriminate in any way between universities on grounds of their location. Standard considerations were applied to all universities. The UGC has circulated all universities with details of those, and will be spelling out the implications further in meetings with universities during the next few months.

None of that, however, means that the different pattern of provision in Scotland has gone unrecognised. The UGC's grants fully reflect the fact that most honours courses in Scotland last for four years. The hon. Member complained about funding, but, as a result of that,

universities north of the border receive roughly 30 per cent. more funding per honours graduate than do their English and Welsh counterparts.

So far I have spoken only about matters of direct concern to universities, and St. Andrews in particular. That is the extent of the specific responsibilities that my right hon. Friend and I hold.

The hon. Member also spoke, quite rightly, about the impact of the university on its local community. He drew particular attention to the university's importance as an employer locally and to its considerable influence on total spending power in the area. I acknowledge that, but it is true of quite a number of our universities which are sited in or near relatively small towns. Another aspect of a university's impact on its local community is also important. A key part of the Government's policy for higher education is to encourage greater links between academics and industry in their widest sense. These can provide significant support for universities and help industry gain more quickly from the fruits of research by facilitating technological transfer and making highly qualified consultancy services available. St. Andrews' involvement in the Glenrothes enterprise trust and its technology centre are good examples of that.

As the hon. Gentleman referred at some length to the general position of universities, I want to stress that what is now happening in higher education in general and in unversities in particular will strengthen those vital institutions for the future. Of that I have no doubt. In a speech the other evening, which the hon. Gentleman was lucky enough not to have read, I said that in private I have been assured by many university people that they well understood that many of the changes now taking place would strengthen the system for the future.

I understand that many of the reforms being introduced are painful for dons and difficult for those who manage universities, but they are absolutely vital in the longer term. Any Government who allow the not wholly efficient management of the university system to continue would be less responsible than they should be.

The Government aim to increase participation in higher education above the record levels already achieved. We are reviewing university funding levels in the light of improvements in that sector. St. Andrews and its locality should benefit from that as much as the remainder of the country.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-two minutes to Four o'clock.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 23 June 1986

WALES

General Certificate of Secondary Examination

Mr. John Morris asked the Secretary of State for Wales when all the necessary translations of general certificate examination syllabuses into Welsh will be complete; how many of the translation staff of the Welsh Office have been seconded for this purpose; when this was done; and what proportion of the work has now been done.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The assistance being provided by the Welsh Office relates to the translation of those subject syllabuses corresponding to the 10 training manuals already translated into Welsh. They number some 24 syllabuses. Work is in hand on all the syllabuses so far received from the WJEC. The aim is to complete the translations by the end of July so that they can be available to schools by the beginning of the next school year. One member of the Welsh Office translation unit is co-ordinating the work.

Visiting Teachers

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales what information he has as to how many teaching days per year have been provided by visiting teachers in each year from 1979-80 to 1985-86, inclusive, in Welsh secondary schools; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: I presume that the hon. Gentleman is referring to foreign teachers on exchange visits to this country. Information on this subject is not centrally collected.

Schools (Repairs)

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales what is the estimated total cost of outstanding urgent repairs to Welsh schools, at the latest date for which such information is available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: This information is not held centrally. Local education authorities are responsible for the maintenance of schools.

Schools (Remedial Staff)

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales what information he has as to how many remedial staff have been employed by Welsh local education authorities in each of the last seven school years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Information in the form requested in not centrally collected. That which is available relates only to peripatetic remedial teachers, figures for which are given in the table:

	Full-time	*Part-time*
1978-70	206	123
1979-80	186	119
1980-81	200	108
1981-82	208	78
1982-83	244	128
1983-84	221	110
1984-85	238	118

School Curricula

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales what information he has as to how many schools in Wales provided teaching in the following subjects from 1979-80 to 1985-86: Latin, German, needlework, geology, drama, music and religious education; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Information supplied by the Welsh Joint Education Committee indicates the following numbers of schools where the subjects were examined as GCE O-level subjects.

	Number of schools in Wales where subjects listed were examined in the summer of:					
	1980	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*
Latin	72	128	110	103	97	91
German	166	158	136	158	154	153
Needlework	187	177	167	167	169	176
Geology	128	126	117	122	118	107
Drama	—	51	67	72	74	83
Music	206	207	207	204	207	209
Religious Studies	—	15	17	21	24	26
Scripture	234	221	227	227	208	190

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many Welsh secondary and sixth form pupils sat examinations in *(a)* Latin, *(b)* German, *(c)* needlework, *(d)* geology, *(e)* drama, *(f)* music and *(g)* religious education at all levels, from 1979-80 to the latest date for which figures are available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The information, as supplied by the Welsh Joint Education Committee, is given in the table:

	Candidates in maintained schools (*)					
	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
A-Level						
Latin	78	84	76	74	62	54
German	245	235	237	226	211	212
Home Economics (clothing)	91	77	72	69	66	61
Geology	387	397	402	425	370	333
Drama	—	—	—	—	—	—
Music	263	325	286	269	279	280
Religious Studies (†)	529	567	586	557	563	563
O-Level						
Latin	893	853	765	688	612	581
German C(‡)	941	948	1,009	853	675	587
German O	1,072	1,054	870	939	979	885
Dress and Design	1,352	1,163	1,017	870	929	910
Geology	1,540	1,588	1,372	1,355	1,274	1,063
Drama	113	449	562	678	642	637
Music	1,440	1,461	1,517	1,376	1,439	1,455
Scripture	3,066	3,135	3,077	2,736	2,644	2,673
Religious Studies	385	445	521	737	655	748
CSE						
Latin	6	7	8	8	3	1
German	303	409	316	408	442	585
Needlework	1,903	1,892	1,864	1,802	1,777	1,757
Geology	497	652	479	524	508	532
Drama	597	547	560	663	733	848
Music	508	507	471	453	540	554
Scripture Knowledge	1,818	1,923	2,009	1,716	1,770	1,530
Religious Studies	1,005	1,026	1,030	1,056	1,336	1,470
Religious Education	61	97	83	141	152	165

* Candidates taking WJEC summer examinations. Figures exclude external candidates. Frigures for 1982 and onwards exclude candidates at one sixth form college.
† Includes scripture in 1980.
‡ Common syllabus examination

Education Services (HMI Report)

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales why Her Majesty's inspector's report on education services in Wales in 1984-85 was delayed.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply given to the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Mr. Thomas) on 9 June 1986, in column *11*.

ENVIRONMENT

Lead-free Petrol

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will be taking any further steps to encourage the introduction of unleaded petrol to the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Government are committed to the earliest practicable introduction of unleaded petrol in this country. Under the terms of directive 85/210/EEC, itself the result of a United Kingdom initiative, unleaded petrol should be generally available throughout the Community by 1 October 1989; and member states should take appropriate steps to ensure its balanced distribution and to encourage its use.

The need for additional provisions arises, first, from incompatibility of unleaded petrol with many of the engines in the present car fleet, as the use of unleaded petrol in cars designed for running on leaded petrol could cause severe mechanical damage to the engine; and, secondly, from the likelihood that unleaded petrol will be more expensive than leaded petrol to produce and distribute. Last November, the Department therefore consulted a wide range of interested bodies on ways to ensure that our target is met. Having considered the responses to our consultation exercise very carefully, I am now able to announce various measures to encourage the sale and use of unleaded petrol in the United Kingdom.

An important first step has already been taken.

My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced in his Budget statement that he would create a tax differential to offset the higher production costs of unleaded petrol, and that officials would discuss with the oil companies how this can best be achieved in time for next year's Budget.

It is important to ensure the availability of suitable cars as soon as possible. The Environment Council has been considering a draft EC directive on vehicle emissions, which sets out the dates from which member states may require new cars to be capable of running on unleaded petrol. At present it is subject to reserves by Denmark and Greece, which must be lifted before it can be adopted by the Council of Ministers. As soon as it has been adopted, we will implement the earliest dates set out in the directive; 1 October 1988 for new model cars over 2 litres; 1 October 1989 for all new model cars; and 1 October 1990 for all new registrations, unless a manufacturer can certify that major re-engineering would be involved.

We intend that there should be at least a minimal network of petrol stations offering unleaded petrol in 1987, building up to wide availability of the fuel by October 1989. I hope this can be achieved voluntarily by the industry, but the Government do not rule out taking measures to require the provision of unleaded petrol for garages above a particular size.

It will be particularly important for motorists to have full information on the new fuel, its availability, and its suitability for the car he or she drives. We will consult fully with interested bodies on a publicity campaign to be put in hand as unleaded petrol comes on to the market.

Finally, there is the particular question of the future of leaded 2-star petrol. Much of today's vehicle fleet that uses 2-star, can run equally well on unleaded petrol. Two-star leaded petrol will in any case eventually be displaced from many smaller forecourts as unleaded petrol is introduced. The Government will wish to consider the most appropriate timing for this.

We will make further announcements on details of these proposals as discussions develop. The broad framework, however, should outline for industry and the motorist the way forward we intend to take.

Council House Sales

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has received any recent representations about dealing with potential defects in title in right-to-buy sales; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: Representations have been received from my hon. Friend and from my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, West (Mr. Sackville). I refer my hon. Friend to my reply of 23 April at column *283*.

Housing Investment Programme

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many local authorities in the north-west have made representations seeking increases in housing investment programme allocations for the current financial year.

Sir George Young: Six authorities have made formal representations seeking increases.

Green Belt

Mr. Geraint Howells asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many acres of green belt land have been built on in the last two years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tracey: I regret that this information is not available centrally. Green belt land should not normally be built on because the long-standing policy is that inside a green belt approval should not be given, except in very special circumstances for purposes other than agriculture, sport, cemeteries, institutions standing in extensive grounds, or other uses appropriate to a rural area.

Mr. Murphy asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received regarding the preservation of the green belt between Welwyn Garden City and Hatfield in the light of the Haven Green leisure park and housing plan submitted to him by Welwyn Hatfield district council.

Mr. Tracey: Welwyn Hatfield district council has forwarded to the Department over 60 individual representations, together with two petitions, concerning a proposal for a leisure park at Haven Green and an application for residential development on an adjoining site. Many of these representations refer to the green belt between Welwyn Garden City and Hatfield. Two letters have been sent direct to the Department requesting that these two applications be called in for my right hon. Friend's decision. The proposed leisure park at Haven Green was not referred formally to the Department, and I understand that Welwyn Hatfield district council has now deemed itself planning permission for this development. The proposed residential development has been referred to my right hon. Friend as a substantial departure from the development plan. He is considering whether it should be called in for decision.

London Docklands

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the definition of the role and function of the community services liaison department of the London Docklands Development Corporation.

Sir George Young: LDDC's community liaison department co-ordinates links between the corporation and local community groups, both directly and through the area teams.

Nuclear Waste

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will introduce legislation to permit local authorities to commission and carry out surveys and research on their own behalf in order to assess and attempt to verify the findings of any investigation by NIREX into the suitability of sites in their area for the construction of nuclear waste repositories.

Mr. Waldegrave: Local authorities already have powers under the Town and Country Planning General Regulations 1976 to deem themselves planning permission for development which could include geological surveys, where this is necessary. I am not aware that legislation is required to enable local authorities to carry out research not involving development under planning legislation.

Housing (Cornwall)

Dr. Roger Thomas asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many council owned houses have been sold by each district council in Cornwall since 1980.

Sir George Young: The district councils in Cornwall have reported selling the following numbers of houses and flats between 1 April 1980 and 31 March 1986:

	Number
Caradon	631
Carrick	*725
Kerrier	631
North Cornwall	807
Penwith	570
Restormel	793
Isles of Scilly	*7

* Returns incomplete.

Dr. Roger Thomas asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to the number of residential units in each of the district council areas in Cornwall which are second houses or holiday homes, and as to what percentage they represent of the housing stock.

Sir George Young: The latest available information is the numbers of household spaces counted in the 1981

census as being second residences or holiday accommodation which were unoccupied on census night. The figures are derived from table 18 of the census 1981 county report for Cornwall.

Unoccupied second residences and holiday accommodation, April 1981

	Number	*Percentage of all household spaces*
Caradon	1,811	6·3
Carrick	1,669	5·1
Kerrier	1,362	4·0
North Cornwall	3,169	10·9
Penwith	1,953	7·8
Restormel	1,657	5·2
Isles of Scilly	156	15·7

Other second homes and holiday accommodation were counted among those household spaces occupied on census night by people who were not usual residents.

Dr. Roger Thomas asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many residential units have been bought from the private sector to enable them to be let to council tenants by each district council in Cornwall for each year since 1980.

Sir George Young: The district councils in Cornwall have reported acquiring the following numbers of dwellings in the financial years from 1980-81:

*Dwellings Acquired for Retention in Council Stock**

	1980-81	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86†*
Caradon	—	5	5	—	—	1
Carrick	—	—	2	—	—	n.a
Kerrier	—	1	4	1	2	—
North Cornwall	11	—	2	1	3	—
Penwith	—	—	—	—	—	1
Restormel	—	—	11	—	—	—
Isles of Scilly	—	—	—	5	—	‡ –

* Including any acquisitions in housing action areas, priority neighbourhoods and general improvement areas for resale to housing associations, before 1985-86. Excluding repurchases under the 1984 Housing Defects Act.
† Provisional
‡ April to September 1985
n.a. = not available

Dr. Roger Thomas asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many houses are owned by each district council in Cornwall.

Sir George Young: The latest information relates to 1 April 1985 and was provided in the council's housing investment programme returns. The figures are listed in column A11 of "HIP1 (1985) all items print" which is available in the Library.

Dr. Roger Thomas asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many residential units have been built by each district council in Cornwall for each year since 1980.

Sir George Young: The numbers of house building completions reported by each district council in Cornwall for the years 1980 to 1983 appear in issue 73 of "Local Housing Statistics" and for 1984 and 1985 in issue 77. Copies are available in the Library.

Homelessness

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the estimated net revenue expenditure on bed and breakfast accommodation for homeless households recorded by local authorities on his Department's RO4 forms for the financial years *(a)* 1982-83, *(b)* 1983-84, *(c)* 1984-85 and *(d)* 1985-86; and if he will give this information for England as a whole and for each local authority area.

Sir George Young: I will place the information available, shortly, in the House of Commons Library.

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish any estimates prepared by his Department of the potential effect on the number of homeless households currently placed by local authorities in bed and breakfast accommodation of a relaxation in his Department's controls on local authority acquisition of empty private sector properties.

Sir George Young: No such estimates have been prepared.

We look to local authorities to make the best possible use of their existing stock.

Highway Authorities

Mr. Warren asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what data he has available on failures by highway authorities to comply with section 27(2)*(d)* of the Countryside Act 1968; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: We have no recent information as to progress made by highway authorities in the signposting of public rights of way. Failure by an authority to comply with this statutory requirement is a matter for the courts.

Radioactivity (Cancer)

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for the Environment to what extent the United Kingdom's emergency reference levels for radioactivity are drawn from a basis of acceptable risk of cancer resulting from wholebody doses of radioactivity; and to what extent emergency reference levels for one radioisotope take account of other radioisotopes to which individuals may be simultaneously exposed.

Mr. Waldegrave: The United Kingdom's emergency reference levels for radioactivity, which are advisory for

Government, were issued by the National Radiological Protection Board in 1981. They are figures for dose received by whole body and individual organs or tissues from all radionuclides. They are based on balancing the level of risk from harmful effects of radiation with the social cost and risk of counter measures.

West Yorkshire Metropolitan County Council

Mr. Harrison asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what were the total capital assets of the West Yorkshire metropolitan county council on 31 March at the time of the abolition of that county council.

Mr. Tracey: Local authorities are not required to maintain a balance sheet recording their total capital assets and no such record exists for West Yorkshire county council.

Opencast Coalmining

Mr. Beith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what account he takes of the adequacy of liaison arrangements with the local community when deciding whether to approve applications for authorisation of opencast coalmining sites.

Mr. Tracey: Local liaison committees can provide a useful forum to deal with any matters arising in connection with mineral operations and provide an opportunity for views and information to be exchanged between the operator and those most closely affected; their establishment is to be encouraged. However, the setting up of a liaison committee and the terms under which it operates are essentially matters for local negotiation and agreement.

Urban Development Grants

Mr. Steen asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many urban development grants were made in each of the last three years; at what total cost; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: For each of the last three financial years, and for this financial year to date, offers of urban development grant made are as follows:

(£ million, rounded)

	Number of schemes	*UDG and other public expenditure*	*Private investment*	*Total*
1983-84	70	37	185	222
1984-85	56	23	91	114
1985-86	54	25	79	103
1986-87*	14	6	32	38
Totals	194	92	386	478

*To date.

These figures relate to offers of grant which have been accepted or which are on the table. Offers which were not taken up are excluded. The expenditure figures relate to total estimated costs; not all of the expenditure has yet been incurred.

Estates (Improvement)

Mr. Steen asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many estates have been improved under the priority estates projects in each of the last three years; at what cost; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: During the last three years the priority estates project has worked with local authorities to improve and localise management on 28 estates.

In 1983-84, three projects were under way; 17 began in 1984-85; and eight in 1985-86. Work with all but the original three projects is continuing. The direct costs of the priority estates project in these three years, including national advisory and promotional work drawing experience from the 28 estate schemes, was £530,000.

Departmental Contracts

Mr. Mates asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the contracts, with the subject of the assignment, awarded to management consultancy or accounting firms by his Department in 1985, with the name of the consultants concerned.

Mr. Ridley: I will provide the information as soon as our current survey of consultancy contracts let in the financial year 1985-86 is completed.

Palace Chambers Development

Mrs. Peacock asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what consideration he has given to the inclusion of a general store type of shop in the proposed Palace Chambers development.

Sir George Young: As I advised my hon. Friend the Member for Wells (Mr. Heathcoat-Amory), on 16 June, at column *405*, plans for the new Palace Chambers are at an early stage. It is intended to reprovide shops on the ground floor and I will give careful consideration to the suggestion that there should be a general store.

Parish Councils

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how long the outstanding recommendations of the Local Government Boundary Commissioners on where parish councils should be established have been with him awaiting a decision.

Mrs. Rumbold: Between one month and two years.

Leicester (Inner Area Partnership)

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to make a decision on Leicester's inner area partnership submission for 1986 to 1989.

Mrs. Rumbold: My decision on the Leicester inner area programme was conveyed to the city and county councils on 19 June.

Gipsy Sites

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list, by county, all the applications for gipsy sites in England which he has called in for his determination; if he will state in each case the date when he called in the applications; and whether in each case the proposed sites have or have not been the subject of a public inquiry.

Mr. Tracey: There have been two such applications called in during the present Parliament. They are:

(1) in Oxfordshire: application called in on 12 October 1983, and a public local inquiry held on 9 October 1984; and

(2) in Hampshire: application called in on 18 April 1986, and a public local inquiry arranged for 1 July 1986.

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Secretary of State for the Environment on what date he expects to make a decision on the proposal for a gipsy site at Hinksey Hill in Oxfordshire; and on what date he called in the proposal.

Mr. Tracey: My right hon. Friend hopes to issue his decision very soon. The Oxfordshire county council applied for planning permission for the gipsy site to the then Secretary of State on 15 August 1984, following a direction issued by him on 12 October 1983.

Homes Insulation

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will place in the Library of the House a copy of the research carried out by the Building Research Establishment into the standards of draught proofing for existing windows and doors; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: The work is continuing, and no final report has yet been prepared.

Crown Suppliers

Dr. McDonald asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he plans to provide the departmental trade union side with details of the report of the review team considering the future of the Crown Suppliers and of their recommendations; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: Copies of the review team's report, excluding only certain commercially sensitive material, were sent to the departmental trade union side last December. I will make a statement when we have fully considered all the factors which need to be taken into account when deciding on the future of the Crown Suppliers, including the views of the central unit on purchasing.

Water Rates (Yorkshire)

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions he has had with representatives at the Yorkshire water authority about the removal of payment charges from pensioners wishing to pay water rates by instalments; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: I have not discussed this with the authority. Detailed charging arrangements are a matter for individual water authorities acting within their powers and duties.

EMPLOYMENT

Home Workers

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Paymaster General what was the number of home workers by region and trade at the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Lang: The most recent national estimates of home workers are from the 1981 survey of home-based workers in England and Wales. Table 1 shows the number of home workers by region, distinguishing manufacturing home work from other white-collar and service sector work done at home. Table 2 shows the number of home workers in industry.

Table 1 National estimates: regional distribution of homeworkers, England and Wales 1981

Region	*Manufacturing homework*		*Other work at home*		*Total working at home (excluding childminders and family workers)*	
	Number	*Per cent.*	*Number*	*Per cent.*	*Number*	*Per cent.*
North	710	1	6,460	4	7,180	3
Yorkshire & Humberside	4,050	7	9,480	6	13,530	6
East Midlands	14,280	24	10,890	6	25,170	11
East Anglia	1,990	3	13,100	8	15,090	7
Greater London Council	5,630	10	31,880	19	37,510	16
South East (except GLC)	11,950	20	56,100	33	68,050	30
South West	8,360	14	13,610	8	21,970	10
West Midlands	5,830	10	10,380	6	16,200	7
North West	4,280	7	16,040	9	20,320	9
Wales	1,670	3	3,120	2	4,780	2
Total	58,750	100	171,050	100	229,790	100

TABLE 2 National estimates: industry distribution of homeworkers, England and Wales 1981

Industry 1980 SIC(R) Divisions	*All working at home (excluding childminders and family workers)*	
	Number	*per cent.*
0 Agriculture	370	*
1 Energy and water supply	390	*
2 Chemicals and minerals extraction and manufacture	2,220	1
3 Metal goods, engineering and vehicles	9,260	4
4 Other manufacturing	53,070	23
5 Construction	2,640	1
6 Distribution, hotel and catering, repairs	36,700	16
7 Transport and communication	2,770	1
8 Insurance, financial and business services	50,730	22
9 Other services (professional and scientific, public administration, etc.)	69,890	30
Inadequately described	1,760	1
TOTAL ALL INDUSTRIES	229,790	100

Employment Measures

Mr. Patrick Thompson asked the Paymaster General if he will make a statement on the progress of special employment measures for young people.

Mr. Trippier: Progress in setting up two-year YTS, the Government's main training measure for young people, has been excellent. The new programme began in April and we have already been offered all the places that will be required. We have also introduced the new workers scheme to follow on from YTS to help many more young people gain a foothold on the employment ladder.

Job Vacancies

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Paymaster General what are the total numbers of unfilled job vacancies currently recorded at *(a)* all jobcentres and *(b)* the Leicester jobcentre; of those vacancies, how many have remained unfilled for (i) six months and (ii) 12 months; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: On 2 May 1986 there were 178,801 unfilled vacancies at jobcentres in Great Britain, and 1,061 unfilled vacancies at the Leicester jobcentre. Analysis of the length of time vacancies remain unfilled is not available in the form requested.

Highfields Task Force

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Paymaster General if the Highfields task force is receiving the full co-operation of Leicester city council; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Enterprise Allowance Scheme

Mr. Rooker asked the Paymaster General (1) if he will arrange to give more specific advice to applicants for the enterprise allowance scheme at the information session about the need to apply for help whilst still in receipt of social security benefits;

(2) how many applicants applied for help under the enterprise allowance scheme after operation of their business commenced in the last period for which figures are available.

Mr. Trippier: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Pharmaceutical Industry

Mr. Hoyle asked the Paymaster General what information he has about the trend in employment in the pharmaceutical industry over the last five years and about how this compares with the trend in employment in manufacturing industry over the same period.

Mr. Lang: The table shows the trends in employment in the pharmaceutical industry, as defined by activity heading 2570 of the Standard Industrial Classification 1980, and in manufacturing industries.

Employees in Employment
Great Britain

thousand

	Pharmaceutical Industry	*All Manufacturing Industry*
March 1982	81·3	5,869·6
March 1983	80·2	5,540·5
March 1984	81·0	5,427·5
March 1985	81·3	5,421·1
March 1986	82·4	5,370·1

Circular 109/252 (School Leavers)

Mr. Frank Field asked the Paymaster General (1) when the circular 109/252 was issued; when it was withdrawn; and how many changes in the rules relating to claims from school leavers occurred betwen those two dates;

(2) if he will investigate the circumstances in which a telex was sent to local unemployment benefit offices referring to circular 109/252 which was three years old and which contained incorrect information about entitlement to benefits; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what steps he is taking to ensure that those young people who have been discouraged from claiming supplementary benefit by staff in local unemployment benefit offices on the basis of the erroneous information contained in circular 109/252 are now encouraged to make a claim.

Mr. Lang: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Youth Training Schemes

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Paymaster General why his Department has stopped publishing figures relating to numbers employed on YTS schemes;

(2) how many young people were employed on or about to leave YTS schemes in the United Kingdom in May.

Mr. Trippier: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Work Permit (Polish National)

Mr. Spencer asked the Paymaster General what response he has sent to the chief executive of Leicester city council regarding his request for a six-week work permit

for a Polish national permanently resident in Strasbourg, who wishes to join a training attachment for Strasbourg secretaries organised by the Leicester/Strasbourg twinning association, which his Department is dealing with under reference GW 8608681.

Mr. Lang: An official in my Department's overseas labour section telephoned the chief executive on 10 June to explain that the application could not be approved because it did not satisfy the requirements of the work permit scheme. A letter confirming in detail the reasons for this decision will be sent shortly.

Occupational Medicine and Hygiene Laboratories (Sheffield)

Mr. Dobson asked the Paymaster General what is the estimated cost of relocating in Sheffield the occupational medicine and hygiene laboratories of the Health and Safety Executive; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Prescott asked the Paymaster General why his Department has stopped publishing the details of the numbers of people on temporary employment measures and the YTS with the unemployment and vacancy figures; and if he will arrange for these figures to be made available on a monthly basis together with their effect on the register.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The numbers of people assisted by employment measures and YTS are now published regularly in the *Employment Gazette*.

It is difficult to calculate precisely the effect on the unemployment count of employment measures; their estimated average effectiveness was set out in table 3.7.13 of the public expenditure White Paper, Cmnd. 9702. YTS is a permanent training scheme.

Although estimates of the overall effect on unemployment of the employment measures are available, it is not appropriate to present these routinely as a reliable monthly indicator because of the uncertain assumptions involved in their calculation. It is also not necessary to present them since they represent only one detail of the overall labour market.

Bakeries (Departmental Visits)

Ms. Richardson asked the Paymaster General when was the last time that *(a)* he and *(b)* officials of his Department paid an official visit to a bakery.

Mr. Lang: Neither I nor my right hon. and learned Friend has undertaken an official visit to a bakery.

The information requested could be obtained only at disproportionate cost given the large number of officials of the Department who visit premises, including bakeries, in connection with their statutory function.

Technical and Vocational Initiative (Batley and Spen)

Mrs. Peacock asked the Paymaster General what technical and vocational initiative proposals he has approved in the Batley and Spen constituency.

Mr. Trippier: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Baking Industry

Ms. Richardson asked the Paymaster General how many representations for repeal of the Baking Industry (Hours of Work) Act in the past three years he has received from baking employers.

Mr. Lang: During recent consultations with employers' associations on the baking industry, the Federation of Bakers, National Association of Master Bakers, Confectioners and Caterers, Cake and Biscuit Alliance and the Co-operative Employers' Association all favoured repeal.

CIVIL SERVICE

Occupational Health Care

Mr. Jessel asked the Minister for the Civil Service what arrangements it is proposed should be made to improve the occupational health care of civil servants; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: An efficiency scrutiny was carried out in 1985 on the occupational health and hygiene provision throughout the Civil Service. The report recommended the merging of existing services to create an integrated and more efficient and effective organisation. This recommendation has been accepted, and an occupational health service will be formed with effect from 23 June 1986 by the amalgamation of the Civil Service Medical Advisory Service of the Cabinet Office (Management and Personnel Office) and the Civilian Medical Services Directorate of the Ministry of Defence. It will be located within the Cabinet Office (MPO). My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has approved this transfer of responsibilities from the Ministry of Defence to the Management and Personnel Office.

The creation of the occupational health service will facilitate a fundamental change from a therapeutic medical and nursing service to one centred on the work place and essentially preventive in character. It will be well placed to take advantage of developments in recent years of scientific technique for the identification and measurement of environmental hazards, and of the substantial contribution which scientists and nurses trained in occupational health are able to make.

There will be substantial economies of scale through the integration of the present fragmented services, with long-term benefits for management from reductions in the duplication of facilities provided elsewhere and by promoting greater efficiency.

Copies of the scrutiny report and of the proposed charter for the occupational health service have been placed in the Library of the House.

SECOND ESTATES COMMISSIONER

Broken Rites

Mr. Frank Field asked the Second Estates Commissioner what financial help the Church Commissioners have been able to offer Broken Rites, the self-support group of deserted ex-wives of clergy.

Sir William van Straubenzee: None to this organisation, but the Commissioners have discussed how the House of Bishops can be helped in its exercise of pastoral care in such cases.

See House, London

Mr. Frank Field asked the Second Estates Commissioner when plans for building a new See house for the London Diocese were received; and what sum from the Commissioners is asked towards the project.

Sir William van Straubenzee: I shall write to the hon. Member.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Liverpool Fans (Extradition Notices)

Mr. Alton asked the Attorney-General when the extradition notices will be served upon the Liverpool football club supporters who are alleged to have been involved in the disorders at the Heysel stadium in May 1985.

The Solicitor-General: I understand from my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary that no such application for extradition has been received from the Belgian Government, although it has indicated an intention to apply. As and when such application is received he will consider making an order under section 7 of the Extradition Act 1870.

Snaresbrook Crown Court

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Attorney-General what was the percentage acquittal rate, in cases where defendants plead not guilty, in the last four six-month periods for which figures are available, at Snaresbrook Crown court.

The Solicitor-General: The percentage of defendants acquitted after pleading not guilty to all counts at Snaresbrook Crown court in the last four six-monthly periods is as follows:

	per cent.
April 1984 to September 1984	51·9
October 1984 to March 1985	58·7
April 1985 to September 1985	50·3
October 1985 to March 1986	48·6

Court Documents (European Court Decision)

Mr. John Morris asked the Attorney-General what action he proposes to take to give effect in United Kingdom law to the judgment of the European Court in the case involving the hon. Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman).

The Attorney-General: There is no judgment of the European Court of Human Rights in respect of the application brought by the honourable Member for Peckham. A friendly settlement, within the meaning of article 28(b) of the European Convention on Human Rights, has been reached between the parties, and the European Commission of Human Rights has recently adopted a report recording this solution. The Government are now considering how best to carry into effect the undertaking to seek to change the law given in those proceedings.

SCOTLAND

Oil Industry

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people were employed by the oil industry in Scotland in *(a)* offshore work and *(b)* onshore and downstream work at the latest date for which information is available and in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Rifkind: It is not possible to provide a breakdown of employment in the oil industry into offshore and onshore employment. The classification available from census of employment results is as follows:

(a) The extraction of mineral oil and natural gas in Scotland:

	Number
September 1981	17,500
June 1978	10,200
June 1977	5,900

(b) Mineral oil processing in Scotland:

	Number
September 1981	3,400
June 1978	2,400
June 1977	2,500

Information is not available for the intervening years, nor as yet from the 1984 census of employment.

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the average weekly wage in *(a)* Scotland and *(b)* the North sea oil industry at the latest date for which information is available; and what is the average weekly wage in Scotland not including the earnings of those employed in the oil industry.

Mr. Rifkind: In April 1985, the average gross weekly earnings of full-time male employees on adult rates in Scotland, whose pay was not affected by absence, was *(a)* £189·7 in all industries; *(b)* £329·8 in the extraction of mineral oil and natural gas (Activity heading 1300); and *(c)* £186·5 in industries excluding those in Activity heading 1300. These figures are derived from the new earnings survey, and are consequently subject to sampling error.

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people are employed in the oil rig and module production yards in Scotland; and if he will give the corresponding figure in each of the last five years.

Mr. Rifkind: The last available estimate of employment in oil rig and module production yards in Scotland over the last five years is as follows:

Year	*Employment*
June 1981	8,036
June 1982	9,392
June 1983	8,425
June 1984	6,684
June 1985	4,941

Source: Manpower Services Commission.

Oil Production

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what has been the average quarterly output of the North sea oil fields in barrels per day in each of the last eight quarters for which records are available.

Mr. Rifkind: The average quarterly output of the North seal oilfields in barrels per day is estimated to have been as follows:

Thousand of barrels per day average rate per quarter

	Daily average
1984	
Q2	2,414·5
Q3	2,391·7
Q4	2,601·3
1985	
Q1	2,638·7
Q2	2,439·8
Q3	2,384·8
Q4	2,573·7
1986	
Q1	2,666·4

Sites of Special Scientific Interest

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the largest 100 sites of special scientific interest located within Scotland, in each case giving the area covered in square miles and the area in which it is located.

Mr. Ancram: The Nature Conservancy Council has provided the following information. Areas are given in hectares.

Site name	*Local Authority District*	*Local Authority Region*	*Site area (hectares)*	*Date of re-notification*
Cairngorms	Kincardine and Deeside	Grampian	25,948·5	—
Affric Cannich Hills	Inverness	Highland	17,073·2	27 January 1984
Parallel Roads of Lochaber	Lochaber	Highland	16,664·0	—
Beinn Dearg	Ross and Cromarty	Highland	13,715·0	10 July 1984
Foinaven and Meall Horn	Sutherland	Highland	13,307·0	—
North Harris	Western Isles	Western Isles	12,920·6	12 September 1984
Eastern Cairngorms	Kincardine and Deeside	Grampian	12,141·0	—
Ben Klibreck	Sutherland	Highland	11,182·0	—
Cuillins	Skye and Lochalsh	Highland	10,915·8	20 August 1985
Inverpolly	Ross and Cromarty	Highland	10,857·0	—
Monadhliath	Badenoch and Strathspey	Highland	10,696·3	—
Rhum	Lochaber	Highland	10,684·0	—
Rannoch Moor	Perth and Kinross	Tayside	10,232·0	19 April 1985
Arran Northern Mountains	Cunninghame	Strathclyde	10,198·4	—
Drumochter Hills	Perth and Kinross	Tayside	9,690·0	31 August 1985
Fannich Hills	Ross and Cromarty	Highland	9,546·9	—
Cromarty Firth	Ross and Cromarty	Highland	8,523·9	
Ben More Assynt and Breabag	Sutherland	Highland	8,401·0	
Moorfoot Hills	Tweeddale	Borders	8,125·0	—
Beinn A Ghlo	Perth and Kinross	Tayside	7,933·0	15 December 1983
Merrick Kells	Merrick	Dumfries and Galloway	7,928·8	—
Langholm—Newcastleton Hills	Roxburgh	Borders	7,679·0	4 July 1985
Creag Meagaidh	Badenoch and Strathspey	Highland	6,986·7	12 July 1983
Ben Nevis	Lochaber	Highland	6,981·0	
Letterewe Forest	Ross and Cromarty	Highland	6,974·2	—
Ben Lawers	Perth and Kinross	Tayside	5,943·2	23 August 1985
Tweedsmuir Hills	Tweeddale	Borders	5,544·0	—
Ben Wyvis	Ross and Cromarty	Highland	5,471·9	16 May 1985
Caerlaverock	Nithsdale	Dumfries and Galloway	5,469·1	—
Monar Forest	Ross and Cromarty	Highland	5,420·0	5 March 1984
Inner Tay Estuarty	Perth and Kinross	Tayside	5,400·0	23 August 1985
North Hoy	Orkney	Orkney	5,346·1	—
Southern Parphe	Sutherland	Highland	5,311·7	—
An Teallach	Ross and Cromarty	Highland	5,239·7	3 May 1984
Garabal Hill	Argyll	Strathclyde	5,180·0	—
Caenlochan	Angus	Tayside	5,043·4	29 November 1984
Culbin Sands, Forest and Findhorn Bay	Moray	Grampian	4,975·8	14 February 1984
Beinn Eighe	Ross and Cromarty	Highland	4,758·0	26 February 1985
Cree Estuarty	Merrick	Dumfries and Galloway	4,739·3	—
Ben Loyal	Sutherland	Highland	4,431·0	25 February 1985
Glen Muick and Lochnagar	Kincardine	Grampian	4,306·8	5 January 1984
Beinn Bhan	Ross and Cromarty	Highland	4,235·0	3 May 1984
Knockfin Heights	Caithness	Highland	4,188·3	19 September 1984
Glen Tanar	Kincardine	Grampian	4,185·0	14 February 1984
Ardnamurchan	Lochaber	Highland	4,135·0	—
Carn Nan Tri Tighearnan	Inverness	Highland	4,106·0	25 November 1983
Ben Heasgarnich	Perth and Kinross	Tayside	4,064·0	19 April 1985
Glen Strathfarrar (including NNR)	Inverness	Highland	4,030·6	12 April 1984
Cape Wrath-Durness	Sutherland	Highland	3,880·0	—
Torridon Forest	Ross and Cromarty	Highland	3,773·8	—
Ronas Hill-North Roe	Shetland	Shetland	3,743·5	—

Site name	*Local Authority District*	*Local Authority Region*	*Site area (hectares)*	*Date of re-notification*
Loch An Duin	Western Isles	Western Isles	3,606·0	16 August 1985
Dornach Firth	Ross and Cromarty	Highland	3,577·4	31 August 1985
Cairnsmore of Fleet	Merrick	Dumfries and Galloway	3,545·2	—
Morven and Scaraben	Caithness	Highland	3,379·5	29 February 1984
Ardmeanach	Argyll	Strathclyde	3,257·0	28 February 1986
Ben Griams	Sutherland	Highland	3,206·3	13 July 1984
Gruinart Flats	Argyll	Strathclyde	3,170·0	24 November 1983
Loch Morar	Lochaber	Highland	3,032·0	—
Meall Na Samnha	Stirling	Central	2,959·8	21 December 1984
Ben Hope	Sutherland	Highland	2,899·6	—
Bidean Nam Bian and Meall Mhor	Lochaber	Highland	2,890·0	—
Blar Nam Faoileag	Caithness	Highland	2,874·9	23 November 1984
Morrich More	Ross and Cromarty	Highland	2,862·8	—
White Coomb and Loch of Skene	Annandale and Eskdale	Dumfries and Galloway	2,781·5	—
Ben Hutig	Sutherland	Highland	2,752·2	—
Stob Binnein and Ben More	Stirling	Central	2,671·0	—
West Mainland Moorlands	Orkney	Orkney	2,523·0	—
Tinto Hills	Lanark	Strathclyde	2,455·7	—
Torrs Warren—Luce Sands	Merrick	Dumfries and Galloway	2,409·0	23 August 1985
Loch Shiel	Lochaber	Highland	2,404·0	—
Raasay	Skye and Lochalsh	Highland	2,323·0	—
Laughenghie & Airie Hills	Stewartry	Dumfries and Galloway	2,308·5	28 November 1985
Glen Affric	Inverness	Highland	2,229·1	12 April 1984
Ladder Hills	Gordon	Grampian	2,096·3	—
Central Mull Complex	Argyll	Strathclyde	2,068·0	—
Northern Corries, Cairngorms	Badenoch and Strathspey	Highland	2,036·6	13 July 1984
Black Wood of Rannoch	Perth and Kinross	Tayside	1,946·6	16 December 1985
Lochs of Harray and Stenness	Orkney	Orkney	1,930·2	15 July 1985
Carn Gorm and Meall Garbh	Perth and Kinross	Tayside	1,930·0	31 October 1983
Strath	Skye and Lochalsh	Highland	1,920·0	—
Ben Vrackie	Perth and Kinross	Tayside	1,891·0	15 December 1983
Hill of Towanreef	Gordon	Grampian	1,828·0	11 October 1983
Coire Bhachdaidh	Perth and Kinross	Tayside	1,743·0	15 December 1983
Tulach Hill	Perth and Kinross	Tayside	1,704·0	12 June 1985
Ben Hiant & Ardnamurchan Coast	Lochaber	Highland	1,703·0	—
Strollamus	Skyde and Lochalsh	Highland	1,699·7	—
Beinn Iadain and Beinn Na H'uamha	Lochaber	Highland	1,693·0	—
Ben Chonzie	Perth and Kinross	Tayside	1,677·0	15 December 1983
Loch Druidibeg	Western Isles	Western Isles	1,677·0	—
North Fetlar	Shetland	Shetland	1,674·4	18 March 1986
Loch Leven	Perth and Kinross	Tayside	1,612·6	12 June 1985
Ardmore, Kildalton & Callumkill Woodlands	Argyll	Strathclyde	1,589·4	28 November 1985
Glen Callater	Kincardine and Deeside	Grampian	1,576·6	13 December 1984
Southerness Coast	Nithsdale	Dumfries and Galloway	1,526·5	—
Beauly Firth	Inverness	Highland	1,505·1	—
Eriboll	Sutherland	Highland	1,497·0	—
Canna	Lochaber	Highland	1,469·0	—
Baleshare & Kirkibost	Western Isles	Western Isles	1,465·7	26 February 1985
Meall Ghaordie	Stirling	Central	1,460·0	15 December 1983

Forestry

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the effectiveness of the various broadleaved assistance schemes in reversing the decline of deciduous woodlands.

Mr. John MacKay [*pursuant to his reply*, 20 June 1986, c. *670*]: The Forestry Commission introduced a broadleaved woodland grant scheme on 1 October 1985 which offers significantly higher rates of grants for the use of broadleaved species on their own. This scheme has had an encouraging start, with over 1,800 applicationss being received in the first six months covering nearly 11,400 hectares of existing broadleaved woodland and land proposed for planting with broadleaves.

In the year ended 31 March 1986, the Forestry Commission grant-aided some 850 hectares of new broadleaved planting under its various schemes, including 46 hectares under the broadleaved woodland grant scheme: this represented a total increase in new broadleaved planting of some 42 per cent. over the previous year. This figure is expected to be significantly higher in succeeding years as planting under the broadleaved woodland grant scheme gets into its stride.

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish in the *Official Report* Her Majesty's Government's conservation and landscape strategy in relation to forestry and woodlands.

Mr. John MacKay [*pursuant to his reply*, 20 June 1986, c. *670*]: Landscape and conservation policies and strategies for forestry and woodlands have been drawn up by the Forestry Commission and published in the following papers: Policy and Procedure Paper No. 3 — The

Forestry Commission and Landscape Design; Policy and Procedure Paper No. 4 The Forestry Commission and Conservation.

The Government's policy for broadleaved woodlands was set out in the statement made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Ayr (Mr. Younger) on 24 July 1985, in columns 557 to 561 and further information has been given in the following Forestry Commission publications: Policy and Procedure Paper No. 5 The Policy for Broadleaved Woodlands; Guidelines for the Management of Broadleaved Woodlands. Copies of all these publications are available in the Library of the House.

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he has any plans to meet the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities to discuss alternative methods in controlling forestry planting.

Mr. John MacKay [*pursuant to his reply*, 20 June 1986, c. *670*]: My right hon. and learned Friend has no plans to meet the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities on this subject.

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will make an integrated approach to agriculture and forestry in the uplands and lowlands of the United Kingdom.

Mr. John MacKay [*pursuant to his reply*, 20 June 1986, c. *670*]: An integrated approach to agriculture and forestry developments is sought through the consultations which take place between the Forestry Commission and the Agriculture Departments over applications for grant aid for afforestation proposals. This continues to be our policy.

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will take steps to require private forestry companies to include recreational provision in any large scale planting scheme which benefits from forestry planting grants.

Mr. John MacKay [*pursuant to his reply*, 20 June 1986, c. *670*]: Applicants for grant under the Forestry Commission's forestry grant scheme and broadleaved woodland grant scheme are already required to accept as an objective that they should provide such opportunities for recreation, including provision for public access, as may be appropriate. Applicants are also required to accept as a specific condition of these schemes that they will enter into discussions, if requested by the local authority, with a view where appropriate to negotiating an agreement for public access; this condition does not, however, bind the applicant to entering into any such agreement.

DEFENCE

MOD Police (Accommodation)

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Defence when numbers 42 and 85 Amplethorp road SE2 were vacated by the Ministry of Defence police; and when he expects them to be re-occupied.

Mr. Lee: Since Number 85 Amplethorp road is occupied it is assumed that the hon. Member intended to refer to Numbers 42 and 93 Amplethorp road, both of which are empty.

These two houses have been vacant for approximately 18 months and arrangements are being made for their return to the London borough of Greenwich, from which they have been on loan to the Ministry of Defence.

Household Division (Recruitment)

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will direct that the traditional recruiting areas of the Household Division be extended to include all areas where there is a large ethnic minority population.

Mr. Freeman: Between them, the regiments forming the Household Division cover the whole of Great Britain and Ireland.

NATO (Recruitment Policies)

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will take steps to seek to establish a North Atlantic Treaty Organisation goal of standardisation of recruitment policies and procedures in relation to equal opportunities and positive discrimination in favour of ethnic minorities.

Mr. Freeman: These are matters for decision by individual member states. Her Majesty's Forces are equal opportunity employers under the terms of the Race Relations Act 1976 and recruitment and promotion are on merit alone. Discrimination in selection to achieve racial balance is not allowed under that Act.

RFA Argus (Weapons System)

Mr. Speed asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he is satisfied with the adequacy of the close-in weapon system that is to be provided for the helicopter support ship Argus now being converted at Harland and Wolff.

Mr. Lee: RFA Argus will be fitted to receive twin 30mm and 20mm mountings. However, the mountings themselves will not be fitted except for exercises and in times of emergency. Such "fit to receive" facilities are quite adequate for this ship.

Petty Officer John Black

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether any of his Department's employees including members of Her Majesty's forces or any person acting on their behalf entered the apartment in an official capacity in Sabinillas, Spain, of that late Petty Officer John Black, Royal Navy, between 24 and 27 December 1983.

Mr. Freeman: No. My Department was not aware of Petty Officer Black's death until after that period.

Royal Ordnance (Privatisation)

Mr. Trotter asked the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the comparative implications for the export potential for tanks and other armoured vehicles of *(a)* selling the Royal Ordnance factories as a single unified company and of *(b)* selling the Leeds and Nottingham Royal Ordnance factories separately to Vickers plc.

Mr. Lee: The means of achieving the privatisation of Royal Ordnance plc is being considered further following the recent decision not to proceed with a flotation of the whole company this summer.

Mr. Trotter asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make it his policy to sell the Leeds and Nottingham Royal Ordnance factories separately to Vickers plc; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence told the House on 17 June, it remains our intention to privatise Royal Ordnance and we are giving further consideration to the means of achieving this objective.

Mr. Fatchett asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the direct and indirect costs to his Department of the work involved in arranging for the privatisation of the Royal Ordnance plc.

Mr. Lee: The Comptroller and Auditor General gave details of the Department's costs for the work involved in the incorporation of Royal Ordnance plc in his report on that exercise (H.C. 343). The preliminary estimate for the costs incurred since then for professional advisers on privatisation is about £1 million. In addition, there are, of course, MOD staff costs, but it is not possible readily to quantify these.

Military Units, Woolwich

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list all the military units housed at the Royal arsenal, Woolwich.

Mr. Freeman: The following units of the Ministry of Defence are located at the Royal arsenal, Woolwich:

Army Cataloguing Authority
Directorate General Defence Quality Assurance
Naval Publications Store
Air Publications and Forms Store
RAF Movement Unit (London)
RAF Signals Unit
Ministry of Defence Police

Trident

Mr. Soames asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many jobs will be dependent on the Trident project programme in 1988.

Mr. Lee: I shall answer shortly.

SP70 Howitzer

Mr. Soames asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what are the technical problems delaying the SP70 howitzer's entry into service; and when he expects them to be overcome;

(2) if he will list the precise dates of the concept stage, of the feasibility study stage, of the project definition stage, and of the full development stage of the SP70 155 mm howitzer; and if he will list the specific reasons for the delay at each stage.

Mr. Lee: I shall answer shortly.

VC10 Aircraft

Mr. Soames asked the Secretary of State for Defence when he intends to convert further VC10 aircraft to tankers; and what is the reason for the delay.

Mr. Lee: I shall answer shortly.

Tucano Basic Trainer

Mr. Soames asked the Secretary of State for Defence how long is the delay on the Tucano basic trainer programme; and what is the reason for it.

Mr. Lee: I shall answer shortly.

Equipment Budget

Mr. Soames asked the Secretary of State for Defence what cuts he will be making in the equipment budget in 1987-88 and 1988-89.

Mr. Lee: I shall answer shortly.

Tigerfish HWT Torpedo

Mr. Soames asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the precise dates of the concept stage, of the feasibility study stage, of the project definition stage and of the full development stage of the Tigerfish HWT torpedo; and if he will list the specific reasons for the delays at each stage.

Mr. Lee: I shall answer shortly.

Torpedo Programme

Mr. Soames asked the Secretary of State for Defence what measures he has introduced into the torpedo programme to increase competition.

Mr. Lee: I shall answer shortly.

Research Contracts

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether his Department has awarded any classified research contracts to universities or other educational establishments.

Mr. Lee: I shall answer shortly.

Northern Ireland (Security Forces)

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the numbers of soldiers killed in Northern Ireland by regiment in each year since 1968.

Mr. Freeman: I will answer shortly.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the numbers of soldiers wounded in Northern Ireland by regiment in each year since 1968.

Mr. Freeman: Between August 1969, when troops were deployed on duties in support of the civil power, and 19 June 1986, 4,099 soldiers were wounded. Information by regiment is not readily available and could be provided only with disproportionate cost.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what proportion of soldiers in Northern Ireland are of West Indian, African, Asian or other minority groups in the United Kingdom;

(2) what proportion of soldiers killed in Northern Ireland were of West Indian, African, Asian or other ethnic minority groups annually since 1969;

(3) what proportion of soldiers wounded in Northern Ireland are of West Indian, Indian, African, Asian and other ethnic minority groups.

Mr. Freeman: No records are maintained of the ethnic origins of members of the armed forces.

Procurement Executive

Mr. Soames asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) how many people work for the Procurement Executive; how many are civilians; and how many have service personnel;

(2) if he is satisfied with the operation of the Procurement Executive management board;

(3) who are the members of the Procurement Executive management board;

(4) how many secondments there have been both inwards and outwards in 1985-86 from the Procurement Executive.

Mr. Lee: I shall answer shortly.

Equipment Programmes

Mr. Soames asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list all the equipment programmes in which he is experiencing management or contractual difficulties; and if he will specify what precise steps he is taking to overcome them.

Mr. Lee: I shall answer shortly.

Military Education Committees

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many military education committees are in existence; and where are their functions.

Mr. Freeman: "Military education committee" is the term used to describe the committee which supervises UOTC training at a university. There are 19 of these committees composed of senior members of academic staff and the commanding officers of service units connected with the university. The duties of the committees are:

To promote defence studies.

To supervise UOTC or other Service units at the University.

To make recommentations for the appointments of Honorary Colonels and Commanding Officers.

To request the appointment of regular training Majors.

To liaise with the Services on matters affecting the UOTC.

To liaise with COMEC (the co-ordinating committee for military education committees).

RAF (Equipment)

Mr. Soames asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what are the operational and financial implications for the RAF of the sale of Tornados to Oman and Saudi Arabia, and the diverting of these aircraft from the RAF re-equipment programme;

(2) if he will make a statement on what future equipment orders he is currently considering for the Royal Air Force.

Mr. Lee: I shall answer shortly.

Lightning Fighter Aircraft

Mr. Soames asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the timing, extent and cost of the life extension programme of the Lightning fighter aircraft.

Mr. Lee: I shall answer shortly.

Communication Systems

Mr. Soames asked the Secretary of State for Defence what will be the cost of the upgrading of Royal Naval and Royal Air Force communication systems, including high frequency, low frequency and extra low frequency.

Mr. Lee: I shall answer shortly.

Royal Navy (Equipment)

Mr. Soames asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on what future equipment orders he is currently considering for the Royal Navy.

Mr. Lee: I shall answer shortly.

Army (Equipment)

Mr. Soames asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on what future equipment orders for the Army he is at present considering.

Mr. Lee: I shall answer shortly.

Royal Yacht Britannia

Miss Fookes asked the Secretary of State for Defence if the royal yacht Britannia will be refitted in Her Majesty's dockyard, Devonport.

Mr. Lee: After considering all factors, I have decided that HMY Britannia's refit will be undertaken at Devonport dockyard, where it is now clear that the necessary capacity will be available in the required timescale. An agreement has been reached between management and industrial and non-industrial trade unions at Devonport which provides for flexible working practices and the avoidance of delay through industrial action. I hope that Britannia will provide a welcome addition to the work load of the dockyard, and underline the confidence which we have in both management and the work force.

Radar Facilities (Fylingdales)

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Defence if Her Majesty's Government have given permission to the United States of America to build a phased array radar at Fylingdales for early warning against ballistic missile attack; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley: As I stated in my answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Scarborough (Sir M. Shaw) on 22 May 1986, at columns *263-64*, the Government have decided to proceed with a modernisation programme in co-operation with the United States Government. The modernised radar referred to will be a phased array radar.

Defence Programme

Mr. Soames asked the Secretary of State for Defence what percentage of gross domestic product will be spent on the defence programme in 1988-89 compared with 1978-79 and 1985-86.

Mr. Stanley: I shall reply shortly.

Mr. Soames asked the Secretary of State for Defence what savings would accrue to the defence programme by cutting the surface fleet to 42 ships.

Mr. Stanley: The savings would depend on a range of assumptions, such as the composition of the surface fleet remaining and the period of time over which this reduction was made. Such a reduction in the size of the surface navy is not under consideration and the carrying out of hypothetical costing exercise would involve disproportionate costs.

Jaguar Aircraft

Mr. Soames asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many Jaguar aircraft are now in storage in the United Kingdom; and what is to be their role.

Mr. Stanley: Forty-five Jaguar aircraft are held in storage in the United Kingdom, some of them in support of the long-term fleet whose roles are offensive support and reconnaissance. Those not required for RAF purposes will be offered for sale. The number of aircraft required to support the long-term front line strength is classified.

HMS Opossum

Sir Patrick Wall asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether the coming refit of HMS Opossum will be put out to tender.

Mr. Lee: I shall answer shortly.

Contracts (Tendering)

Mr. Michael Brown asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if it remains Her Majesty's Government's policy to submit submarine refits to competitive tender;

(2) if the refit of HMS Opossum will be put out to competitive tender.

Mr. Lee: I shall answer shortly.

Mr. Michael Brown asked the Secretary of State for Defence what estimates he makes of the potential additional savings that would arise from removing from the royal dockyards core work and submitting this work to competitive tender.

Mr. Lee: The introduction of commercial management to the royal dockyards will, of itself, introduce competitive pressures into the pricing of all dockyard work. Our current programme reflects the requirement, amongst other factors, to maintain a strategic capacity in the royal dockyards for reasons of national security. No estimate is, therefore, available of the potential cost or savings of putting the whole of the core programme to competitive tendering.

Mr. Michael Brown asked the Secretary of State for Defence if the refit of the royal yacht Britannia will be submitted for competitive tender.

Mr. Lee: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave earlier today to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Drake (Miss Fookes).

NHS (US Casualties)

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Defence what exactly are the arrangements under the United States/United Kingdom lines of communication agreement for the treatment of United States casualties in National Health Service hospitals in the event of an emergency.

Mr. Whitney: I have been asked to reply.

The Government are making contingency plans for the best use of all National Health Services resources in the event of war and these plans will cover the treatment in United Kingdom hospitals of both British and American military casualties should war in Europe ever break out. These plans will be incorporated in planning for the National Health Service as a whole in time of crisis or war, and are part of a continuous process. The United States is also establishing its own contingency hospitals which would be activated in a crisis; these will be equipped, manned and financed by the United States Government and would reduce the burden on the National Health Service.

In transition to war, health authorities, if so directed, will cease to admit all but emergency cases and will arrange for patients whose retention is not medically essential to be sent home, the purpose being to free hospitals to deal with civil and military casualties. The latter may include United States service personnel.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Birmingham Bombings

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether the inquiry presently being conducted into the case of the six men convicted of the Birmingham pub bombings is considering how they came by the injuries inflicted upon them during their first week in custody.

Mr. Mellor: My right hon. Friend's present examination of the case includes consideration of documents presented in support of allegations made by the six men at their trial that they were assaulted while in police custody. In 1976 a number of prison officers were acquitted of charges of assaulting the six men, but the Department accepted that they sustained injury while in prison.

Fire Services (London)

Mr. Leighton asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether Her Majesty's inspectorate of fire services, during the 1986 annual inspection of the London fire brigade, examined the operational implications for fire cover in Greater London of the loss of three 100-ft turntable ladders and hydraulic platform appliances and of one foam tender appliance from the London fire brigade on 1 April; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Her Majesty's inspectorate of fire services was involved in the recent review by the London fire brigade of all its special appliances and it was satisfied with the arrangements made for 1986-87.

Mr. Leighton asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment he has made of the adequacy of fire cover in London using his Department's computerised fire cover model; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: None. The assessment of risk and the consequent levels of fire cover in London is a matter for the London Fire and Civil Defence Authority. The possible use of computer models to assist in such assessment is a matter for the authority to decide.

Mr. Leighton asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information his Department collects about average attendance times taken by fire appliances in London in response to emergency calls.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Information on the times of the first call to the fire brigade and of the arrival of the brigade at the incident in recorded on the reports which are submitted to the Home Office by local authority fire brigades on all fires on which a detailed report is made – it is, those which involve casualties, rescues or escapes, occur in a building in use, unless confined to a chimney, or in a vehicle or other outdoor location having some intrinsic value. These reports serve administrative as well as statistical purposes and the information on the time of brigade arrival is not regularly analysed statistically. Analysis of these data on attendance times for the London area would involve disproportionate costs. However, attendance times were analysed as part of a special exercise on fire cover standards in 1982, and aggregate information for the 14 participating brigades, including London, was published and is to be found on pages 68, 76, 82 and 89 of the report of the Joint Committee on Standards of Fire Cover, published by the Home Office in May 1985.

Mr. Leighton asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to be in a position to reach a decision about the arrangements for fire services in London for 1987-88.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Early in 1987, after completion of consultations between the Home Office and the other parties involved.

Mr. Leighton asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his policy towards *(a)* the closure of certain London fire stations at night and at weekends and *(b)* the use of part-time firemen in London; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The possible provision of day-manned fire stations and the employment of retained staff is in the first instance a matter for the fire authority concerned subject to the statutory requirement to obtain my right hon. Friend's approval to any resulting variation in the agreed establishment scheme. I understand that the London Fire and Civil Defence Authority has no current proposals on these lines.

Fires

Mr. John Fraser asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people have died in fires in hotels, bed and breakfast accommodation and houses in multiple occupation in each of the last five years.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The readily available figures are given in the table. A more specific breakdown by type of building could be provided only at disproportionate cost. Information for 1985 is not yet available.

Deaths in fires in certain types of building 1980 to 1984
England and Wales

	1980	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*
Hotels, boarding houses, guest houses, motels, holiday bed and breakfast accommodation *	2	10	4	7	9
Hostels and similar institutions	12	2	5	3	6
Detached, semi-detached or terraced houses in multiple occupation *	117	110	53	64	67

* The figures for detached, semi-detached and terraced houses in multiple occupation were affected by a change in recording practice on the fire report forms from February 1982, and the figures for 1982 and subsequent years are not comparable with those for earlier years. Fuller instructions were issued to brigades and this appears to have contributed to a decrease in the figures for houses in multiple occupation and an increase in those for other dwellings in multiple occupation, relative to earlier years.

Immigration

Sir Dudley Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the approximate total of people who have applied for entry clearance at the British high commission in New Delhi and who are awaiting interview.

Mr. Waddington: Eight hundred and eighty applicants for entry clearance, whether for settlement or a limited stay, were awaiting their first interview in New Delhi at the end of March 1986.

Mr. Kaufman asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if, in the light of the breaches by the immigration service of his Department's guidelines on immigration cases with regard to Sahid Saleem on 13 June and of Nazir Ahmed on 18 June, he will take immediate steps to ensure that in future his Department does not take any action in breach of its obligations under the guidelines; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: In the case of Mr. Shahid Saleem, I refer the right hon. Member to the reply I gave to his question on 18 June at columns *542-3*.

In the case of Mr. Nazir Ahmed, the sequence of events before and on 18 June is the subject of an inquiry. Once this has been completed, I will write to the right hon. Member.

Police Officers

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action he is taking to seek to ensure that more police officers are operating on the beat; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Chief officers of police have been helped to put more officers on the beat by the improvement in the strength of the police service and by

the release of police officers from administrative posts which the Government have encouraged. I expect that the manpower increases which my right hon. Friend announced on 20 May will lead to a steady increase in the number of officers on foot patrol.

Mrs. Peacock asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many police officers are in service at the latest date for which figures are available in west Yorkshire; and what was the comparable number in May 1979.

Mr. Giles Shaw: On 31 May 1986 the strength of the West Yorkshire police was 5,119. This is a gain of 380 on the strength of 4,739 in May 1979.

Traffic Management (London)

Mr. Adley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will meet the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis to discuss traffic management in London.

Mr. Giles Shaw: My right hon. Friend has no plans to do so, but regular discussions take place between the police and the highway authorities, including the Department of Transport, which have the responsibility for traffic management in London and which are obliged to consult the commissioner before making traffic regulation orders.

Police (Plastic Baton Rounds)

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many police forces have now been issued with plastic baton rounds.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Plastic baton rounds are held by 14 forces in England and Wales.

Mr. Peter Harvey

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 16 June, on what items of legislation Mr. Peter Harvey has worked since 1983.

Mr. Hurd: In general, I do not think it is helpful to discuss the work of the Department in terms of the contribution to it of individual officers. If there is any item of business in which the hon. Member has a particular interest perhaps he would care to write to me.

Police National Computer

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will specify for each police force the number of officers investigated by the Police Complaints Authority in relation to misuse of the police national computer in the case of the BP and National number plate competition; and if he will further specify the number of officers in each force who *(a)* were and *(b)* were not subject to disciplinary proceedings.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The information available in the Department is as follows.

The investigation team led by the Assistant Chief Constable of Sussex, Mr. Scott, examined a total of 529 inquiries made of the Police National Computer in connection with vehicle registration numbers displayed in the BP and National Competition; 157 of these were found to have been made for proper reasons and in a further 163 cases either no record was found to show who made the inquiry or no record was made of the reason for the inquiry. In a further 113 cases, no culpable misuse was made of the information obtained from the computer. Formal discipline proceedings were instituted against officers in 12 forces as set out in the table. Three police officers whose inquiries of the computer were under investigation resigned.

	Number
Avon and Somerset	5
Cumbria	6
Devon and Cornwall	1
Dorset	1
Gloucestershire	1
Lancashire	1
Leicestershire	1
Merseyside	2
North Wales	3
South Wales	2
West Mercia	2
Wiltshire	1

No inquiries were made of the computer in this connection by officers from the City of London, Durham, Humberside and Lincolnshire.

Heathrow (Translators)

Mr. Wainwright asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he is satisfied with the adequacy of the current staffing levels of translators based at Heathrow terminal 3 in relation to the demands imposed upon them by the numbers of visitors arriving from India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh requiring interviews before entry permission is granted; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: I presume the hon. Member is referring to interpreters. The eight full-time interpreters employed by the immigration service, all of whom are based at Heathrow terminal 3 and of whom seven speak one or more of the various languages required for interviewing passengers from India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, are augmented at terminal 3 by a panel of 75 hourly-paid interpreters in the same languages. Additionally 17 immigration officers based at terminal 3 speak a variety of the same languages.

The full-time interpreters are rostered to be in attendance for the scheduled arrival of flights which are likely to require their services. There will inevitably be delays at times in providing adequate interpretative facilities when schedules are disrupted, when more passengers than anticipated are found to require the use of an interpreter and whilst hourly-paid interpreters are deployed. Their use is a more flexible and cost effective way of meeting the need for interpretative facilities than increasing the number of permanent staff who would not always be fully employed. A review of interpretative facilities throughout the immigration service is currently under way.

Vietnamese Refugees (Agency Funding)

Mr. Mason asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the present scale of funding of the refugee agencies' Vietnamese programme; to what extent this funding will be increased by the implementation of the accepted recommendations of the third report of the Home Affairs Committee for the 1984-85 Session; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: In its third report, published in April 1985, the Home Affairs Committee recommended that the scale of the refugee agencies' Vietnamese programme should be increased and that its funding should be continued for as long as necessary to achieve its objectives. At that time, the level of funding support from the Home Office for the programme was £260,000 for the financial year 1985-86; and the programme was due to end on 31 March 1987. Following the Government's consideration of the report, it was decided to increase the level of the Home Office contribution by £130,000 in a full year and to extend the programme to 31 March 1988. A pro-rata sum of £52,000 was paid in 1985-86; and the grant in the current year will be £405,000.

Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis

Mr. Kaufman asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the occasions since 1979 on which the strategy report submitted to him by the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis has been amended after its submission; and if he will state the nature of any such amendments.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The commissioner made his first such report in 1983. Minor textual amendments were agreed to the 1985 and 1986 reports after they had been shown in draft to the Home Office. There is regular contact between our officials and the Metropolitan police, and the commissioner has always been aware in preparing his reports of the issues to which my right hon. Friend and his predecessors as the police authority have attached importance.

Drugs

Mr. Spencer asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the recent meeting in Oslo of European Justice Ministers to discuss European co-operation on countering the importation of drugs.

Mr. Mellor: The meeting which I attended in Oslo on 17-19 June gave Council of Europe Justice Ministers a valuable opportunity to discuss common problems relating to the criminal aspects of drug abuse. In my address I urged all member states to ensure that the laundering of the proceeds of drug trafficking should itself by a criminal offence under their own laws, as it will be in this country once the Drug Trafficking Offences Bill becomes law. The conference fully recognised the necessity for an international approach to the attack on the illegal drugs trade. Its final resolution reflected the wish of all members states to develop more effective co-operation in such areas as the detection, freezing, and confiscation of the proceeds of drug trafficking; and recognised the importance of the meeting of the ministerial conference of the Pompidou Group in London next January in taking this work forward. The Government regard this as a highly satisfactory outcome.

Speeding Prosecutions (London)

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many successful prosecutions there have been for speeding in *(a)* the Greater London council area and *(b)* the inner London area in the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Mellor: Information in the form requested is not readily available. The available information relates to findings of guilt for speed limit offences in each police force area and is published annually in "Offences Relating to Motor Vehicles, England and Wales, Supplementary Tables" – table 18 of the issue for 1984. In 1984, there were about 32,700 findings of guilt for these offences in the Metropolitan police district and about 140 in the City of London.

Parole

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department in how many of the applications for parole in 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984 and 1985, respectively, the fact that the prisoner had no suitable accommodation to go into on release was a factor in the application being refused

Mr. Mellor: This information is not available. Parole is not granted in the absence of a suitable release plan. In some cases where release on parole is made conditional on suitable accommodation being found for a prisoner, it proves impossible to make satisfactory arrangements in time for release on parole. But this is very rare.

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what increase the Government propose to make in the resources of the Parole Board in light of concern expressed by the Parole Board in its annual report for 1985.

Mr. Mellor: Every effort is being made to find the extra resources required to cope with the increase in the parole caseload. Resources in the Home Office parole unit have already been increased and further increases are due to take place in the near future.

Prisoners

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners on their release were found accommodation in approved hostel schemes or approved landlady schemes in 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984 and 1985, respectively.

Mr. Mellor: This information is not available in the form requested. The numbers of prisoners released on parole and life licences who were accommodated in approved probation hostels were as follows:

Year	*Number*
1980	65
1981	114
1982	136
1983	137
1984	179
1985	271

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received asserting a link between homelessness and released prisoner reoffending or breaking the conditions of their parole licences; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: None recently. In its annual report for 1985, the Parole Board has drawn attention to Home Office research bulletin 20 "Housing for the homeless offender: key findings from a literature review" by Dr. M. N. P. Ramsay (1986). Accommodation for released

offenders is available through the Home Office after-care accommodation scheme which currently funds some 320 projects providing about 4,500 places for offenders. In addition, places in approved probation hostels may be made available to persons who on release from custody are subject to supervision by the probation service, and who are in need of special support for a short period.

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners on their release from prison were unable to find any accommodation in 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983 and 1984, respectively.

Mr. Mellor: This information is not available. The Home Office has no responsibility to provide accommodation for discharged prisoners. However, a discharge grant is paid to eligible prisoners to ensure that they have sufficient money on release for their immediate needs. This replaces and broadly equates with the supplementary benefit which could otherwise be claimed for the first week after release. A higher rate of grant is payable to those prisoners who have no home to return to and need to have rented accommodation arranged prior to release.

Juvenile Offenders

Mr. John Mark Taylor asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement about his policy towards the substitution in some cases which would otherwise have been prosecuted before the juvenile bench of a reference to a juvenile bureau.

Mr. Mellor: Decisions on whether or not to prosecute are a matter for the chief officer of police. Guidelines on cautioning, issued in February 1985, asked forces to ensure that juveniles were not prosecuted unless it was absolutely necessary and advised that decisions should be taken in consultation with other agencies. A copy of Home Office circular 14/1985 is available in the Library.

Drug Control (UN Fund)

Mr. Craigen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will take steps to encourage member states of the European Community to contribute financially to the work of the United Nations fund for drug abuse control.

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he plans to take to encourage member states of the European Community to contribute financially to the work of the United Nations fund for drug abuse control.

Sir Bernard Braine asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he is taking to encourage member states of the European Community to contribute financially to the work of the United Nations fund for drug abuse control.

Mr. Mellor: The Government maintain close contact with our European Community partners on all aspects of drug abuse and trafficking through the Council of Europe Pompidou Group. We use this and all other appropriate political and official channels to stress the importance of support of the fund and we seek by publicising our own contributions to encourage others to follow suit. Eight EC countries, including the United Kingdom, have pledged donations to the fund for 1986.

Mr. Craigen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to increase the United Kingdom contribution to the United Nations fund for drug abuse control.

Mr. Mellor: Yes. We are increasing our regular annual contribution to the fund this year from £100,000 to £163,000. In addition, we are making special purpose contributions to the fund of £3·4 million for its work in Pakistan and £1 million in Latin America.

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is Her Majesty's Government's current contribution to the United Nations fund for drug abuse control; if he has any plans to increase it; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: The Government make an annual contribution to the United Nations fund for drug abuse control for use as the fund thinks fit. This was increased from £50,000 to £100,000 in 1983 and this financial year is being increased to £163,000. The level of that contribution will be kept under review. In addition, the Government are making special purpose contributions totalling £3·4 million to the fund's crop substitution/rural development scheme in the Dir district of the north-west frontier province of Pakistan and £1 million to the fund's drugs law enforcement support activities in Latin America. The United Kingdom is among the major donors to the fund, with whom we work very closely. The executive director of the fund visited London last month for talks with Ministers, and I met him for further talks as recently as last week.

Emergency Planning Officers (Training)

Mr. Richard Livsey asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement concerning the training of emergency planning officers in England and Wales in connection with civil nuclear matters.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Emergency arrangements are under review following Chernobyl. The potential role and need for training of emergency planning officers will be amongst the matters considered.

India (Settlement Applications)

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he plans to introduce any changes in the procedure for processing applications to settle in Britain from the India sub-continent.

Mr. Waddington: The arrangements are kept under review in order to ensure that applications are processed with a minimum of delay. The Government have no proposals for changes at present.

Parliamentary Seats

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to introduce legislation to reduce the number of parliamentary seats *(a)* in Scotland or *(b)* in the rest of the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: We have no present plans for legislation. We are expecting the Home Affairs Committee to report later this year on the results of its inquiry into the rules governing the redistribution of seats laid down in the

House of Commons (Redistribution of Seats) Acts. The Government will naturally give full consideration to any recommendations it may make on these or other aspects of the law.

Deputy Chief Constable Stalker

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if there is any connection between the enforced suspension of Deputy Chief Constable John Stalker and the investigation into some aspects of the Royal Ulster Constabulary which he was carrying out; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: I have no information to suggest such a connection.

Broadcasting (Peacock Committee)

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he intends to publish his response to the Peacock committee on broadcasting.

Mr. Hurd: I will give my initial response when I publish the report, which will be before the recess.

Metropolitan Police Precept

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how much of the Metropolitan police precept on London ratepayers is for expenditure on equipment for public order duties and on training for such duties.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The income raised from the precept is treated as a whole, along with central Government contributions and income from other sources. From none of these individual sources, including the precept, is the income allocated to particular purposes.

Prisoners (Slopping Out)

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners will have to continue with the practice of slopping out after 1991.

Mr. Mellor: On the basis of the building schemes at present in progress or planned there will be just under 20,000 places in 1991 lacking access to sanitation. After that there will be further reductions. The number of prisoners slopping out in 1991 would be higher by the extent that there was then still overcrowding in the prisons which lacked access to sanitation.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Hon. Members (Tax Codes)

Mr. Spencer asked the Lord Privy Seal if he will take steps to ensure that the appropriate tax code appears on the monthly salary slips sent to hon. Members' staff who are paid directly from the hon. Member's allowance.

Mr. Biffen: Yes. Arrangements are in hand to incorporate this information on the monthly payment advices issued to hon. Members' staff, in the near future.

Political Parties (Public Money)

Mr. Fatchett asked the Lord Privy Seal what are the latest available figures for the amount of public money paid to political parties.

Mr. Biffen: The total amount paid to Opposition parties for 1985 under the scheme whereby provision is made for financial assistance to Opposition parties in carrying out their Parliamentary business, were as follows:

	£
Labour Party	440,355
Liberal Party	88,641
Social Democratic Party	62,562
Scottish National Party	7,977
Plaid Cymru	4,878
Ulster Unionist Party	19,889
Democratic Unionist Party	6,789

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Avon (Aerospace Factories)

Mr. Stern asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what projects have been either partly or wholly financed by his Department since 1979 which have resulted in work being placed in Avon's aerospace factories; and what were the sums involved.

Mr. Pattie: The civil aerospace project which currently is being partly financed through launch aid from my Department and which is contributing to the provision of work at British Aerospace's factories in Avon is the Airbus A320. In March 1984 my right hon. Friend, the former Secretary of State for Trade and Industry announced that up to £250 million of launch aid was to be provided for this project. Work on the A320 programme is not concentrated exclusively at British Aerospace's Filton factories but is distributed among several of the company's sites in the United Kingdom. The Bristol factories of Rolls-Royce are predominantly engaged in military programmes and no significant civil work relating to projects partly financed by my Department is being undertaken there.

During the period since 1979 grants have been made by my Department towards a number of research projects carried out by aerospace companies in Avon.

Lloyds (Neil Inquiry)

Mr. Arnold asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he now expects to receive the report of the Neil inquiry into Lloyds; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: I refer the hon. Gentleman to my remarks during the Report stage of the Financial Services Bill on Thursday 12 June at columns 577-78.

Co-operative Fair

Mr. Allan Roberts asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will seek to pay an official visit to the Co-operative Fair on 17 or 18 June at the Kensington exhibition centre; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Morrison: My right hon. Friend did not visit the Co-operative Fair. General responsibility for co-operatives now rests with the Department of Employment.

Japan (British Exports)

Mr. Alexander asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what recent discussions he has had with the Japanese Government about that country's economic

outlook in respect of British exports being accepted without unfair restrictions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: The European Community continues to press the Japanese Government for the implementation of the various market-opening measures that they have announced. A particular objective at the United Kingdom's forthcoming presidency of the Community will be to give this added impetus. In addition my Department's new unfair trade unit will be closely monitoring specific cases of unfair trading and pursuing such cases vigorously where appropriate.

Burglar Alarms (Insurance)

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what information he has as to the number of insurance companies which are offering discounts to clients for the installation of burglar alarms; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: The Association of British Insurers has advised that there are at least 10 insurance companies who offer discounts of 5 per cent. or more from household insurance premiums for security precautions including alarm systems. Some companies among these are market leaders. In the light of the Government's initiative on crime prevention, I welcome this positive attitude on the part of the insurers.

Stainless Steel

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what are the present quota arrangements for stainless steel production in Britain; and when he expects to be able to announce the new quotas for stainless steel plants in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Stainless steel bar and wire rod is subject to European Community production quotas, as are most bulk carbon steel products. The present quota arrangements, agreed by the Council of Ministers last year, have been on operation since 1 January 1986. After consultation with producers and member states, the Commission sets quotas each quarter in line with forecast demand. Quotas for individual producers are commercially confidential.

Regional Aid (Kirklees)

Mrs. Peacock asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the total amount of regional aid given to Kirklees metropolitan district council area as a result of assisted area status in each year from 1974-75 to date.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

South Africa (Sanctions)

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if, pursuant to his statement of 17 June, *Official Report*, column 909, he will detail those industries, together with the number of workers involved, which might be affected by economic sanctions against South Africa; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: Given the composition of our exports to South Africa, it is likely that a significant proportion of the jobs would be in the chemical and engineering industries. However, estimates of the number of jobs involved in trade with South Africa in particular sectors are not available.

Mr. Straw asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will publish deails in the *Official Report* of the likely effects, in terms of jobs and output in the United Kingdom, of different levels of economic measures against South Africa, and of similar effects arising from a potential loss of markets elsewhere in Africa if no such economic measures are taken.

Mr. Alan Clark: The information requested by the hon. Gentleman is not available.

Deputations

Mr. Terry Davis asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list the Ministers in his Department who have met deputations from Birmingham city council in the current year, stating the dates and the purpose of each meeting.

Mr. Channon: One meeting has taken place this year, when my hon. Friend the Minister of State for Industry met a deputation of Birmingham city councillors on 5 June this year, to discuss BL.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

European Economic Commission (Staff)

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs why the average cost per person on the staff of the European Economic Commission has risen from 28,500 European currency units in 1976 to 64,240 European currency units in 1986.

Mrs. Chalker: This increase of 124·9 per cent. in Commission staff costs results mainly from inflation, including wage increases. Wages in EC member states rose by an average of 158·3 per cent. over the same period.

Saudi Arabia

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make representations to the Government of Saudi Arabia urging the withdrawal of regulations, recently issued by the Saudi Arabian embassy in London, which require applicants, wishing to go on pilgramage to Mecca and Medina for Hajj or Umrah, to be British passport holders or overseas nationals with permanent residency in the United Kingdom with confirmed bookings in and out of Saudi Arabia ticketed on Saudia Arabia Airlines or British Caledonian only; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: No. Administrative arrangements for the issue of visas are within the competence of the issuing state. Furthermore the travel requirement does not discriminate against British carriers.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Milk

Mr. Livsey asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what will be the stocking rate to be used for standard quota, with reference to landlords and tenants in the milk producers outgoers scheme.

Mr. Gummer [*pursuant to his reply*, 19 May 1986, c. *71*]: It was our intention to use a stocking rate of 1·31 cows per hectare. This stocking rate would have accurately reflected the number of cows per hectare of land, bearing in mind the average area occupied by followers in a herd. However, in the light of views put to us by the National Farmers Union, we have now decided that it would be more appropriate to exclude land used by followers. On the basis of land used by milking cows alone the appropriate stocking rate is 1·8 cows per hectare.

The choice of the basis for application of the stocking rate does not in itself affect the total amount of standard quota in the country as a whole. There are, however, practical advantages in the use of the basis excluding followers, in that it links the area more precisely with the cows that produce the milk. On many farms the followers may well be kept away from the main herd, possibly alongside beef animals, making it difficult to establish the precise area to be taken into account.

Cereals

Mr. John asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will estimate the proportion *(a)* of total cereals produced in the United Kingdom and *(b)* of cereals used in animal feed which will be liable for co-responsibility levy; and if he will give information on equivalent figures for the European Community.

Mr. Jopling [*pursuant to his reply*, 20 June 1986, c. *659*]: I am not in a position to give these estimates as details of the application of the co-responsibility levy are still under discussion in Brussels.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Select Committees

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many *(a)* officials and *(b)* Ministers from his Department gave evidence to Commons Select Committees in each of the Sessions (i) 1983-84 and (ii) 1984-85.

Dr. Boyson: Oral evidence has been given as follows:

(i) In 1983-84; 1 Minister and 12 officials from Northern Ireland Departments.

(ii) In 1984-85; 1 Minister and 14 officials from Northern Ireland Departments.

Industry (Loans)

Mr. Bell asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the value of outstanding loans to industry since 1966 from any Government agency; and if he will give the names of firms that have defaulted on these loans, and the amount of money that has been lost due to companies defaulting on these loans.

Dr. Boyson: The value of outstanding loans at 31 March 1986 is £73·7 million. Of this £67·9 million is in respect of loans issued since 1966 by the Industrial Development Board for Northern Ireland and the former Department of Commerce, Northern Ireland Finance Corporation and Northern Ireland Development Agency. The remaining £5·8 million relates to loans made available by the Local Enterprise Development Unit since its inception in 1971. £16·2 million of loan has been written off as irrecoverable by the Industrial Development Board and the former Department of Commerce, and £1·2 million by the Local Enterprise Development Unit.

The former Northern Ireland Development Agency wrote off an amount of approximately £37·5 million which comprised both share capital and loan investments made by itself and its predecessor, the Northern Ireland Finance Corporation.

A list of names of the firms in respect of which loan has been written off over this period is not readily available, and to compile it would involve disproportionate cost.

Royal Victoria Hospital, Belfast

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will state, in relation to catering equipment in the corridor kitchen of the Royal Victoria hospital, Belfast *(a)* where the equipment, which was returned eventually, was used by the board and where it was stored before use, *(b)* which firm or firms supplied catering equipment to the royal group, *(c)* when the catering equipment was to be used for the supply of food to day centres in north and west Belfast removed from use, *(d)* what was the cost of the equipment, its age and when it was removed from use and *(e)* subsequent to the invitation of tenders on 17 May 1984, to whom they were circulated and in what papers.

Mr. Needham: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Michael Tighe

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the circumstances surrounding the death of Michael Tighe in Armagh in November 1982.

Mr. Tom King: It would be inappropriate for me to comment on these circumstances as I understand they are among matters that are the subject of an inquiry being carried out at the request of the chief constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary by a team of detectives from the Greater Manchester constabulary headed by the chief constable of West Yorkshire.

ENERGY

North Sea Oil (Price)

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for Energy what has been the quarterly average price paid per barrel of North sea oil in each of the last four quarters for which records are available.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: The prices realised for North sea crude sales in the last four quarters, as given in the PQ1300 *Business Monitor* and converted to £/barrel, were:

	£/barrel
1985	
Q2	21·7
Q3	19·2
Q4	19·4
1986	
Q1	13·9

British Gas

Mr. Hardy asked the Secretary of State for Energy what proportion of the equity in the privatised British Gas will be allocated to those who are employed in the industry; and how this will be allocated among the work force.

Mr. Peter Walker: I announced an attractive package of share offers for past and present employees of British Gas in the reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Exeter (Mr. Hannam) on 18 June at columns *537-39*. The proportion of shares allocated to employees will, of course, depend on the applications which are received from them.

Mr. Hardy asked the Secretary of State for Energy (1) when he proposes to announce the terms of the flotation of British Gas plc;

(2) what sum will be allocated to the privatised British Gas as a debt to public funds.

Mr. Peter Walker: I refer the hon. Member to the reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Exeter (Mr. Hannam) on 18 June at columns *537-39*. Further announcements will be made as appropriate.

National Coal Board (Name)

Mr. Allen MacKay asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he has any plans to introduce legislation to change the name of the National Coal Board to British Coal; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: I refer to the answer given to the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) on 2 May 1986 at column *503*.

Plutonium

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he has any plans to change the precautions taken to ensure that plutonium exported from the United Kingdom is put solely to its stated end use; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: No. The policy in respect of exports of nuclear materials, including plutonium, remains that set out in the answer given by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister to the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) on 28 January 1985 at columns *24-25*.

Nuclear Materials

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Energy, pursuant to his reply, *Official Report*, 1 May, column *460*, to the hon. Member for Merionnydd Nant Conwy if he will list the reactors of origin from which nuclear material has been withdrawn from safeguards since 1978.

Mr. Goodlad [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 May 1986, c. *206*]: All the material withdrawn from safeguards for defence purposes originated from the Chapelcross or Calder Hall reactors.

On a number of occasions small quantities of material, measured in grammes, have been temporarily withdrawn from safeguards by the AEA for experimental testing in unsafeguarded facilities. These tests were for civil purposes and the withdrawal of the material from safeguards and its subsequent return was a technicality necessary only because appropriate safeguarding facilities were not available. The material involved originated in either Chapelcross, Calder Hall or in generating board reactors.

PRIME MINISTER

Fraud Investigation

Mr. Cohen asked the Prime Minister, pursuant to the answer of 25 February, *Official Report*, column 484, concerning fraud investigation, what progress has been made in the four cases referred to; if she is now aware of any further cases of fraud which have been hindered by difficulties in obtaining evidence; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I am informed that progress has been made in two of the four cases referred to in my answer of 25 February, *Official Report*, column 484. One person has been charged and is awaiting committal in one of the cases, and one person has been committed for trial in the other case.

I have now been informed of two further cases involving public money, in which problems of obtaining evidence in other jurisdictions were experienced. Satisfactory evidence has now been obtained with the result that a total of five people have been charged and committed for trial since the beginning of this year.

EC (Budget)

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Prime Minister if she will make a statement setting out the progress made in achieving the strict budgetary controls of expenditure of the EEC as agreed by the European Council in December 1984; if she will secure information from the Commission on the amount by which these limits will be exceeded in 1986; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: On progress to date, I refer my hon. Friend to the memorandum entitled "European Community Budget: Budget Discipline and Related Matters" which the Treasury submitted to the Treasury and Civil Service Committee on 18 February. The comparison between actual spending appropriations and budget discipline limits in 1986 will depend on the outcome of further negotiations on the 1986 budget which will take place in July, following the European Court's judgment on the legality of the 1986 budget. The Government will keep the House informed about progress on these matters.

EC (Contributions)

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Prime Minister when it first became the practice of Her Majesty's Government to make advance payments of contributions to the EEC before seeking parliamentary approval for such advance payments; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The first occasion on which the Government agreed to advance payments of levies and duties to the European Community, was on 20 June 1983. In accordance with established procedures for urgent cases, that payment was financed in the first instance by a repayable advance from the contingencies fund pending parliamentary approval of the necessary Estimate. All subsequent advance payments have been financed either from an Estimate or from the contingencies fund pending parliamentary approval of an Estimate. Advance payments affect only the timing of contributions to the European Community; there is no overall effect on public expenditure.

Research and Development

Mr. Soames asked the Prime Minister what percentage of Government funded research and development is directed to military work.

The Prime Minister: The "Annual Review of Government Funded R & D" shows that 51 per cent. of expenditure on R and D was accounted for by the Ministry of Defence.

NHS (Management Board)

Mr. Meacher asked the Prime Minister if Her Majesty's Government have any plans to transfer public responsibility for any aspects of National Health Service policy and development to the National Health Service Management Board; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The National Health Service Management Board was set up in April 1985 within the Department of Health and Social Security by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services to assist him in carrying out the necessary central management functions in respect of the hospitals and community health services in England. There are no present plans to alter the board's formal responsibilities or its accountability to my right hon. Friend and his to Parliament.

Dr. Kurt Waldheim

Mr. Janner asked the Prime Minister (1) if, when she has discussions with the Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany during his forthcoming official visit to the United Kingdom, she will ask him *(a)* to arrange for the disclosure of all information in the possession of his Government concerning the interrogation of British prisoners of war by German Army Group E while Dr. Kurt Waldheim was in charge of those interrogations and about their subsequent fate and *(b)* for his Government's full co-operation with the inquiries being made by Her Majesty's Government in the Waldheim case; and if she will make a statement;

(2) if, when she has discussions with the Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany during his forthcoming official visit to the United Kingdom, she will ask him to arrange for his Government to disclose all documents in their possession relating to the whereabouts of Dr. Kurt Waldheim in so far as they relate to periods in respect of which Her Majesty's Government are investigating allegations concerning the interrogation and subsequent fate of British prisoners of war and Dr. Kurt Waldheim's alleged involvement therewith; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The Ministry of Defence search of military records for information relevant in the context of the disappearance of British subjects in the Balkans in the second world war is not yet complete. Only when the results are known will the Government be in a position to decide whether it is necessary to seek further information from other sources.

Engagements

Mr. Rooker asked the Prime Minister if she will list the Ministers who have received deputations from Birmingham city council in the current year, stating the dates and the purpose of each meeting.

The Prime Minister [*pursuant to her reply*, 17 June 1986, c. *512-13*]: I regret that there was an ommission from the meetings listed in my earlier reply. The information should read as follows:

Secretary of State or Minister	*Date and purpose of meeting*
Secretary of State for the Environment *(Mr. Baker)*	*31 January 1986* Meeting with Birmingham Inner City Partnership Committee
Secretary of State for the Environment *(Mr. Baker)*	*12 February 1986* Meeting with Councillors on Olympic bid
Paymaster General *(Mr. Clarke)*	*14 February 1986* Meeting on Inner City Initiative
Minister for Housing, Urban Affairs and Construction *(Mr. Patten)*	*19 May 1986* Meeting with City Council Members and MPs on Defective Housing
Minister of State for Industry *(Mr. Morrison)*	*5 June 1986* Meeting with Birmingham Economic Development Committee on BL

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Entry and Search Powers

Mr. Michael Brown asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many officials for whom he has responsibility currently have the power to enter and search premises, subject to statutory conditions; and if, in each case, he will indicate the statutory authority under which power is exercised.

Mr. Chris Patten: No officials for whom the Secretary of State has responsibility have the express powers to enter and search premises. However, section 77 of the Education Act 1944 imposes a duty on the Secretary of State to cause inspections to be made of educational establishments, as defined in that section. HM inspectors are appointed for the purpose of enabling such inspections to be made. They have no express powers of entry or search, but it is an offence under section 77(4) to obstruct them in the execution of their duty. On 1 June 1986 there were 463 HM inspectors in post.

Universities (Research Funding)

Mr. Hoyle asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has about the level of funding by the pharmaceutical industry of research in United Kingdom universities in each of the last five years.

Mr. Walden: None.

Teachers (Self-Assessment)

Mr. Peter Griffiths asked the Secretary of State of Education and Science if he will list in the *Official Report* those local education authorities which operate a self-assessment system for teachers.

Mr. Chris Patten: The information is not available centrally.

NATIONAL FINANCE

African Countries (Debt)

53. **Mr. Geraint Howells** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he has any plans to seek to reschedule the debts of African countries; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Stewart: As part of our approach to debt problems of developing countries, Her Majesty's Government have been ready, within the Paris Club, to reschedule official or officially guaranteed debts in appropriate cases. Since 1982 such reschedulings have covered some $8 billion of debt in respect of 18 African countries. For the poorest developing countries, Britain also has a generous policy of commuting official aid loans to grants. This has so far benefited 21 countries, including 12 in sub-Saharan Africa, at a total cost of almost £1 billion.

Select Committees

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many *(a)* officials and *(b)* Ministers from his Department gave evidence to Commons Select Committees in each of the Sessions (i) 1983-84 and (ii) 1984-85.

Mr. Brooke: The number of Treasury officials and Ministers who appeared before Commons Departmental Select Committees is as follows:

Session	*Officials*	*Ministers*
1983-84	22	3
1984-85	32	3

Because some of these gave evidence more than once, figures for the total number of sessions attended would be considerably higher than this. In addition, the Treasury Officer of Accounts or his deputy attends every session of the PAC, normally accompanied by an official of the relevant Treasury division.

Inland Revenue

Mr. Evennett asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what advice has been issued to officials of the Inland Revenue involved in interviewing those who may be charged with a criminal offence since the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 came into force.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Copies of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 and the codes of practice issued under section 66 of that Act have been made available to Inland Revenue officials involved in interviewing those who may be charged with a criminal offence. In addition departmental instructions setting out the revised interviewing procedures and the new forms of caution in use since 1 January 1986 have been issued to ensure that Inland Revenue procedures comply with the provisions of that Act and the codes of practice.

EEC (Budget)

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer by what amount he estimates the European Economic Community will exceed the total of expenditure determined by the strict budgetary controls in the calendar year 1986; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: Total expenditure contained in the European Communities budget will depend on the outcome of discussion on the new 1986 budget which is due to begin shortly after the European Court has delivered its judgment on the 1986 budget dispute.

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether it remains the policy of Her Majesty's Government that the terms of the 4 December 1984 agreement in relation to the adjustments in future years for overspending by the European Economic Community beyond the strict budgetary controls should be applied by the Council of Ministers.

Mr. Brooke: Yes.

EEC (Contributions)

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer why the European Economic Commission requested a further advance payment of contributions from member states; if the request was put to a meeting of the Council of Ministers; and why Her Majesty's Government agreed to the advance payment.

Mr. Brooke: The Commission requested the latest advance payment because of cash flow difficulties. Under article 10(2) of Council Regulation 2891/77 the Commission may, without recourse to the Council of Ministers, invite members states to bring forward any payments of traditional own resources in order to meet short term cash flow difficulties. The Government are prepared to accede to such requests when they are justified by the Commission's cash flow position.

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what rebates of abatements remain to be secured from the EEC by the United Kingdom in respect of the calendar year 1985 and previous years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: There are no rebates or abatements owing to us from years prior to 1985. Our abatement in respect of 1985 is being implemented in accordance with the arrangements agreed at Fontainebleau, with the result that our VAT contributions to the Community are some £75 million per month less than would otherwise be the case. The total provision for our abatement in the 1986 budget is 1,400 mecu (some £900 million). This amount will need to be corrected when outturn information on our 1985 VAT expenditure gap becomes available. The Commission has proposed that a correction of 500 mecu (£325 million) should be included in a supplementary and amending budget this year. A further correction might be required next year.

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if it is the policy of Her Majesty's Government to make to the EEC any advance payments requested by the Commission; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: The Government are prepared to accede to requests for advance payments only when we are satisfied that the Commission's cash flow position justifies such requests.

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the latest estimate of the net contribution which the United Kingdom will be required to make to the EEC in respect of the calendar year 1986; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: The Government's latest forecast of the United Kingdom's net contribution to the Community budget is that published in the Public Expenditure White Paper (Cmnd. 9702).

Value Added Tax

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he had made of the percentage value added tax contribution which member states will be required to make to the European Economic Community in 1986; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: We estimate that the highest rate of VAT contribution for 1986 implied by the Council's Second Reading budget of last December is 1·22 per cent. The actual rates for the year will depend on the outcome of discussions on a new 1986 budget which will begin after the European Court has delivered judgment on the 1986 budget dispute.

Monetary Values

Mr. Winnick asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the present day equivalent of the value of £10 in 1958, 1968, 1978 and 1981.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The information is given in the table:

	£
1958	79·41
1968	59·41
1978	19·71
1981	13·09

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Less Developed Countries

40. **Mr. Kirkwood** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what initiatives his Department is currently taking to relieve the debt burden of the less developed countries.

Mr. Raison: Britain has had a generous policy for the poorest countries of converting past aid loans into grants. Twenty-one countries have benefited at a total cost of nearly £1 billion. All new bilateral aid to these countries is provided on grant terms.

Indonesia

44. **Mr. Alton** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proportion of the aid budget is allocated to the transmigration programme in Indonesia.

Mr. Raison: The Government do not give direct financial support to the Indonesian transmigration programme.

Africa (Child Immunisation)

45. **Mr. Tom Clarke** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether the Government will be contributing to the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund's special appeal for child immunisation in Africa; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Raison: I am expecting a detailed request from UNICEF, and will consider it carefully when it arrives. We have already contributed more than £2 million over the last two years to an earlier appeal for similar purposes.

Pensions

46. **Mr. Stanbrook** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proportion of overseas aid is devoted to the payment of pensions to retired members of the Overseas Civil Service; and what is the gross amount so paid.

Mr. Raison: We expect total expenditure on pensions to former overseas civil servants and their dependants to reach £140 million in the current financial year. This constitutes approximately one-tenth of the Overseas Development Administration's total budget. Of this about £19 million, representing the pre-independence element of these pensions, will count as aid. This is approximately 1·5 per cent. of the gross overseas aid budget.

Food (Transportation Costs)

47. **Mr. Livsey** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proportion of the aid budget is allocated for transporting food into recipient countries.

Mr. Raison: We do not make a separate allocation for these costs. In 1985 food aid accounted for 8 per cent. of total gross public expenditure on aid, but within that the transport element cannot be separately identified. A further £18 million was spent on the airlift of food in Ethiopia in 1985 and £6 million has been allocated this year on transporting food within Sudan.

India

48. **Mr. Janner** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many representations he has received in the last 12 months concerning aid to India.

Mr. Raison: I have received some 20 letters from right hon. and hon. Members, and a similar number from members of the public.

Africa

49. **Mr. Dicks** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the policy review embodied in the United Nations programme agreed at the recent special session on Africa.

Mr. Raison: I welcome the final resolution of the United Nations special session where all concerned agreed to work together for sustained economic development based on realistic policies. The emphasis given to the agricultural sector is particularly encouraging, as is the recognition of the role of the private sector.

Relief Aid

50. **Mr. Leigh** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he is satisfied with the arrangements for the provision of disaster relief aid.

Mr. Raison: The ODA responds rapidly and effectively to requests for disaster relief throughout the world. The most recent recipients have been countries in Latin America, the Solomon Islands and Jamaica, where we have provided a total of £1·27 million.

I was honoured to receive recently a plaque from the Mexican Government in recognition of our urgent response to the Mexico City earthquake last September.

Aid Debts

51. **Mr. Conway** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is Her Majesty's Government's policy on the cancellation of official aid debts.

Mr. Raison: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood).

Tropical Development and Research Institute

52. **Mr. Spearing** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has for the future programme of work of the Tropical Development and Research Institute.

Mr. Raison: The Tropical Development and Research Institute will continue to concentrate on its work on pest control and reducing post harvest losses in aid recipient countries. The hon. Member may care to look at the

Tropical Development and Research Institute annual report for 1984-85, a copy of which is being placed in the Library of the House.

TRANSPORT

Public Transport

3. **Mr. Tony Lloyd** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what recent representations he has received about the future of public transport in the light of the Transport Act 1985.

Mr. Moore: I have received some 30 such representations.

Radiation (Aircraft)

8. **Mr. Colvin** asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many domestic airliners have been grounded as a result of exposure to radiation following the Chernobyl explosion.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I understand from the Civil Aviation Authority, which is responsible for aviation safety, that no United Kingdom aircraft have been grounded as a result of exposure to radiation following Chernobyl.

British Rail

13. **Mr. Marlow** asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he last met the chairman of British Rail; and what subjects were discussed.

Mr. David Mitchell: I last met the chairman on 10 June and discussed a wide range of matters of current interest.

17. **Mr. Pike** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if, when he next meets the chairman of British Rail, he will raise with him the current level of investment in British Rail; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: It is for the board, not me, to propose what investment should take place. At present it plans £2 billion investment over the next five years, of which half has already been approved.

In addition the Government have approved in principle investment of up to £390 million for rail services associated with the Channel tunnel.

26. **Mr. Steen** asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he will next meet the chairman of British Rail.

Mr. David Mitchell: We are next due to meet on 26 June.

27. **Mrs. Virginia Bottomley** asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he last met the chairman of British Rail; and what subjects were discussed.

Mr. David Mitchell: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow).

Channel Tunnel

14. **Mr. Adley** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what recent discussions he has had with the chairman of British Rail on matters related to the Channel tunnel; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moore: The chairman and I have regular meetings at which we discuss a wide range of matters of current interest, including the Channel tunnel.

16. **Mr. Dykes** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the progress so far in the preparation of the project to construct the tunnel link in the English Channel.

Mr. Moore: The Channel Tunnel Bill received Second Reading on 5 June and has now been committed to a Select Committee.

20. **Mr. Roger King** asked the Secretary of State for Transport how the west midlands will benefit from the proposed Channel fixed link.

Mr. David Mitchell: West Midlands firms are well placed to compete for major orders for mechanical and electrical equipment, rolling stock and tunnel linings. When the tunnel is complete, they will benefit from the substantially improved but less expensive access to European markets, particularly by rail. In environmental terms, residents will benefit from transfers of international freight from road to rail that the tunnel will make possible.

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for Wrexham of 18 June, on what expectation of demand British Rail has formed its views that it has sufficient capacity to handle the additional traffic generated by the Channel tunnel.

Mr. David Mitchell: This is a matter for BR, which will no doubt be giving evidence on this point to the Select Committee which considers the Channel Tunnel Bill.

Vehicle Excise Duty

15. **Mr. Peter Bruinvels** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what recent measures have been introduced to reduce driving licence abuse and fraud.

Mr. Michael Spicer: We maintain a constant vigilance against abuse and fraud. In recent months no new measures have been considered necessary.

19. **Mr. Heathcoat-Amory** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what is his latest estimate of the annual revenue lost from evasion of vehicle excise duty.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The survey carried out by the Department in 1984 showed the revenue loss through evasion to be about 4 per cent.—equivalent to some £99 million gross in 1985-86 excluding recoveries through enforcement.

28. **Dr. Michael Clark** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what was the result of the most recent survey of the extent of evasion of vehicle excise duty; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The survey carried out by the Department in 1984 indicated a gross loss of revenue of about 4 per cent., equivalent to some £99 million in 1985-86. The report on the survey was published on 18 December 1984 and a copy is available in the Library.

Civil Aviation Authority (London Airports)

18. **Mr. Maclennan** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what advice he has received from the Civil

Aviation Authority regarding possible changes to the distribution system for aircraft at London's airports; and whether he intends to accept it.

21. **Mr. McCrindle** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he has responded to the Civil Aviation Authority's advice on traffic distribution at the London airports; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: My right hon. Friend received advice from the Civil Aviation Authority on 28 May, proposing additional rules for regulating air traffic within the London airports system. Copies were placed in the Library. He will make an announcement in due course.

Aldenham Bus Engineering Works

22. **Mr. Bidwell** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what representations have been made to him concerning the proposed closure of Aldenham bus engineering works; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: I have received a small number of representations, including an earlier question from the hon. Member on 4 June 1986, in column 597. I have made it clear that the proposed closure is entirely a management decision for LRT.

Gatwick Airport

23. **Mr. Soames** asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he next expects to meet the chairman of the British Airports Authority to discuss franchise arrangements at Gatwick airport.

Mr. Michael Spicer: My right hon. Friend and I meet the chairman of the British Airports Authority from time to time to discuss matters of common concern.

Residential Areas (Traffic)

24. **Mr. Tom Cox** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions his Department is having with local authorities as to the present criteria on seeking to improve traffic conditions in residential areas.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We are in regular contact with local authorities on traffic and parking matters and are exploring possible ways to improve traffic conditions in residential areas.

Bypasses

25. **Mr. McLoughlin** asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many bypasses have been added to the roads programme since 1979.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Eighty one bypasses and relief roads have been added since 1979. Other schemes in the programme—for example, M25—also take traffic out of communities.

Road Programme

29. **Mr. Richard Page** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what has been the change in expenditure on the national road programme in real terms since 1978-79.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Planned expenditure on the national road programme in 1986-87 is 26 per cent. higher, in real terms, than in 1978-79.

Plutonium (Transport)

Mr. Hoyle asked the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the answer of 11 June, if he will detail the regulatory provisions governing radiation exposure and outline the radioactive dosage to which the crew of the cargo aircraft are exposed.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The technical instructions of the International Civil Aviation Organisation prescribe minimum distances from the surface of containers to areas occupied by personnel. As I said in my reply given to the hon. Member on 11 June, this ensures that no crew member should receive a radiation dose greater than that permitted for members of the public.

Mr. Hoyle asked the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 11 June, *Official Report*, column 191, if he will outline in detail the tests required of the International Atomic Energy Agency to which the containers are subjected; what type of wood and steel is used in their construction; what is the segregated distance between the packages and the occupied areas; and what protection is given to those who have to load and unload the plutonium.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The design requirements of the International Atomic Energy Agency applicable to these containers are set out in detail in the agency's regulations for the safe transport of radioactive materials, a copy of which is held in the House of Commons Library. They consist of combinations of impact, penetration, compression, immersion and thermal tests associated with acceptance criteria based on the maximum levels of activity which could be released, increases in external radiation emitted and prescribed margins of subcriticality.

The containers are constructed externally from mild steel and hardwood with stainless steel inner components. Under the regulations of the IAEA there may be low, but measurable, levels of radiation.

The separation distances between the containers and occupied areas depend on these radiation levels external to the containers as prescribed by the International Civil Aviation Organisation's technical instructions, when carried by air. The protection of persons loading and unloading the containers is ensured by the requirements of the Ionising Radiations Regulations 1985 made under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974, and questions on this matter would be for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment.

Mr. Hoyle asked the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 11 June, *Official Report*, column 191, if the plutonium is returned by ship from Dounreay to Sellafield; why the plutonium is not transported by ship from Sellafield to Dounreay; what other flights were involved and from which airports; what were the restrictions; if he will detail the loads; and why these airports were used.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I understand that in fact in some cases plutonium is returned to Sellafield from Dounreay by ship. However, I do not determine the mode of transport. The Department's certificates approving containers for the carriage of radioactive materials specify for what modes of transport they are valid. It is then for the consignor to decide which mode to use.

I understand that airports used by British Nuclear Fuels, other than Liverpool, have been Carlisle and until 1976 London Heathrow. Heathrow is also currently used, once or twice a year, for the transport of gram samples. British Nuclear Fuels tells me that these airports were used because of their convenience and suitability to the consignor. The shipments consisted of new fuel, plutonium oxides and plutonium residues for recovery. I also understand that the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority makes similar shipments using Bournemouth (Hurn) as well as those airports mentioned.

Consignments are subject to the normal restrictions of the International Civil Aviation Organisation's Technical Instructions for the carriage of radioactive materials by air. My compliance assurance officers verify that consignors have standing arrangements to ensure compliance with these regulations.

Trunk Road Improvements (Rights of Way)

Mr. Iain Mills asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the effect of implementing trunk road improvements in the United Kingdom since 1976 on statutory rights of way, bridleways, roads used as public paths or byways.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The construction or improvement of trunk roads and motorways unavoidably involves interference with rights of way, including those covered by the question. The Secretary of State has power under sections 14 and 18 of the Highways Act 1980 to make orders authorising him to stop up, divert or alter highways or other such rights of way which cross or enter the routes of roads he proposes to construct or improve, or which will otherwise be affected by the works. There are procedural requirements for the publication of draft orders, the service of notices and the holding of inquiries into objections.

The Secretary of State may not make an order stopping up a highway unless he is satisfied that another reasonably convenient route is available or will be provided before the highway is stopped up. Detailed information about the extent to which these powers have been exercised over the last 10 years cannot be obtained except at disproportionate cost.

Okehampton Bypass

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he proposes to take to inform Okehampton town council of the results of Wimpey Laboratories tests into toxic soils on the site of the proposed Okehampton bypass route; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: These soil investigations are to assist the design and construction of the road. I will arrange for a copy of the report from Wimpey Laboratories, which is expected next month, to be placed on deposit at the Okehampton offices of the borough of west Devon, where anyone interested will be able to study it.

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish the results of the soil tests being undertaken into mineralised deposits by Wimpey Laboratories on the site of the proposed Okehampton bypass.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: As indicated in my reply to the hon. Member's earlier question, the report of the soil investigations will be made available for public scrutiny in Okehampton.

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for Transport what tests were conducted into the extent of mineralised land containing arsenic along the site of the proposed southern route for the Okehampton bypass prior to the 1979 public inquiry.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I refer the hon. Member to my reply given to his earlier question on this topic on 27 March 1986, at column 566.

Ashbourne Bypass

Mr. McLoughlin asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he is now able to indicate when work will start on the building of the Ashbourne bypass.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I expect to be able to appoint an Agent shortly to begin preparation work on a scheme to relieve Ashbourne. The future progress will depend on the results of their investigations, the successful completion of statutory procedures and the availability of funds. At this stage I do not expect construction work to start before the end of 1992.

British Rail Engineering Ltd.

30. **Mr. Nellist** asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he next intends to meet the chairman of British Rail to discuss proposed cutbacks in British Rail Engineering.

Mr. David Mitchell: My right hon. Friend is happy to discuss any matter which the chairman wishes to raise at our regular meetings. The next of these is due to take place later this week.

Docklands Light Railway

31. **Mr. Spearing** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement concerning his intentions in respect of the proposed eastern extension to the Docklands light railway.

Mr. David Mitchell: We have no specific, costed proposals before us at present. We would consider any such proposals on their merits.

Woolwich Ferry

11. **Mr. Cartwright** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he is satisfied with the Woolwich ferry's standard of service to the public since he assumed responsibility for it; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Greenwich borough council is operating the Woolwich ferry as our agent. Questions on day-to-day operations should be addressed to it.

Accident Reporting (Horses)

Mr. Iain Mills asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will take steps to include in the police accident report form Stats 19 provision for the accurate recording of traffic accidents in which horses are involved; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The only animals explicitly noted in Stats 19 road accident reports are dogs. Horses are

included with "other animals". This category features in one half of 1 per cent. of all accidents. The Stats 19 system is currently under review and this aspect will be considered.

Mr. Iain Mills asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many horses-related traffic accidents have occurred since 1976 in the United Kingdom by region.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The only available information is for personal injury accidents in Great Britain, where an animal other than a dog is recorded as being present. Horse-related accidents will represent part of this group. Data for years before 1980 can be provided only at disproportionate cost.

British Rail Tracks (Debris)

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Transport if, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth of Monday 16 June, he will give details of the number of occasions the railway inspectorate has drawn British Rail's attention to debris on, or adjacent to, British Rail tracks; what was the type of debris most frequently found; and which were the three regions most frequently referred to.

Mr. David Mitchell: A full answer could be provided only at disproportionate cost since it would involve searching the inspectorate's records from the formation of British Railways. However, during the past three years the inspecting officers have drawn attention, in writing, to the need to clear away unwanted material from alongside the lines on 22 occasions. The debris most frequently referred to was railway material awaiting collection after engineering work, although rubbish thrown on to the lineside by the public also featured. It would be invidious to single out particular regions for BR since the number of references reflects the number of inspections made, and these vary. If the hon. Member has a specific concern, I suggest he writes to me.

Heavy Goods Vehicles

Mr. Snape asked the Secretary of State for Transport what percentage of heavy goods vehicles involved in spot checks by his Department's inspectors on the M2 during the week commencing 9 June were *(a)* towed away as being unroadworthy, *(b)* subject to instant prohibition and *(c)* found to have other serious defects.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: No spot checks were conducted on the M2 at that time. On 12 June, 28 vehicles were checked at Falconwood on the A2: four were immediately prohibited; seven were given a delayed prohibition. I do not know how many were towed away.

Motorways (Direction Signs)

Mr. Oakes asked the Secretary of State for Transport what has been the amount of expenditure on the maintenance of direction signs on motorways for each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Moore: I regret that this particular information is not available, but the following is the expenditure incurred on maintaining signs and signals on motorways over the five years 1979-80 to 1983-84.

Year	*Expenditure* £
1979-80	1,449,660
1980-81	1,384,555
1981-82	1,584,715
1982-83	1,989,135
1983-84	1,900,689

Mr. Oakes asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he proposes to take steps to improve the level of maintenance of direction signs on motorways; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moore: Our agents carry out weekly safety inspections which include checks on the general condition of signs. Necessary repairs are put in hand. In addition, a detailed inspection of each sign is usually made biennially. Cleaning takes place whenever necessary. These arrangements should be adequate. We shall continue to keep standards under review.

Langstone Harbour

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many representations he has received regarding windsurfing in Langstone harbour.

Mr. Moore: About 100, from individuals and clubs.

Settle-Carlisle Railway Line

Mr. Stephen Ross asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he now expects to receive the report of the inspector following the public inquiry into the Settle to Carlisle railway line closure proposal.

Mr. David Mitchell: The transport users' consultative committees for north-eastern and north-western England have, in accordance with provisions in section 56 of the Transport Act 1962, held public hearings into the British Railways Board's closure proposal. I understand that the TUCCs expect to be able to submit a joint report to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State later this year.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Smoking

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has about the incidence of smoking in each European Economic Community country for the five years up to the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Whitney: Information appears in tables 7 and 8 of "Statistics on Smoking in the member states of the Community" published by the European Commission, copies of which are in the Library. Latest figures for Great Britain show a further fall in cigarette smoking prevalence for men from 52 per cent. in 1972 to 36 per cent. in 1984, and for women from 41 per cent. to 32 per cent.

Cancer (West Cumbria)

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he is satisfied with the progress of research projects commissioned to implement the recommendations numbered 1 to 4 of the report of the advisory group, chaired by Sir Douglas Black, on the incidence of cancer in West Cumbria; and when the findings of each research project are likely to be received by his Department.

Mr. Ray Whitney: We are generally satisfied with the progress of these studies. We are advised however that collection of the data required for the studies to implement recommendations 1, 2 and 3 has proved to be more complicated than was expected. Consequently, these studies will be completed later than was originally anticipated. We understand that the report of the study implementing recommendation 1 should be received by the Department during the second half of 1987 and those from the studies implementing recommendations 2 and 3 should be received in the autumn of this year. The work on recommendation 4 is proceeding to schedule.

Nursing Posts

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list in the *Official Report*, for the last year for which figues are available, the number of nursing posts lost, gained and the net outcome, in terms of full-time equivalents (in numbers and as a percentage of the total) in the following categories *(a)* nursing auxiliaries, *(b)* enrolled nurses, *(c)* staff nurses, *(d)* sister, grade II, *(e)* sister, grade I and *(f)* learners (pupils and students), broken down by regional and district health authority.

Mr. Hayhoe: I regret that information on the number of nursing posts lost or gained is not available centrally and the net change in staff in post broken down by regional and district health authorities could be supplied only at disproportionate cost. Information on the net change in staff in post in England between September 1983 and September 1984 is given in the table. Detailed information for September 1985 is not yet available but the provisional total number of nursing and midwifery staff shows an increase of 0·8 per cent. to 396,900.

Nursing and midwifery staff in specific grades (excluding agency staff)
England—30 September

	1983	*1984*	*1984 to 1983 change*
	WTE	*WTE*	*Percentage*
*Specific grades**			
Nursing auxiliaries	87,240	85,860	−1·6
Enrolled Nurses†	70,010	71,200	+1·7
Staff Nurses	63,060	65,730	+4·2
Nursing Sister II	64,370	63,740	−1·0
Nursing Sister I	9,630	9,360	−2·9
Learners(students and pupils)‡	78,860	75,850	−3·8

All figures are rounded to the nearest 10. Percentages have been calculated on unrounded figures.

*The figures include all nursing and midwifery staff in these specific grades whatever area of work they are employed in: Health Visitors have been included in the Nursing Sister I category.

†Includes senior enrolled nurse.

‡Includes health visitors, district nurse and midwifery students.

WTE = Whole time equivalent.

"Primary Health Care"

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to his answer of 20 May, *Official Report*, column 167, (1) what plans he has to draw to the attention of the public locations at which a copy of the Green Paper, "Primary Health Care", is available for free perusal or to borrow;

(2) if he will give the reasons why he has decided not to distribute copies of the Green paper, "Primary Health Care", to main libraries.

Mr. Hayhoe: Over 5,000 copies of the discussion document have been issued free to interested bodies for comment, and over 170,000 copies of a summary leaflet, copies of which are available free on demand, have been distributed. The leaflet's availability is to be advertised in the press shortly. Main libraries were sent copies of the summary leaflet, which it was considered would best meet libraries' immediate needs. The leaflet gives details of where copies of the main document can be obtained and it is open to libraries, if they believe this is likely to be justified by demand, to obtain copies as a priced document, at the standard 50 per cent. discount from Her Majesty's Stationery Office.

Pharmaceutical Industry

Mr. Hoyle asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has about the level and trend of new investment by the pharmaceutical industry in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Hayhoe: Net capital expenditure in respect of establishments in the pharmaceutical products industry, including veterinary and certain other chemical and consumable materials, has been as follows:

	£ million
1979	155·5
1980	189·2
1981	239·2
1982	210·9
1983	225·8
1984	244·0

Information for 1985 is not yet available.

Pharmaceuticals (Research and Development)

Mr. Hoyle asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has about the principal areas of research and development carried out by the pharmaceutical industry in each of the last five years.

Mr. Hayhoe: I regret that the Department does not collect information of the kind requested. I am not aware of any comprehensive published information relating solely to the United Kingdom, but the "Scrip Year Books" for 1985 and 1986, produced by PJB Publications Ltd. contain tables relating to research and development activity internationally.

Drug Addiction

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any proposals for the introduction, within the National Health Service, of the Minnesota method of treating drug addiction; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: The Department does not prescribe treatment approaches. It is for health authorities and practitioners in the field to decide whether the Minnesota method could be a useful approach in the treatment of drug misuse.

The Department is currently funding an evaluation of the treatment provided to National Health Service patients being referred to an establishment offering treatment based on the Minnesota philosophy.

NHS (US Casualties)

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what plans the local health authorities have to formulate to meet with the tasks which might be placed on them with regard to treating United States casualties under the United States-United Kingdom lines of communication agreement in National Health Service hospitals in the event of an emergency.

Mr. Whitney: The Government are making contingency plans for the best use of all National Health Service resources in the event of war and these plans will cover the treatment in United Kingdom hospitals of both British and American military casualties should war in Europe ever break out. These plans will be incorporated in planning for the National Health Service as a whole in time of crisis or war, and are part of a continuous process. The United States is also establishing its own contingency hospitals which would be activitated in a crisis; these will be equipped, manned and financed by the United States Government and would reduce the burden on the National Health Service.

In transition to war, health authorities, if so directed, will cease to admit all but emergency cases and will arrange for patients whose retention is not medically essential to be sent home, the purpose being to free hospitals to deal with civil and military casualties. The latter may include United States service personnel.

Clinical Research (Children)

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to the answer of 12 June, *Official Report*, column *301*, when he expects to complete his consideration of the possibility of issuing further guidance or reminders to health authorities about clinical research investigation involving children, and about references of such investigations to local ethical committees; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: In reaching a decision on whether to issue further guidance or a reminder to health authorities on clinical research we will wish to take account of the views of relevant professional and other bodies on the need for such guidance. Consultations will begin as soon as possible.

Bloomsbury Local Office

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many items of outstanding post are awaiting action at the Bloomsbury local Department of Health and Social Security office, Tavistock square; how long on average they have been outstanding; and how many of the items of unlinked post outstanding at 11 March have now been dealt with.

Mr. Major: The Department's Bloomsbury local office had 1,090 items of post awaiting action on 17 June, of which 798 were more than two days old. Records are not kept of how long on average post is outstanding. There are no items of post from claimants still outstanding from 11 March.

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what are the detailed arrangements for processing urgent needs claims at the Bloomsbury local Department of Health and Social Security Office, Tavistock square; what particular arrangements are made for urgent needs claims when the office is shut *(a)* before its usual time, and *(b)* in any event; and how information about those proceedings is made available to claimants.

Mr. Major: Urgent needs claims at Bloomsbury local office are given priority and payment is normally made the same day, in accordance with the "S Manual" — paragraphs 8001-8651. If the office is forced to close early, eg because of industrial action, callers are invited to come back the next day, and claimants who cannot wait this long are advised of the Department's London emergency office. The London Emergency Office is open each evening and during the day at weekends. The local office also has an arrangement with the local authority Social Services Department to provide emergency payments on its behalf.

Midwifery

Mr. Patrick Thompson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is Her Majesty's Government's policy on management structures for midwifery in the light of the report, "Neighbourhood Nursing — A Focus on Care".

Mr. Hayhoe: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

NHS (Resources)

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how his Department calculateses the annual estimated growth in National Health Service resources demanded by demographic change;

(2) if he will give for each year from 1975 to 1995 the estimated growth in National Health Service resources demanded by demographic change.

Mr. Hayhoe: The estimates of growth in demographic demand on the hospital and community health services are arrived at by weighting the estimated and projected population changes each year, based on the latest figures published by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys, by the estimated expenditure per head in those groups to give for each of the years in question the total expenditure, and thus the percentage growth required to meet demographic needs. The resultant estimates of annual increases in demographic demand are thus expenditure-based but should not be taken to imply that increased spending is the only way in which increased demand can be met; improved efficiency and cost improvement programmes play a significant part in developing services to meet the various pressures on the service. On the foregoing basis the increase in demographic demand on hospital and community health services for each year from 1975-76 to 1995-96 is estimated as follows:

Year	*Per cent.*
1975-76	0·0
1976-77	0·2
1977-78	0·3
1978-79	0·9
1979-80	1·2
1980-81	0·9
1981-82	0·3
1982-83	0·5
1983-84	0·5
1984-85	0·6
1985-86	1·1

Year	Per cent.
1986-87	1·0
1987-88	0·9
1988-89	0·8
1989-90	0·7
1990-91	0·6
1991-92	0·5
1992-93	0·2
1993-94	0·0
1994-95	0·1
1995-96	0·6

The effect of demographic changes is not identified separately from other pressures for the family practitioner services which are demand-led, but changes in population structure, and especially increases in the number of very elderly people, clearly lead to increased demand for these services as well.

Health Authorities (Documentation)

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will issue instructions to district health authorities reminding them of the entitlement of hon. Members to receive all documents and accounts which are available to authority members, even those for confidential consideration in connection with hospitals, services and overall management covering the constituency of the hon. Member concerned and to seek to improve compliance with those rules by all health authorities.

Mr. Whitney: Under Section 1(4) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 all members of the public are entitled to receive on request, and subject to appropriate payment, copies of the agenda and related documents for items to be discussed during that part of a health authority's meeting which is open to the public. There is no entitlement to receive confidential documents relating to items discussed in closed session. Hon. Members have no rights in this respect above those of any member of the public.

Supplementary Benefit

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for Social Services which paragraphs of circular S51/85 are still in force and which have been withdrawn.

Mr. Newton: The full contents of the circular are still in force.

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if claims for supplementary benefit from young people born on or after 1 February 1970 are being dealt with pending the further legal advice which the Office of the Chief Adjudication Officer is seeking on their position.

Mr. Newton: Claims received from these young people are determined by the independent adjudicating authorities and the chief adjudication officer's guidance on claims from school leavers is contained in the published S manual and S circulars.

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has about the number of claims for supplementary benefit being received at local offices from young people who left relevant education at or before Easter and about how many are being successful, the age of those applying, and how many have returned to school after Easter for 12 hours a week or less.

Mr. Newton: Local offices have been asked to record the number of successful claims to benefit made between 7 April 1986 and 3 June 1986 where payment has been made under the conditions outlined in circular S51/85 and in addition to record the number of successful claims made between May and the end of August 1986 where the claimant has left school before his legal school leaving date. The results of this exercise are not yet available.

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will place in the Library a copy of his Department's current circular explaining the rules governing claims to supplementary benefit by those who have recently left school.

Mr. Newton: A copy of the chief adjudication officer's published guidance—circular S51/85—is available in the Library.

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish in the *Official Report* the text of the circular sent by the Office of the Chief Adjudication Officer to the regional adjudication officers which informed them that further legal advice was being sought on the question of benefit for school-leavers.

Mr. Newton: No. The hon. Member may wish to pursue the question of the letter with the chief adjudication officer.

Voluntary Organisations (Grants)

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many voluntary organisations, funded by his Department, have not yet been informed of the level of their grant allocation for the financial year 1986-87; why this delay in notification has occurred; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Custodianship Allowances

Mr. Frank Cook asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to respond to the representations dated 7 November 1985, 20 November 1985 and 30 May 1986 concerning the treatment for social security purposes of custodianship allowances; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: If the hon. Member will provide me with further details of these representations, I shall write to him with the information he has requested.

Foster Parents (Supplementary Benefit)

Mr. Frank Cook asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he plans to amend the provisions of the Supplementary Benefit (Resources) Regulations as regards the position of foster parents in receipt of supplementary benefit who wish to seek custodianship orders; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: We are considering the treatment of custodianship payments across the range of means-tested benefits and will put forward any proposals for consultation in due course.

AIDS

Mr. Craigen asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish the names and occupations of the outside members of his Department's working party on acquired immunity deficiency syndrome convened under the auspices of the Chief Medical Officer; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: Membership of the expert advisory group on AIDS drawn from outside the four health departments is:

Member	*Organisation*
Professor M. Adler	Professor Genito-Urinary Medicine (London university) at the Middlesex hospital
Professor A. L. Bloom	Professor of haematology Welsh National School of Medicine
Dr. J. D. Cash	Consultant Adviser in Blood Transfusion (Scotland)
Dr. Contreras	Director, North London Blood Transfusion Centre
Dr. N. S. Galbraith	Epidemiologist — Director of the PHLS Communicable Disease Surveillance Centre (CDSC)
Professor A. Geddes	Consultant Physician, East Birmingham hospital
Dr. H. Gunson	Director, North Western Blood Transfusion Service, (Consultant Adviser to the CMO in Blood Transfusion)
Miss E. Jenner	Nursing representative (St. Mary's hospital)
Dr. D. B. L. McClelland	Regional Director, Edinburgh and SE Scotland Blood Transfusion Service
Dr. P. Mortimer	Consultant Virologist in the Virus Reference Laboratory of the Central Public Health Laboratory
Dr. D. Pereira-Gray	General Medical Practitioner (and Consultant Adviser in General Practice)
Dr. A. J. Pinching	Clinical Immunologist St. Mary's hospital medical school
Dr. J. W. G. Smith	Director, Public Health Laboratory Service
Dr. R. Tedder	Consultant Virologist—the Middlesex hospital
Dr. R. N. Thin	Consultant in Genito-Urinary Medicine (and Consultant Adviser to the CMO in GU Medicine) St. Thomas's hospital
Dr. D. A. J. Tyrrell CBE	Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Dangerous Pathogens (ACDP), Director MRC Common Cold Unit
Professor R. Weiss	Institute of Cancer Research (the Chester Beatty Institute)
Mr. R. Wells	Nursing representative (Royal College of Nursing)
Professor A. J. Zuckerman	Professor of Microbiology (University of London) at London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine

North-West RHA (Computers)

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what discussions he has had with the North-West regional health authority concerning the DHSS audit report and the authority's conduct in relation to the procurement and development of the integrated personnel system and the patient administration system computers.

Mr. Whitney: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Bethlem Royal and Maudsley Special Health Authority

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will make a statement on the outcome of the meeting between the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Wycombe (Mr. Whitney) and representatives of the Bethlem Royal and Maudsley special health authority on 12 June.

Mr. Whitney: This was a useful meeting at which a number of issues were clarified. I emphasised the importance of the authority bringing its budget back into balance no later than the end of March 1988 and taking early decisions to achieve this but promised to look sympathetically at a number of issues raised by this authority, whose work the Government value greatly. I am writing to the chairman of the authority to confirm the points we agreed.

Benefits

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many students he estimates will be worse off, and how many will be better off, in 1986-87 as a result of the changes to student entitlement to supplementary benefit and to housing benefit allowances announced on 18 June.

Mr. Newton: Over 400,000 students in total will be affected by the proposals. It is estimated that some 140,000 living away from home will gain the full £36 increase in the grant. Of the remainder, some will make smaller gains, the effect for others will be neutral overall and some will sustain losses in their combined grant and social security entitlement. The net effect for those who make either a partial gain or loss will depend entirely on the individual's circumstances and estimates of numbers likely to have particular levels of gain or loss are not possible. However, in general, any losses from the various measures will not be cumulative.

Health Authorities (Tendering)

Mr. Chope asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a further statement on the progress made by health authorities on competitive tendering in the fields of catering, cleaning and laundry and give details in each case as to whether contracts have been awarded in-house or to outside contractors.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will publish in the *Official Report* details of the progress made by district health authorities in putting their services out to tender in the manner of the answer given on 14 April, *Official Report*, columns *273-80*

(2) if he will name for each tendering exercise of which his Department is aware and which was completed since his answer of 14 April, *Official Report*, columns *279-86*, the health authority, the hospital concerned and the successful tenderer.

Mr. Fowler [*pursuant to his reply*, 16 June 1986, c. *447*]: The policy of competitive tendering is producing increasing benefits for the Health Service. The resources that are released are available for health authorities to spend on improvements in services to patients. Savings have built up steadily. At the end of 1984 they amounted

to £9 million a year. At the end of 1985 they had risen to £42 million a year. In the first quarter of 1986 alone further savings of some £10 million a year have been identified. It is now estimated that a total of £52 million a year will be saved through competitive tendering exercises completed by 31 March 1986. One hundred and forty eight contracts have been let to private contractors with estimated annual savings of £21·5 million. Five hundred and twenty two tenders have been secured by in-house organisations with estimated annual savings of £30·5 million.

Table A summarises the position in each health authority.

A list of results of further tendering exercises of which we are aware is shown in table B.

Table A
Health Authorities Competitive Tendering: Position on 31 March 1986

Districts	*Percentage of Service put out to Tender*			*Estimated Annual Savings £'000*
	Catering	*Domestic*	*Laundry*	
Northern RHA				
Hartlepool	12	30	nil	42
North Tees	nil	100	nil	14
South Tees	100	29	nil	167
East Cumbria	5	27	7	156
South Cumbria	nil	100	100	257
West Cumbria	nil	3	nil	1
Darlington	100	100	100	300
Durham	nil	22	100	54
North West Durham	nil	100	100	141
South West Durham	2	2	nil	nil
Newcastle	54	79	22	1,025
North Tyneside	nil	60	100	176
South Tyneside	38	96	nil	271
Sunderland	3	5	nil	24
Northumberland	11	15	29	108
Gateshead	51	43	nil	375
Yorkshire RHA				
Hull	13	25	nil	173
East Yorkshire	nil	26	56	298
Grimsby	76	52	nil	223
Scunthorpe	85	71	nil	289
Northallerton	100	nil	100	16
York	100	90	nil	645
Scarborough	64	24	100	54
Harrogate	21	34	nil	41
Bradford	nil	51	nil	318
Airedale	32	21	nil	28
Calderdale	100	100	100	530
Huddersfield	nil	72	44	597
Dewsbury	nil	47	100	397
Leeds Eastern	nil	nil	nil	nil
Leeds Western	24	27	100	272
Wakefield	11	86	100	369
Pontefract	nil	100	100	485
Trent RHA				
North Derbyshire	88	83	nil	546
South Derbyshire	nil	26	nil	85
Leicestershire	46	50	nil	783
North Lincolnshire	1	33	100	194
South Lincolnshire	100	35	nil	168
Bassetlaw	nil	84	100	25
C. Notts.	nil	75	nil	453
Nottingham	44	14	9	306
Barnsley	23	23	100	258
Doncaster	14	39	80	195
Rotherham	nil	21	nil	33
Sheffield	27	37	100	455
East Anglian RHA				
Cambridge	41	85	nil	481
Peterborough	nil	79	nil	115
Huntingdon	nil	100	100	493
Great Yarmouth/Waverley	80	91	100	304
West Norfolk/Wisbech	100	100	100	399
Norwich	13	87	100	1,038
West Suffolk	nil	100	nil	160
East Suffolk	19	79	100	42
North West Thames RHA				
North bedfordshire	100	100	100	146

Districts	Percentage of Service put out to Tender			Estimated Annual Savings £'000
	Catering	Domestic	Laundry	
South Bedfordshire	nil	100	100	285
North Hertfordshire	nil	1	100	18
North West Herfordshire	16	21	100	219
South West Hertfordshire	nil	42	nil	194
East Hertfordshire	nil	100	100	nil
Barnet	100	100	100	8
Harrow	100	100	100	295
Hillingdon	82	100	100	457
Ealing	100	100	100	526
Hounslow/Spelthorne	nil	100	100	1,412
Hammersmith/Fulham	nil	100	100	1,053
Paddington and North Kensington	100	90	100	853
Victoria	100	100	75	1,385
Brent	nil	nil	nil	nil
North East Thames RHA				
Barking	100	57	nil	565
Basildon	nil	40	100	109
Bloomsbury	nil	nil	100	176
City and Hackney	nil	nil	100	136
Enfield	nil	57	100	292
Hampstead	nil	nil	67	26
Haringey	nil	100	nil	334
Islington	2	19	nil	7
Mid Essex	nil	70	100	734
Newham	nil	53	100	358
Redbridge	nil	19	nil	130
Tower Hamlets	nil	65	100	271
Waltham Forest	10	68	40	120
West Essex	35	32	100	184
Southend	nil	81	100	383
North East Essex	58	40	nil	218
South West Thames RHA				
North West Surrey	nil	87	100	462
West Surrey/NE Hants	10	30	94	94
East Surrey	nil	76	36	620
Mid Surrey	30	90	30	107
South West Surrey	26	24	100	233
Mid Downs	86	79	100	337
Chichester	45	59	100	389
Worthing	100	51	nil	240
Kingston/Esher	8	53	94	564
Croydon	nil	18	62	180
Richmond/Twickenham Roehampton	72	66	93	799
Wandsworth	60	98	100	903
Merton/Sutton	54	88	26	1,170
South East Thames RHA				
Bexley	nil	97	100	279
Brighton	38	27	nil	90
Bromley	100	100	100	904
Camberwell	100	100	100	56
Canterbury/Thanet	81	84	nil	403
Dartford/Gravesham	nil	43	100	nil
Eastbourne	55	72	nil	152
Greenwich	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Hastings	34	55	Nil	67
Lewisham-North Southwark	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Maidstone	35	100	100	496
Medway	57	83	Nil	326
South East Kent	100	100	Nil	337
Tunbridge Wells	13	26	Nil	Nil
West Lambeth	Nil	5	100	217
Wessex Regional Health Authority				
East Dorset	73	59	100	626
West Dorset	100	100	25	Nil
Portsmouth	40	50	100	407
Southampton	Nil	78	100	261
Winchester	33	67	100	75
Basingstoke	Nil	75	100	36

Districts	Percentage of Service put out to Tender			Estimated Annual Savings £000
	Catering	Domestic	Laundry	
Salisbury	100	74	100	377
Swindon	100	75	100	73
Bath	100	100	100	150
Isle of Wight	Nil	67	100	15
Oxford Regional Health Authority				
East Berkshire	Nil	6	Nil	61
West Berkshire	6	11	Nil	118
Aylesbury Vale	54	100	100	526
Milton Keynes	100	100	100	98
Wycombe	Nil	100	Nil	134
Kettering	Nil	100	100	140
Northampton	2	15	100	52
Oxford	7	75	Nil	705
South Western Regional Health Authority				
Cheltenham	100	24	100	31
Gloucester	Nil	72	100	86
Frenchay	37	36	Nil	76
Bristol-Weston	Nil	92	100	226
Southmead	40	25	100	145
Somerset	79	57	100	588
Exeter	11	14	100	Nil
North Devon	Nil	100	100	131
Torbay	100	30	Nil	188
Plymouth	Nil	Nil	100	60
Cornwall-Isles of Scilly	26	49	100	770
West Midlands Regional Health Authority				
Mid Staffordshire	13	50	Nil	244
South Warwickshire	10	17	100	146
Kidderminster	Nil	Nil	100	90
Shropshire	Nil	24	Nil	247
North Staffordshire	19	7	Nil	136
Coventry	Nil	4	Nil	8
Bromsgrove and Redditch	Nil	34	100	100
Herefordshire	Nil	47	Nil	147
Rugby	100	26	100	10
North Warwickshire	Nil	3	100	74
Solihull	82	82	Nil	459
Wolverhampton	24	Nil	Nil	116
Walsall	100	Nil	Nil	72
North Birmingham	26	24	Nil	105
Dudley	Nil	42	Nil	297
Sandwell	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
East Birmingham	nil	27	nil	154
Central Birmingham	78	34	nil	810
South Birmingham	15	15	100	334
South East Staffordshire	29	52	nil	219
Worcester	nil	13	nil	21
West Birmingham	nil	nil	nil	nil
Mersey RHA				
Southport/Formby	100	100	100	155
South Sefton	nil	55	100	48
St. Helens/Knowsley	100	nil	100	808
Wirral	100	100	nil	560
Liverpool	30	11	100	nil
Macclesfield	nil	84	nil	398
Halton	66	100	100	47
Warrington	45	97	nil	708
Chester	100	100	100	1,086
Crewe	43	90	nil	577
North Western RHA				
North Manchester	nil	15	nil	7
Central Manchester	100	nil	100	323
Wigan	55	53	100	157
Stockport	94	17	nil	240
Tameside/Glossop	28	nil	nil	2
Bolton	nil	94	nil	nil
Bury	100	100	100	429
Chorley/South Ribble	nil	100	nil	15
Preston	nil	38	nil	nil

Districts	Percentage of Service put out to Tender			Estimated Annual Savings £'000
	Catering	Domestic	Laundry	
Lancaster	4	37	nil	41
Blackpool	nil	9	nil	7
Burnley	50	39	100	nil
South Manchester	nil	4	nil	19
Trafford	nil	50	100	189
Oldham	36	72	nil	13
Salford	nil	5	100	189
West Lancashire	nil	16	100	4
Blackburn	nil	31	nil	nil
Rochdale	12	27	nil	16
Special Health Authorities				
Bethlem and Maudsley	100	100	100	87
Eastman	100	100	100	nil
Hammersmith and Queen Charlottes	0	90	100	969
Hospital for Sick Children	0	0	100	nil
Moorfields	0	100	100	30
National Heart and Chest	0	76	100	50
National Hospital for Nervous Diseases	0	0	100	nil
Royal Marsden	0	100	100	206

TABLE B

Results of Tendering—Domestic Services

Health Authority	Hospital	Contractor or In-House
Northern Regional Health Authority		
Hartlepool	Cameron Hospital	In-House
South Tees	North Riding Infirmary	In-House
	Stead Memorial Hospital	In-House
East Cumbria	Carlisle Acute Hospital	In-House
Durham	Earls House Hospital	In-House
South Tyneside	Community	In-House
	South Tyneside General	In-House
Yorkshire Regional Health Authority		
Hull	Community	In-House
Wakefield	District	In-House
Huddersfield	Storthes Hall	In-House
York	York District	In-House
Harrogate	Whixley	In-House
Bradford	St. Lukes	In-House
	Community	In-House
	Northern View and Others	In-House
Trent Regional Health Authority		
North Derbyshire	Community	In-House
	Newholme/Bakewell	In-House
	Chesterfield/North Derbyshire Royal Hospital	In-House
	Walton	In-House
North Lincolnshire	Harmston Hall	In-House
South Lincolnshire	Rauceby	Crothalls
Bassetlaw	Community	In-House
Central Nottinghamshire	Kings Mill	In-House
	Community	In-House
Rotherham	D G H Residences	In-House
Sheffield	Mental Handicap	In-House
	Nether Edge	In-House
	St. George's	In-House
East Anglian Regional Health Authority		
Norwich	Mental Illness	Reckitts
Great Yarmouth	Northgate Hospital	In-House
North West Thames Regional Health Authority		
North West Hertfordshire	Hemel Hempstead	In-House
Hillingdon	Community	Andmarc Services
	Mount Vernon	Mediclean
	Hillingdon	ICC
Hammersmith/Fulham	Charing Cross	Exclusive

Health Authority	Hospital	Contractor or In-House
	West London/Community	Exclusive
Victoria	Community	Exclusive
	St. Stephens	In-House
Paddington	St. Charles	Mediclean
North East Thames Regional Health Authority		
Newham	St. Andrews	RCO
Enfield	Chase Farm	In-House
Basildon	Community	Victoria, Window and General Cleaning Services
Barking	High Wood	In-House
Southend	Rochford and Shoebury	In-House
Waltham Forest	Community	In-House
South East Thames Regional Health Authority		
Brighton	Alexandra	In-House
	Bevendean	In-House
Bexley	Bexley Hospital	In-House
	Queen Mary's	RCO
Hastings	Battle	In-House
South East Kent	Dover	In-House
West Lambeth	St. Johns/Lisle Street	Victoria, Window and General Cleaning Services
	St. Johns/Homerton Grove	RCO
	Community	In-House
South West Thames Regional Health Authority		
West Surrey	Brookwood	In-House
Mid Surrey	Epsom District	RCO
	West Park	In-House
Kingston	Tolworth	Exclusive
Wessex Regional Health Authority		
East Dorset	Kings Park Unit	In-House
	Royal Victoria	In-House
	St. Leonards	In-House
Portsmouth	St. James	Crothalls
	Jubilee	In-House
Southampton	Knowle	In-House
	Community	Knight
	Moorgreen	In-House
Salisbury	Barnards Cross	In-House
	Odstock	In-House
Swindon	Marlborough Childrens	In-House
Oxford Regional Health Authority		
Northampton	St. Edmunds	RCO
South Western Regional Health Authority		
Bristol	Farleigh	In-House
	Weston	In-House
Gloucester	Cashes Green Hospital	In-House
	Forest of Dean Health Centres	In-House
	Corey Hill Hospital	In-House
Cornwall	St. Austell Group	In-House
West Midlands Regional Health Authority		
Shropshire	Shelton	In-House
Coventry	Community	In-House
Dudley	Corbett Hospital	In-House
Solihull	Hollymoor	In-House
Mersey Regional Health Authority		
Warrington	Newchurch	In-House
Southport	Greaves Hall	In-House
Wirral	St. Catherine's	Crothalls
	Community	In-House
North Western Regional Health Authority		
Blackpool	Community	In-House
Bury	Fairfield General	ISS
	Bury General and Others	ISS
Lancaster	Ridge Lea	In-House
North Manchester	Northern	In-House
	Community	In-House
South Manchester	Community	In-House

Health Authority	Hospital	Contractor or In-House
Stockport	Devonshire Royal	In-House
Wigan	Whelley	In-House
Special Health Authorities		
Hammersmith		Mediclean
Queen Charlottes		Mediclean
Moorfields Eye Hospital		In-House
National Heart Hospital		Sunlight
Royal Marsden London		In-House
Royal Marsden Sutton		ISS

CATERING SERVICES

Northern Regional Health Authority		
South Tyneside	Ingham Infirmary	In-House
Yorkshire Regional Health Authority		
Scarborough	Scarborough	In-House
Scunthorpe	Goole Unit	In-House
York	District	In-House
Trent Regional Health Authority		
North Derbyshire	North Derbyshire Royal Hospital	In-House
	Newholme/Bakewell	In-House
	Penmore	In-House
Nottingham	Highbury	In-House
Sheffield	Chapeltown Nursing Home	In-House
	Weston Park and Others	In-House
	St. Georges	In-House
	King Edward VII	In-House
East Anglian Regional Health Authority		
Great Yarmouth	James Paget Hospital	In-House
North West Thames Regional Health Authority		
Harrow	District	Spinneys
Hillingdon	Hillingdon Hospital	In-House
South East Thames Regional Health Authority		
Brighton	New Sussex	In-House
South West Thames Regional Health Authority		
Mid-Downs	Cuckfield	In-House
	Horsham	In-House
Wessex Regional Health Authority		
East Dorset	Royal Victoria	In-House
Salisbury	Odstock	In-House
	Salisbury General Infirmary	In-House
	Old Manor	In-House
	Shaftesbury	In-House
	Fordingbridge	In-House
Swindon	Marlborough Childrens	In-House
	St. Margarets	In-House
South Western Regional Health Authority		
Somerset	Minehead/Williton Hospitals	In-House
West Midlands Regional Health Authority		
Central Birmingham	Childrens	In-House
	Moseley Hall	In-House
Solihull	Marston Green	In-House
Wolverhampton	The Royal and Others	In-House
Mersey Regional Health Authority		
Chester	Psychiatric	In-House
	Manor Hospital	In-House
	Ellesmere Port Hospital	In-House
	Chester Hospital	In-House
	General and Maternity	In-House
Wirral	St. Catherines	In-House
	Community	In-House
North Western Regional Health Authority		
Bury	Bury General	In-House

Health Authority	*Hospital*	*Contractor or In-House*
Central Manchester	St. Mary's	In-House
Stockport	Mauldeth House	In-House
Special Health Authorities		
Bethlem and Maudsley		Spinneys

Laundry Services

Trent Regional Health Authority		
Bassetlaw	District	In-House
Barnsley	District	In-House
Doncaster	Royal Infirmary	In-House
Sheffield	Royal Hallamshire	In-House
North East Thames Regional Health Authority		
City and Hackney	District	In-House
Hampstead	Royal Free	In-House
Bloomsbury	District	In-House
South West Thames Regional Health Authority		
Chichester	District	In-House
Oxford Regional Health Authority		
Northampton	District	Initial
West Midlands Regional Health Authority		
South Warwickshire	Warwick/Central	In-House
South Birmingham	District	In-House
Mersey Regional Health Authority		
South Sefton	Fazakerley	In-House
North Western Regional Health Authority		
Trafford	District	In-House
Special Health Authorities		
Hammersmith		Sunlight
Queen Charlotte		Westcotts
	Chelsea	Westcotts
Royal Marsden		In-House

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 24 June 1986

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

New Zealand (Exports)

Mr. Alexander asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what discussions he has had with the New Zealand Government or the New Zealand Dairy Board about the exportation to the United Kingdom by New Zealand of milk or dairy products which did not originate in New Zealand.

Mr. Gummer: There have been no imports from New Zealand to the United Kingdom in recent years of milk or dairy products which did not originate in New Zealand. Anchor Foods Ltd., a wholly-owned subsidiary of the New Zealand Dairy Board registered in the United Kingdom, has, I understand, imported into the United Kingdom small quantities of dairy products from other member states of the Community. Such imports will have been subject to the normal rules for intra-Community trade, not the special arrangements for imports from New Zealand. My officials, in conjunction with those of Her Majesty's Customs and Excise, monitor the import of New Zealand butter sent under the special arrangements. They also keep in regular contact with the New Zealand Government and the New Zealand Dairy Board about matters such as the trading activities of the New Zealand Dairy Board.

Sugar

Mr. Nicholas Baker asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will seek to renegotiate the terms of the subsidy paid by the European Economic Community to sugar producers with a view to reducing the price of sugar to commercial beekeepers and others within the European Economic Community; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: No subsidy as such is paid to Community sugar producers although refunds funded mainly by levies on producers apply to exports of surplus quota sugar to third countries. Previous Community schemes to provide reduced price sugar to beekeepers have not been cost effective, resulting in high unit administrative costs and little increase in sugar consumption, with less than 2 per cent. of the subsidised sugar under the last scheme being used in the United Kingdom. Moreover, the denaturing of the sugar required to prevent abuse has created problems for beekeepers. We therefore have no plans to press the Commission to introduce another such scheme. We do, however, support price restraint in the sugar sector and I am pleased to say that, over the last three years' price fixings, the effective support price for white sugar in the United Kingdom has increased by a total of only 2·1 per cent., which represents a substantial reduction in real terms.

Chemical Fertilisers and Pesticides

Mr. Hancock asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what studies have been carried out to assess the effect of chemical fertilisers and pesticides on water supplies, and the long-term effect on soils and wildlife in agricultural land; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Fenner: There have in recent years been many studies relating to the effects of fertilisers and pesticides. My Department has been closely involved in a number of these, including a three-year study on the ecological effects of pesticides used in various ways at the Boxworth experimental farm, from which the report is now being finalised. My officials are also working currently with others on the forthcoming report of the nitrate co-ordination group, which concerns nitrate in water.

PRIME MINISTER

Ashow (Visit)

Q14. **Mr. Pawsey** asked the Prime Minister if she has any plans to pay an official visit to the village of Ashow, near Kenilworth.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

F111 Aircraft

Q31. **Mr. Dalyell** asked the Prime Minister if, pursuant to her answer of 5 June to the hon. Member for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond), *Official Report*, column 1086, she will seek the necessary permission to enable her to reveal the source of the advice from the United States of America to the effect that F111 aircraft were more accurate and precise than carrier-based aircraft.

The Prime Minister: No.

Surplus Food

Q35. **Mr. Teddy Taylor** asked the Prime Minister if she will raise at the next meeting of the European Council the impact on the Third world of the European Economic Community policy of disposing of surplus foodstuffs on the world market; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I expect the European Council to discuss the problem of world agricultural surplus production and trade, to which the Community's surpluses contribute along with those of others notably the USA. This will no doubt include the effect of the surpluses on the economies of certain developing countries, a factor which was acknowledged in the declaration issued by the recent summit meeting in Tokyo.

Engagements

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 24 June.

Mr. Pike asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 24 June.

Mr. Harry Greenway asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 24 June.

Mr. Greville Janner asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 24 June.

The Prime Minister: This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House I shall be having further meetings later today. This evening I hope to have an audience of Her Majesty the Queen.

Disabled People

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Prime Minister if Her Majesty's Government will make it their policy to expand rehabilitation facilities for disabled people of all ages in the United Kingdom; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: As indicated in "Care in Action" Government priorities for health and social services already include provision of services for physically and sensorily handicapped, mentally ill and mentally handicapped people of all ages. These priorities apply to services both in hospitals and in the community. There has been a steady expansion in the number of therapy staff employed in provision of these services and regional health authorities' strategies show plans for further substantial increases.

The Government are considering urgently the recommendation in the McColl report about the artificial limb and appliance centre services, with a view to further improving the services they provide.

Considerable progress has also been made in developing support and assistance for disabled people living in the community. Through joint funding and the "Care in the Community" arrangements which are aimed at assisting the transfer into the community of people who do not need to be cared for in long-stay hospitals the Government have assisted the development of services for the most vulnerable groups.

Our initiatives on "Helping the Community to Care" based on central funding for voluntary bodies will also benefit people to whom the hon. Member's question refers.

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Prime Minister what discussions have taken place between Her Majesty's Government and the United Nations regarding the implementation of the world programme of action concerning disabled persons; if she will make it Her Majesty's Government's policy to help to promote further steps to implement the world programme in the second half of the decade; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The Government have kept the United Nations Secretariat informed of the development of services for disabled people in the United Kingdom. These developments broadly reflect the aims and recommendations obtained in the world programme of action.

I have referred in another answer to the hon. Member today to the development of rehabilitation and other health and social services which benefit disabled people. Progress has also been made on a number of other fronts.

The Government have commissioned the first comprehensive study of disablement in the population for some 16 years. The information it will provide is essential if we are to make the best use of available resources in future planning for benefits and services for disabled people.

Total expenditure on cash benefits for long-term sick and disabled people in 1985-86 was over £5·1 billion. This represents an increase in real terms of some 53 per cent. since 1978-79.

The implementation of the Education Act 1981 has improved the arrangements for the assessment and integration of children with special educational needs.

There have been important developments in the key field of access. Amendments to the building regulations introduced in 1985 require developers to provide access facilities for disabled people in some categories of new public buildings. In 1984 the Government funded the establishment of the Access Committee for England, in which disabled people have a prominent voice, to help promote awareness of the access needs of disabled people and encourage provision for them.

The Transport Act 1985 established the Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee, half of whose members must themselves be disabled, to advise the Department of Transport on all aspects of transport and mobility for disabled people. In 1985 the Department of Transport also set up a mobility advice and vehicle information service to provide practical advice on driving, or adaptations, and car choice for disabled drivers and passengers.

In November 1984 I was pleased to launch the first code of good practice on employment of disabled people, endorsed by both the CBI and the TUC, to encourage greater employment opportunities.

The Government will continue to seek opportunities for making improvements in facilities and opportunities for disabled people.

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Prime Minister what co-operation is taking place between her Government and other nations involved in the world programme of action concerning disabled people in stimulating better rehabilitation facilities in the underdeveloped world; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: As I explained to the hon. Member on 18 June, at column *546*, we support the general aims of the United Nations world programme of action concerning disabled persons by giving direct assistance to specific projects under our bilateral aid programmes. In this way, we support rehabilitation programmes for disabled people in Bangladesh, India, Malaysia, St. Helena and Zimbabwe. We are also funding jointly with various British charities rehabilitation programmes and projects to assist disabled people in Bangladesh (two projects), Botswana, India (10 projects), Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Zaire and Zimbabwe (two projects).

In addition, the health aid programme of the Overseas Development Administration is directed at improving the availability of basic health services in the developing world. The programme contributes directly and indirectly to the welfare of the disabled and helps to prevent disability.

South Africa

Mr. Frank Field asked the Prime Minister, pursuant to her answer of 18 June, *Official Report*, column *546*, what steps she has taken to encourage compliance in respect of those companies which refuse to make returns for their operations in South Africa; and if she will list each of the initiatives Her Majesty's Government has taken during the

past 12 months to encourage British firms to comply fully with the provisions of the European Economic Community code of conduct.

The Prime Minister: The Government do not comment publicly on individual company reports volunteered under the EC code of conduct. They are made available publicly and speak for themselves. But in their normal contacts with companies, Ministers and officials encourage them to comply fully.

Mr. Frank Field asked the Prime Minister which Department first became aware that the version of the European Economic Community code of conduct for firms operating in South Africa made available to the public contained a misquote.

The Prime Minister: The Department of Trade and Industry.

SCOTLAND

Labour Statistics

95. **Mr. Ron Brown** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many young people under the age of 25 years are currently unemployed in Lothian region.

Mr. Allan Stewart: On 10 April 1986, the latest date for which information is available, the number of unemployed people claiming benefit in Lothian region under the age of 25 years was 17,786.

Drink Offenders

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many places have been designated in terms of section 5 of the Criminal Jurisdiction (Scotland) Act 1980; and if he plans to increase the numbers of places designated.

Mr. John MacKay: At present one establishment, Albyn house, Aberdeen, is designated by my right hon. and learned Friend under section 5 of the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 1980 as suitable for the care of drunken persons. A second establishment, Annan house, Dundee, is due to be opened by the Church of Scotland later this year, although formal designation has not yet been completed. I understand that proposals are also being devised for designated places in Inverness and at various locations in Strathclyde.

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what savings have been made by diverting habitual drink offenders from the criminal justice system by the establishment of the designated place Albyn house, Aberdeen; and what were the specific savings made for *(a)* the police, *(b)* the courts and *(c)* Her Majesty's prisons for 1984 and 1985, arising therefrom.

Mr. John MacKay: It is not feasible to quantify the benefits of Albyn house on the line suggested. However, the facility has undoubtedly released police manpower in the Aberdeen area for other duties and diverted cases from the courts and prisons. But the principal benefit of this use of the relevant provisions of the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 1980 (under which Albyn house is designated) is that for the offenders concerned this provides a much more constructive approach to the problems of habitual drunkenness.

Forth Estuary (Sewage Disposal)

Dr. Roger Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has as to how much sewage is disposed of into the Forth estuary from *(a)* pipelines and *(b)* ships.

Mr. Ancram: Sewage from a population of some 1·2 million people plus industry and commerce is discharged from local authority sewers to the Firth of Forth, including the estuary and tidal reaches of rivers. This amounts to some 115 million gallons per day, of which 80 per cent. is treated. The Scottish Development Department has no information on the volume of sewage discharged from ships.

Secondary Schools

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what percentage of secondary schools in Scotland are selective; and what were the comparable figures for 1979, 1970, and 1960, respectively.

Mr. Allan Stewart: There are no state schools at present with a purely selective intake policy. The information requested for past years is shown in the table. Comparable information is not available prior to school session 1966-67.

	Per cent.
1979-80	1·8
1970-71	38·8
1966-67	64·0

Holy Loch (Radioactivity)

Mr. Frank Cook asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will provide details of the levels of radioactive contamination and the isotopes identified in the mud flats of the Holy loch in 1965 and in 1978.

Mr. Ancram: The fisheries laboratory of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food undertakes independent monitoring of the Holy loch in respect of the United States naval base. The results for 1978 which include radionuclides in sediments were published in the laboratory's aquatic environment monitoring report No. 4. The concentrations of man-made radioactivity reported were very low and of no significance radiologically.

Although the Holy loch has been monitored regularly by MAFF since the United States base was established, the results for earlier years were not included in the monitoring reports because at that time details of all aspects of the operation of the base were classified. I am assured that the results for 1965 showed no grounds for concern and in terms of doses to people were well within the internationally recommended standard of radiological protection.

Water and Drainage Schemes (Rural Villages)

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he has any plans to assist local authorities to finance water and drainage schemes in small villages which cannot sustain large enough housing developments to make the investment in water and drainage infrastructure economically viable.

Mr. Ancram: Regional and islands councils have a duty to provide water and drainage services where this can be

done at reasonable cost. Where provision of water supplies in a rural area would impose a significant financial burden on the council, grant assistance is available towards capital expenditure under the Rural Water Supplies and Sewerage Acts. The grant is payable on approved expenditure, subject to a ceiling cost per property served, at a rate between 30 and 75 per cent. depending on the needs and resources of the council.

Grant assistance for rural sewerage schemes was terminated as from 31 March 1986, after consultation with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, but loan charges incurred in respect of capital expenditure on drainage works continue to count as relevant expenditure for the purpose of distributing rate support grant.

Private Hospitals (Diseases)

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if, under public health legislation, there have been any reports to him in 1984, 1985 and 1986 of outbreaks of infectious diseases or salmonella poisoning in any of Scotland's private hospitals.

Mr. John MacKay: I am informed that no such outbreaks have been reported to the communicable diseases unit of the Common Services Agency for the Scottish Health Service in any of the years specified.

Employment (Stirling)

Mr. Michael Forsyth asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if, further to his answer of 16 June, *Official Report*, he will publish the information on the structure of employment in the Queensland division of the Stirling constituency which was available to him when he decided not to include that area within the Highlands and Islands Development Board.

Mr. John MacKay [*pursuant to his reply*, 16 June 1986, c. *419*]: In analysing the case for an extension of the Highlands and Islands Development Board area my right hon. and learned Friend used the percentages of persons employed in several categories of employment, together with the unemployed as surrogates for employment structure. A qualitative analysis of the areas adjoining the HIDB area as a whole was undertaken to determine whether their employment structure was better than the average for the board's area. These qualitative assessments when taken along with similar assessments of other factors clearly showed that only parts of Moray district could be considered as satisfying the criteria for inclusion in the board's area. Information is not therefore available in the form requested.

ENERGY

Director General of Gas Supply

Dr. Michael Clark asked the Secretary of State for Energy what plans he has to appoint a Director General of Gas Supply.

Mr. Peter Walker: Subject to Parliament approving the Gas Bill, I intend to appoint Mr. James McKinnon to be Director General of Gas Supply. His appointment will be full-time and run for a period of three years from the day on which the Office of Gas Supply is set up under the new legislation.

Mr. McKinnon is an accountant with considerable experience in commerce and until recently was finance director of the Imperial Group. His background is ideally suited to assessing the financial information needed to carry out his duties in safeguarding the interests of consumers.

The Gas Bill contains powers for the Director to monitor and enforce the authorisation to be given to British Gas as a public gas supplier. The director, together with the Gas Consumers' Council will provide greatly improved protection for consumers, compared with present arrangements.

Coal Industry

93. **Mr. Alex Carlile** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what estimate he has of the effect on employment in the coal industry of the recent reduction in the price of coal being sold to the Central Electricity Generating Board.

Mr. David Hunt: The recently concluded deal between the NCB and the CEGB on coal prices will help to secure the future of the coal industry. Details of employment within the coal industry are a matter for the NCB.

Nuclear Industry

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Energy whether he will now make available all those documents relating to the foundation of the United Kingdom civil nuclear programme withheld from public inspection for beyond a period of 30 years.

Mr. Goodlad: No. The disclosure of such documents would be contrary to the national interest.

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list those matters relating to nuclear activities for which he is responsible on which it is his policy to withold information on the grounds of *(a)* national security, *(b)* commercial confidentiality, *(c)* history and *(d)* cost of provision, respectively; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: My right hon. Friend has made clear his commitment to openness with respect to the nuclear industry. Requests for information are considered individually, taking into account the considerations listed by the hon. Member. A question would not, however, be answered when the information requested could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will publish in the *Official Report* the total cost to date of research and development for the Magnox nuclear programme and the advanced gas cooled reactor nuclear programmes, and indicate the extent to which these costs were borne by the electricity boards.

Mr. Goodlad: This information is not held centrally in the form requested and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. On the Magnox programme I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) of 23 July at column *470*.

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Energy what proportion of the total weight of plutonium reprocessed at Sellafield originated from Central Electricity Generating Board installations, in the period 1970 to 1985.

Mr. Goodlad: It would not be in the national interest to disclose this information as this would assist the calculation of plutonium produced for defence purposes.

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will review his Department's information programme in relation to nuclear energy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: The Government wish to ensure that full and reliable information on the nature and uses of civil nuclear power is readily available to the public. Apart from its day-to-day press services, the Department provides funds for the UKAEA to prepare and publish a range of information about nuclear energy. This programme of expenditure by the UKAEA is reviewed periodically by the Department, as are all its expenditure programmes.

Magnox Nuclear Reactors

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Energy what have been the capital investment costs of Magnox stations in constant pounds since 1956.

Mr. Goodlad: The Central Electricity Generating Board, the South of Scotland Electricity Board and British Nuclear Fuels plc advise that these costs were some £5,660 million at constant March 1986 prices. The original costs have been inflated using the retail price index.

Plutonium

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Energy whether he will state the total weight of plutonium exported for civil use since May 1979, and give the amount, by weight exported to each country involved.

Mr. Goodlad: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will place in the Library copies of all correspondence between himself and the chairman of the Central Electricity Generating Board between January 1983 and May 1986 concerning the use of plutonium produced from civil nuclear power in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: No. It is not the practice to publish correspondence between Ministers and the chairmen of nationalised industries.

Potassium Iodate

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list all occasions that potassium iodate (iodine) has been issued to workers or civilians at or around nuclear stations in the United Kingdom; what dosage was administered on each occasion; and if he will give details of any side effects recorded.

Mr. Goodlad [*pursuant to the reply*, 18 June 1986, c. *578-79*]: In so far as these details are available, they are contained in the Health and Safety Executive's quarterly statements of nuclear incidents, which are published and placed in the Library of the House.

THE ARTS

Export of Works of Art

Mr. Faulds asked the Minister for the Arts whether, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Warley, East on 26 February *Official Report*, column 593, he is now able to announce the publication of the report of the Reveiwing Committee on the Export of Works of Art covering the year ended 30 June 1985.

Mr. Luce: I expect to present it to Parliament and to publish it on 27 June.

EMPLOYMENT

Employment Initiatives

13. **Mr. Baldry** asked the Paymaster General what progress is being made on the employment initiatives that the Paymaster General announced in Luxembourg in the current month; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Together with the Employment Ministers from Italy and the Irish Republic I tabled a paper entitled "Employment Growth into the 1990s—A Strategy for the labour market" at the EC Council of Labour and Social Affairs Ministers in Luxembourg on 5 June. The Council welcomed the paper and agreed that discussion on it should continue at the informal meeting of Social Affairs Ministers in Edinburgh in September. The United Kingdom's aim, shared by those countries with which we tabled the paper, is to secure the adoption by the European Community of an employment strategy along the lines of the paper during the forthcoming United Kingdom Presidency of the Community.

Labour Statistics

14. **Mr. Flannery** asked the Paymaster General what is the latest figure of United Kingdom unemployed people.

Mr. Lang: On 8 May 1986, the number of unemployed claimants in the United Kingdom was 3,271,000.

15. **Mr. Pavitt** asked the Paymaster General if he will publish in the *Official Report* the number of unemployed in Willesden and Wembley on 1 June for each year since 1979.

Mr. Lang: Following is the available information. The table shows the numbers of unemployed claimants in an area closely corresponding to that covered by the Willesden and Wembley jobcentres on the unemployment count date in June 1983, 1984 and 1985. Statistics of unemployment for local areas are derived from the new ward-based system and are available only since June 1983. Information for 12 June 1986 will be available in the Library on 17 July.

Unemployed claimants in Wembley and Willesden—June each year

	Number
9 June 1983	8,911
14 June 1984	9,357
13 June 1985	9,568

Note:
These figures relate to the following wards: Alperton, Barham,

Barnhill, Kenton, Kingsbury, Preston, St. Andrews, Sudbury, Sudbury Court, Tokyngton, Wembley Central, Chamberlayne, Church End, Harlesden, Kensal Rise, Manor, Roundwood, St. Raphaels and Stonebridge.

19. **Mr. Canavan** asked the Paymaster General what is the total number of unemployed people in the United Kingdom.

35. **Mr. Eadie** asked the Paymaster General if he will make a statement on the latest unemployment figures.

43. **Mr. Martin** asked the Paymaster General what is the total number of persons unemployed at the latest available date; and what rate of unemployment this figure represents.

75. **Mr. Latham** asked the Paymaster General whether he will make a statement on the level of unemployment.

Mr. Lang: On 8 May 1986, the number of unemployed claimants in the United Kingdom was 3,270,892, which corresponds to an unemployment rate of 13·5 per cent.

32. **Ms. Richardson** asked the Paymaster General what is the best available estimate of the number of women who are unemployed but not included in the unemployment figures because of their ineligibility for benefit.

Mr. Lang: According to preliminary results from the labour force survey, in the spring of 1985 in Great Britain, there were 580,000 women who were without jobs seeking work but were not included in the monthly count of benefit claimants. There were also about 440,000 women who were claiming benefits and included in the monthly figures, who either had a paid job or were not looking for work.

37. **Mr. Fisher** asked the Paymaster General what percentage of the total number of persons aged under 25 years and unemployed have been unemployed for more than 12 months.

Mr. Lang: On 10 April 1986, the latest date for which an analysis of unemployment by age and duration is available, 28 per cent. of unemployed claimants aged under 25 years in the United Kingdom had been unemployed for more than 12 months.

38. **Mr. Ron Lewis** asked the Paymaster General how the number of unemployed women aged under 25 years compares to that of unemployed men aged under 25 years.

Mr. Lang: On 10 April 1986, the latest date for which an analysis of unemployment by age is available, the numbers of male and female unemployed claimants aged under 25 years in the United Kingdom were 731,170 and 452,663, respectively.

40. **Mr. Willie W. Hamilton** asked the Paymaster General what are the latest figures available concerning the numbers of long-term unemployed.

Mr. Lang: On 10 April 1986, the latest date for which an analysis of unemployment by duration is available, the number of unemployed claimants in the United Kingdom who had been unemployed for over 12 months was 1,356,509.

42. **Mr. Cunliffe** asked the Paymaster General how many persons aged under 25 years have been unemployed for more than 12 months at the latest available date.

Mr. Lang: On 10 April 1986, the latest date for which an analysis of unemployment by age and duration is available, the number of unemployment claimants aged under 25 years who had been unemployed for over 12 months in the United Kingdom was 331,471.

47. **Mr. Andrew F. Bennett** asked the Paymaster General if he is satisfied with the arrangements for determining the number of unemployed people.

Mr. Lang: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Newport, East (Mr. Hughes) on 21 May at column *152*.

51. **Mr. Wigley** asked the Paymaster General how many persons there are in full-time employment in the United Kingdom at the latest available date; how this figure compares with the figure for May 1979; and what are the corresponding figures relating to Wales for those dates.

Mr. Lang: Within the regularly published employment series the estimates of the numbers of self-employed persons and of male employees in employment do not separately identify those in full-time employment. Analyses of full and part-time female employees in employment are not available for the United Kingdom for the dates specified. The available information for Great Britain and for Wales is given in table 1.

TABLE 1

	Males and full-time female employees in employment	*Self employed persons*
Great Britain		
June 1979*	18,768,000	1,842,000
December 1985†	16,681,000	2,604,000
Wales		
June 1979	868,000	124,000
December 1985	722,000	150,000

* Not available for May.
† The latest date for which estimates are available.

The labour force survey provides information on a different basis but provides estimates of the numbers of full-time male and female employees for the spring of 1979 and 1985 and of full-time self-employed for the spring of 1985. The available information is given in table 2.

TABLE 2
Labour Force Survey data on persons in full-time employment*
Thousands

	Great Britain		*Wales*	
Spring	*Full-time employees*	*Full-time self employed*	*Full-time employees*	*Full-time self employed*
1979	18,238	n/a	868	n/a
1985†	16,366	2,242	730	117

* Based on respondent's own assessment, not on hours worked.
† Preliminary results.

52. **Mrs. Clwyd** asked the Paymaster General what proportion of the unemployed have been without work for *(a)* one year, *(b)* two years and *(c)* three years.

Mr. Lang: On 10 April 1986, the latest date for which an analysis of unemployment by duration is available, the proportions of unemployed claimants in the United Kingdom who had been unemployed for between one and two years, two and three years and over three years were 15·4 per cent., 8·4 per cent. and 17·1 per cent., respectively.

57. **Mr. Barron** asked the Paymaster General what is the total number of people under 25 years of age unemployed in the Rother Valley; and how this compares with the national figure.

Mr. Lang: On 10 April 1986, the latest date for which an analysis of unemployment by age is available, the numbers of unemployed claimants aged under 25 years in the Rother Valley parliamentary constituency and in the United Kingdom were 2,286 and 1,183,833, respectively.

60. **Mr. Madden** asked the Paymaster General how many people in the Bradford travel-to-work area have been unemployed for more than a year.

Mr. Lang: On 10 April 1986, the latest date for which an analysis of unemployment by duration is available, the number of claimants who had been unemployed for over one year in the Bradford travel-to-work area was 13,906.

62. **Mr. Dormand** asked the Paymaster General if he will state the number of unemployed, and the percentage, at May 1979 and May 1986, respectively, in the northern region.

Mr. Lang: On 8 May 1986 the number of unemployed claimants, seasonally adjusted excluding school leavers, in the northern region was 226,600, which corresponds to an unemployment rate of 18 per cent. The corresponding number and rate for May 1979 were 99,100 and 7·3 per cent.

66. **Mr. Shersby** asked the Paymaster General what was the total number of people in part-time or full-time work on the latest date for which figures are available; and what was the comparable figure on 1 July 1979.

Mr. Lang: The information is as follows:

Employed Labour Force in Great Britain
(Adjusted for seasonal variations)

	Number
June 1979*	24,775,000
December 1985†	24,010,000

* Not available for 1 July 1979.
† The latest date for which an estimate is available.
The Employed Labour Force is the sum of employees in employment. The self-employed, and HM forces.

74. **Mr. James Hamilton** asked the Paymaster General what are the latest unemployment figures; and how these compare with the figures for December 1979.

Mr. Lang: On 8 May 1986 the number of unemployed claimants, seasonally adjusted excluding school leavers, in the United Kingdom was 3,208,600. The corresponding number for December 1979 was 1,121,700.

77. **Mr. Wareing** asked the Paymaster General how many people are currently registered as unemployed in the Liverpool, West Derby constituency; how many have been jobless for more than a year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: On 10 April 1986, the latest date for which an analysis of unemployment by duration is available. The number of unemployed claimants in the Liverpool, West Derby constituency was 9,768, of whom 5,357 had been unemployed for over one year.

82. **Mr. Parry** asked the Paymaster General if he will make a statement on the latest unemployment figures for Merseyside.

Mr. Lang: On 8 May 1986, the number of unemployed claimants in the Merseyside metropolitan area was 139,502.

91. **Mr. Hardy** asked the Paymaster General how many people are currently in full-time employment; what proportion of the population this represents; and what was the comparable figure 10 year ago.

Mr. Lang: Information is not available in the exact form requested.

Within the regularly published employment series, the estimates of the numbers of self-employed persons and of male employees in employment do not separately identify those in full-time employment. That latest available information for Great Britain, together with information for June 1975, is given in Table 1.

Table 1

Great Britain
Thousands and per cent.

	Males and full-time female employees	*Self-employed persons*	*Total*	*As percentage of population aged 16 and over*	**As percentage of population of working age*
June 1975	16,794	1,933	18,727	45·5	58·9
December 1985	16,681	2,064	19,285	44·2	57·3

* Those in employment include an unknown number above working age.

The labour force survey (LFS) provides information on a different basis but provides estimates of all persons in full-time employment. Preliminary LFS results for the spring of 1985 are given in table 2. Comparable information from the 1975 LFS is not available.

Table 2

Labour force survey data on full-time employment*
Great Britain
Thousands and per cent.

All persons in full-time employment	*As percentage of population aged 16 and over*	*†As percentage of population of working age*
18,608	43·4	56·0

* Based on respondent's own assessment, not on hours worked.
† If those identified in the LFS as being in full-time employment and above working age are excluded this proportion becomes 55·4 per cent.

Clean-up Campaign

16. **Mr. Freud** asked the Paymaster General if he estimates that the proposed clean-up campaign will create any full-time employment.

Mr. Lang: As I said in my earlier reply to the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce), it is estimated that the new environmental improvement initiative will initially provide work for up to 5,000 long-term unemployed people, and of these about 25 per cent. will be full-time workers.

Job Release Scheme

17. **Mr. Knox** asked the Paymaster General if he will make a statement on the operation of the job release scheme.

Mr. Lang: I am satisfied with the operation of the job release scheme. At the end of April 1986, 40,000 people were receiving an allowance under the scheme.

Business Expansion Scheme

18. **Mr. Beaumont-Dark** asked the Paymaster General how much has been raised to date under the business expansion scheme.

Mr. Trippier: Inland Revenue statitics indicate that a total of £252 million was raised by 1,403 companies under the business expansion scheme in the first two years of its operation—1983-84 and 1984-85.

School Leavers

20. **Mr. Viggers** asked the Paymaster General if he will make a statement on the current level of employment amongst school leavers.

Mr. Trippier: The level of employment among school leavers depends mainly on the performance of industry, business and the economy as a whole. Our economic policies are designed to create the conditions for improvement and we are making substantial progress. Our training and employment measures will help young people into jobs.

Long-term Unemployment

21. **Mr. Ashley** asked the Paymaster General what is the latest figure for the poportion of the unemployed who have been out of work for over a year; and what has been the increase in this figure since May 1979.

Mr. Lang: On 10 April 1986, the latest date for which an analysis of unemployment by duration is available, the proportion of claimants in the United Kingdom who had been unemployed for over 12 months was 40·8 per cent. The corresponding proportion of unemployed registrants in April 1979 (not available for May 1979) was 27·4 per cent. The figures are not strictly comparable because of changes in the way the figures are collected.

Earnings

22. **Mr. Tony Lloyd** asked the Paymaster General what percentage of workers employed in the north-west are on earnings below 25 per cent. of the national average earnings.

Mr. Lang: The latest information from the new earnings survey relates to April 1985 and shows that less than 0·2 per cent. of full-time adult employees in the north-west region had gross weekly earnings below £42·8. The figure which is 25 per cent. of average gross weekly earnings of all full-time adult employees in Great Britain.

American Tourists

23. **Mr. Chapman** asked the Paymaster General what is his latest estimate of the number of tourists from the United States expected to visit Britain in 1986; and how this compares with 1985.

Mr. Trippier: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies).

24. **Mr. Geraint Howells** asked the Paymaster General what is the effect of the shortfall on previous years of United States tourists on employment within the tourist industry.

Mr. Trippier: It is too soon to assess the extent of any reduction in the number of United States tourists and the consequences for employment within the United Kingdom tourist industry.

North Yorkshire (Young People)

25. **Mrs. Shields** asked the Paymaster General what plans he has for the employment of young people in North Yorkshire.

Mr. Trippier: Employment prospects for young people in North Yorkshire depend on a sustained improvement in the performance of industry, business and the economy as a whole. Our economic polices are designed to create the conditions for that improvement and we are making substantial progress. We also need levels of pay which ensure the competitiveness of our industry.

In 1986-87 two-year YTS will provide 3,328 places in North Yorkshire, with a further 738 continuation places being provided for young people who entered training last year. The job prospects of those completing YTS and those ineligible for training will be further enhanced by the new workers scheme.

Those young people who have been unemployed for some time will be able to benefit from temporary employment under the community programme. At April 1986 1,340 places were available in North Yorkshire and the target is to increase this figure to 1,520 by October this year. Our other employment measures will also directly or indirectly benefit young people.

Tourism

26. **Mr. Gregory** asked the Paymaster General what progress has been made in implementing the recommendations contained in "Pleasure, Leisure—and Jobs; The Business of Tourism."

Mr. Trippier: I am pleased to report that good progress has been made in the majority of the action points listed

in "Pleasure, Leisure and Jobs" and that work is continuing on the outstanding recommendations. Particular achievements to date include the introduction of the new voluntary hotel classification scheme throughout Great Britain, the opening last month of the new British travel centre in Lower Regent street, the introduction throughout England of the new system of white on brown road signs for tourist attractions and the publication of the consultative document on tourist coaches in London including proposals for additional coach parking facilities for summer 1986. We have also taken steps to improve the co-ordination of Government policies affecting tourism by instituting regular meetings of Ministers under the chairmanship of my right hon. and noble Friend and by setting up new arrangements for co-ordination at regional level.

46. **Mr. Gerald Bowden** asked the Paymaster General how many people work, directly or indirectly, in the tourist industry; and how this compares with 1979.

Mr. Lang: It is estimated that about 1·1 million jobs were supported directly or indirectly by tourism spending in 1985. A comparable figure for 1979 is not available. However, separate information on the number of employees in those sectors which most directly serve tourists (hotels and catering, and leisure services) showed an increase of just over 100,000 to around 1·3 million between June 1979 and June 1985.

54. **Mr. David Atkinson** asked the Paymaster General if he will estimate the proportion of those working in the Southern Tourist Board region whose jobs depend directly or indirectly on tourism.

Mr. Trippier: Estimates covering jobs depending both directly and indirectly on tourism in particular areas are not available. However, the following table shows the available information on the number of employees in the main tourism-related industries from the 1981 census of employment. Comparable details for 1984 will be available later this year.

Number of employees in employment in Hampshire, Isle of Wight and part of Dorset in September 1981*

	Number
All industries and services	743,560
Main tourism-related sectors:	
Hotels and catering (excluding canteens and messes)†	38,128
Libraries, museums, art galleries, etc, and sport and other recreational services‡	10,443

* Bournemouth, Christchurch, North Dorset, Poole, Purbeck and Wimbourne.

† Groups 661, 662, 663, 665 and 667 of Standard Industrial Classification 1980.

‡ Groups 977 and 979 of Standard Industrial Classification 1980.

68. **Mr. Sheerman** asked the Paymaster General what further plans he has to aid the British tourist industry.

Mr. Trippier: The Government have already taken a number of measures to aid the tourism industry this year, including an additional £6 million to the British Tourist Authority and English Tourist Board for promotion of tourism in regions where unemployment is high and there is potential for development. We shall continue to take appropriate measures to encourage the industry's development within available resources; but the prime responsibility for investment in the industry must rest with the private sector.

79. **Mr. Terlezki** asked the Paymaster General what new overseas marketing initiatives have been proposed by the British Tourist Authority.

Mr. Trippier: For 1986-87 the BTA has been set the objectives of encouraging overseas visitors to regions with above average unemployment and the potential to attract additional tourism traffic, and extending the tourism season. Its new marketing campaigns are intended to meet these objectives, and will focus on the promotion of senior citizen, youth travel and special interest markets, together with the business and conference sector.

85. **Mr. Lofthouse** asked the Paymaster General if he will make a statement on the net contribution of the tourist industry to the creation of jobs.

Mr. Trippier: The growth in the number and spending of tourists has been a vital contribution to the growth of employment in recent years. It is estimated that the spending of tourists supports about 1·1 million jobs, directly in hotels, restaurants, transport, tourist attractions, and so on, and indirectly in supplying industries. Also, in the two years to June 1985, the official estimates of the numbers of employees showed a growth of 106,000 in the sectors most heavily dependent on tourism — hotels and catering trades, and leisure and recreational services — and self-employment in hotels and catering grew by around 28,000 over the same period.

87. **Mr. Coombs** asked the Paymaster-General by how much he expects employment in the tourism industry to grow in 1986-87.

Mr. Lang: Future employment levels depend on many factors, some of which are difficult to predict. In recent years there has been a substantial growth in the number of employees in those industries which most directly serve tourists (up by over 100,000 in the hotel, catering and leisure and recreational services sectors between June 1983 and June 1985) at a time when the growth of tourists' spending rose in real terms by around 6 per cent.

If tourists' spending continues to grow at a similar rate as in the recent past. I would expect to see further significant growth in employment in the sectors serving tourists.

Black Unemployment

27. **Ms. Clare Short** asked the Paymaster General what is the best available estimate of the level of black unemployment compared with the overall level of unemployment.

Mr. Lang: According to preliminary results of the labour force survey, in the spring of 1985 in Great Britain, 202,000 or 20 per cent. of the non-white labour force were without a job and seeking work, compared with 2,808,000 or 10·6 per cent. of the total workforce.

Tourist-related Employment

28. **Mr. Pawsey** asked the Paymaster General if he will take steps to improve training and re-training for tourist-related employment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply on 16 April at columns *386-87*.

London Visitor and Convention Bureau

29. **Mr. Porter** asked the Paymaster General whether he proposes to provide financial support to the London Visitor and Convention Bureau, following the abolition of the Greater London Council; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: The Government already provide financial support to the LVCB through the English Tourist Board and this support will continue. I am happy to report that in addition to this support from the ETB, the London boroughs' grants committee is to provide in 1986-87 £360,000 of basic funding to the LVCB with a further £180,000 for special projects.

New Workers Scheme

30. **Mr. Jackson** asked the Paymaster General how many young people will be provided for under the new workers scheme.

Mr. Lang: We estimate that, by the end of March next year, some 100,000 young people will have been helped into employment under the new workers scheme.

Community Programme

31. **Mr. Rogers** asked the Paymaster General what proportion of people leaving the community programme obtain a permanent job.

Mr. Lang: The results of the latest survey of former community programme participants show that 54 per cent. of those responding had had at least one job within 10 months of leaving the community programme; 28 per cent. of respondents obtained a job immediately on leaving.

41. **Mr. Dixon** asked the Paymaster General if he has any plans to introduce a refuse cleaning element into the community programme.

Mr. Lang: I have no specific plans to introduce a refuse clearing element into the community programme. However, the programme already funds projects which, for example, remove flytips from beauty spots and collect and recycle waste materials.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment has recently announced a new environmental improvement initiative which it is estimated will initially provide work for up to 5,000 long-term unemployed people through the community programme.

65. **Mr. Leighton** asked the Paymaster General what is the average wage on the community programme; and what proportion of participants are paid more than this and what proportion less.

Mr. Lang: The latest survey estimate shows the average wage paid to community programme participants, including managers and supervisors, to be £73 per week; 43 per cent. were paid more than this and 57 per cent. less.

80. **Mr. Ernie Ross** asked the Paymaster General if he has any plans to seek to improve the training element in the community programme.

Mr. Lang: The principal objective of the community programme is to provide worthwhile temporary employment for long-term unemployed people. The latest survey evidence shows that about 70 per cent. of participants receive training, and this will continue to be encouraged.

Mr. Steen asked the Paymaster General if he will list the projects funded under the community programme in each of the last three years; how many jobs were created as a result; at what total cost in each year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: The community programme began in October 1982. At the end of the last three years the number of projects and places were as follows:

	Projects operating	*Places filled*
March 1984	7,498	112,886
March 1985	7,894	132,755
March 1986	10,315	199,919

The total annual costs were as follows:

	£ million
1983-84	400·1
1984-85	534·3
1985-86	683·8

It would be impractical to provide a complete list of all projects and places which have been funded in each of the last three years. Such a list could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Wages Bill

33. **Mr. Nellist** asked the Paymaster General what recent representations he has received concerning the provisions of part III of the Wages Bill.

Mr. Trippier: I had a meeting with TUC representatives on 7 May. In addition, I have had letters from the CBI and a number of other employers organisations.

Northern Region

34. **Mr. Fallon** asked the Paymaster General how many people find work each month in the northern region.

Mr. Lang: Information is not available in the precise form requested. Between May 1985 and May 1986 an average of 25,900 persons per month ceased to be unemployed claimants in the northern region.

North-West and Northern Regions

36. **Mr. Campbell-Savours** asked the Paymaster General whether he will consider the introduction of further measures to reduce unemployment in the north-west and northern regions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: I am always prepared to consider further measures to reduce unemployment in these regions. Both regions will benefit from the new package of measures announced in the Budget to accelerate the growth of enterprise, boost employment opportunities for the young and help the long-term unemployed find work.

The north-east will also benefit from the measures announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry of 14 May to alleviate the problems caused by the regrettable redundancies in the shipbuilding industry.

The Government's economic strategy is providing the climate of low inflation and sustained growth which is the only sensible way to secure real jobs throughout the country.

Vocational Qualifications

39. **Mr. Torney** asked the Paymaster General if he will make a statement on the review of vocational qualifications.

Mr. Trippier: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Southampton, Itchen (Mr. Chope) on 8 May 1986 at column *205*.

Industrial Relations

44. **Mr. Eastham** asked the Paymaster General if he has any plans to introduce further legislation in the field of industrial relations.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I have no plans at present to introduce further legislation in the field of industrial relations, but will be keeping the situation under review.

Disabled People

45. **Mr. Robert C. Brown** asked the Paymaster General what is the current rate of unemployment for registered disabled people.

Mr. Lang: There were 26,396 unemployed registered disabled people registered for employment at jobcentres and careers offices on 4 April 1986. It is not possible to

convert this figure into an unemployment percentage rate because the number of registered disabled people in employment is not available.

Jobcentres and Benefit Offices

48. **Mr. Maples** asked the Paymaster General what steps are being taken to encourage links between jobcentres and unemployment benefits offices.

Mr. Lang: Most jobcentres already have close links with unemployment benefit offices, and liaison arrangements are kept under review.

In order to increase the awareness of jobcentre services amongst claimants, including longer term unemployed, 46 pilot projects in unemployment benefit offices are currently under way and a further 70 are planned. The projects include vacancy displays, information displays and the installation of electronic equipment which gives information on jobcentre services.

Job Start Scheme

49. **Mr. Chope** asked the Paymaster General whether he will report upon the latest progress in Southampton on the job start scheme.

Mr. Lang: The job start scheme, which is part of the restart programme, will begin on 1 July 1986. The other elements of the restart programme, counselling of long-term unemployed people and restart courses, will be available in Southampton from 30 June.

Black Economy

50. **Mr. Gerald Howarth** asked the Paymaster General what estimates his Department has of the number of people working in the black economy.

Mr. Trippier: Because of the nature of the black economy it is impossible to estimate the number of people working in it.

Foreign Nationals (Employment)

53. **Mr. Nicholas Baker** asked the Paymaster General if he will introduce legislation to provide for the substitution by United Kingdom nationals of foreign nationals employed in the United Kingdom when the foreign national's initial contract expires.

Mr. Lang: It is not always reasonable for such substitution to take place. Where appropriate, the need for the overseas national is reviewed at the end of the initial contract.

Hotel Accommodation (London)

55. **Mr. Butterfill** asked the Paymaster General if he plans any initiatives to promote an increase in the stock of hotel accommodation in London; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: The Government have noted the findings of consultancy study, "London's Tourist Accommodation in the 1990s", recently published by the English Tourist Board, British Tourist Authority and other sponsors. The report predicts a shortfall in hotel capacity by the early 1990s. We shall be responding shortly to its recommendations for increasing the supply of accommodation.

Enterprise Allowance Scheme

56. **Mr. Hargreaves** asked the Paymaster General how many entrants there have been to the enterprise allowance scheme since August 1983.

Mr. Trippier: 146,930 people entered the enterprise allowance scheme between 1 August 1983 and the end of May 1986.

Mr. Rooker asked the Paymaster General if he will arrange to give more specific advice to applicants for the enterprise allowance scheme at the information session about the need to apply for help whilst still in receipt of social security benefits.

Mr. Trippier [*pursuant to his reply*, 23 June 1986, c. *13-14*]: Applicants for the scheme are already clearly advised both at information sessions and in the printed guide to the scheme that they must be receiving unemployment and supplementary benefit at the time of application. Applicants are also invited to ask questions about their eligibility for the scheme during the information session if they are in any doubt.

Mr. Rooker asked the Paymaster General how many applicants applied for help under the enterprise allowance scheme after operation of their business commenced in the last period for which figures are available.

Mr. Trippier [*pursuant to his reply*, 23 June 1986, c. *13-14*]: The allowance is intended to provide an incentive for unemployed people to set up in business and is therefore not available to those who have already commenced operation of their business. Separate statistics are not kept for those whose applications were rejected because they had already started their business but 3·7 per cent. of applications received during May 1986 were rejected for various reasons.

Redundancies (Merseyside)

58. **Mr. Alton** asked the Paymaster General how many people have been made redundant on Merseyside since June 1983.

Mr. Lang: A provisional total of 33,245 redundancies during the period 1 June 1983 to 30 April 1986 were confirmed by the Manpower Services Commission as due to occur in the jobcentres areas covering the Merseyside metropolitan county.

Job Clubs

59. **Mr. Greenway** asked the Paymaster General what is the latest information he has as to the number of people currently in job clubs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: On 12 June there were 1,039 people attending the 83 job clubs currently in operation. Forty-four of these job clubs have been operating only since May 1986.

Up to 2 May, 2,334 people had passed through job clubs. Of these, 1,478 (63 per cent.) had found work. A further 266 have gone on to the community programme and 67 into training making a total of 78 per cent. positive outcomes.

The Manpower Services Commission plans to expand the job club network to 200 sites by the end of 1986 and 450 as soon as possible thereafter.

Manufacturing Industries

61. **Mr. Sedgemore** asked the Paymaster General what number of people were working in manufacturing industries in 1979, 1983 and the latest available date.

Mr. Lang: The information is as follows:

Employees in Employment and the Self-Employed in the Manufacturing Industries in Great Britain

	Number
March 1979	7,253,000
March 1983	5,690,000
March 1986	5,586,000

Career Development Loans

63. **Mr. Alan Howarth** asked the Paymaster General what responses he has so far received to the Government's pilot scheme of career development loans; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: I am encouraged by the interest shown since the career development loan scheme was launched on 15 April in the four pilot areas of Aberdeen, Bath/Bristol, Greater Manchester and Reading/Slough. Some 48,000 leaflets have so far been distributed with some 5,000 responses to its invitation to make more detailed inquiries. I hope that as many people as possible in the pilot areas will consider whether taking a loan at the very favourable terms now on offer would enable them to train to improve their career prospects.

Tin Industry

64. **Mr. Penhaligon** asked the Paymaster General what studies he has made of the employment implications of the present crisis in the tin industry in Cornwall.

Mr. Lang: Although no studies have yet been concluded of the employment implications of the present crisis in the tin industry in Cornwall, officials in the area are studying the implications for employment of the crisis and all the services of the Department of Employment and MSC are being made available to those made redundant.

Job Counselling

67. **Mr. Watts** asked the Paymaster General how many long-term unemployed people have been assisted to find jobs or training in Slough and nationally since job counselling became a nationwide scheme.

Mr. Lang: Counselling of long-term unemployed people is part of the restart programme. Although this will become a national programme on 1 July, some localities will start earlier, including Slough on 16 June.

At this early stage, results are not yet available.

Neighbourhood Energy Projects

69. **Sir John Biggs-Davison** asked the Paymaster General what contribution the Manpower Services Commission is making to the reduction of unemployment through neighbourhood energy projects; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: I am pleased to be able to report that, following discussions between my Department, the Manpower Services Commission and the Department of Energy, a national initiative to encourage energy efficiency projects has been established. At the end of May over 250 energy projects were providing about 5,600 jobs for previously long-term unemployed people.

Restart Programme

70. **Mr. Leigh** asked the Paymaster General what is the timetable for the implementation of the restart programme.

Mr. Lang: The restart programme will be under way throughout Great Britain by 1 July 1986. Some areas will begin earlier.

By 31 March 1987 all people unemployed for more than 12 months will have been interviewed by jobcentres.

Work-related Non-advanced Further Education

71. **Mr. Wood** asked the Paymaster General what measures have been taken to improve the quality of work-related non-advanced further education.

Mr. Trippier: The resources for work-related non-advanced further education, transferred from the local authority rate support grant (England and Wales) to the Manpower Services Commission (£110 million in 1986-87), will be used to improve the quality of work-related NAFE provision.

All local authorities have produced or are in the process of providing three-year development plans for the academic years 1986-87 to 1988-89 and one year annual programmes for the academic year 1986-87.

Self-employed Persons

72. **Mr. Lawler** asked the Paymaster General what are the latest percentages of self-employed persons for the areas of East Anglia, the south-west, the north, the north-west, and Yorkshire and Humberside, respectively.

Mr. Lang: The following table gives, for each region specified, the numbers of self-employed persons expressed as a percentage of the civilian employed labour force (the sum of employees in employment and the self-employed) in that region at June 1985, the latest date for which regional estimates of the self-employed are available:

	Percentage
East Anglia	13·7
South West	14·0
North	9·2
North West	10·1
Yorkshire and Humberside	11·2

Job Creation

73. **Mr. Greg Knight** asked the Paymaster General how many jobs have been created in the United Kingdom since June 1983; and what information he has on comparable figures in other EEC countries.

Mr. Lang: Between June 1983 and December 1985, it is estimated that total employment in the United Kingdom increased by 952,000. Figures for most other European Community countries are not so up-to-date. The available comparisons are given in the following table.

Changes in Total Employment in EC countries

	**1983 to 1984*		*†1983 (2nd Quarter) to 1984 (4th Quarter)*	
	Thousand	*Per cent.*	*Thousand*	*Per cent.*
United Kingdom	+463	+2·0	+952	+4·0
Germany (FR)	+15	+0·1	‡+242	‡+1·0
France	−218	−1·0	N/A	N/A
Italy	+94	+0·4	+229	+1·1
Netherlands	+3	+0·1	N/A	N/A
Belgium	+11	+0·3	N/A	N/A
Luxembourg	+1	+0·4	N/A	N/A
Ireland	−15	−1·3	N/A	N/A
Denmark	+58	+2·2	N/A	N/A
Greece	−8	−0·2	N/A	N/A
EC 10	+404	+0·4	N/A	N/A
Spain	−465	−4·1	‖−464	‖−4·1
Portugal	−64	−1·5	N/A	N/A
EC 12	−125	−0·1	N/A	N/A

* Annual average, mid-or end-year figures.
† Seasonally adjusted unless stated.
‡ Latest data relate to 1985 (3rd Quarter).
‖ Not seasonally adjusted.
N/A Not available.
Source: Eurostat 'Employment and Unemployment' Bulletin, supplemented by OECD 'Quarterly Labour Force Statistics' for Germany, Italy and Spain and HMSO 'Employment Gazette' for the United Kingdom.

Youth Training Scheme

76. **Mr. Park** asked the Paymaster General what are the latest figures on the proportion of people employed under the YTS who have retained their jobs after 12 months.

Mr. Trippier: The Manpower Services Commission conducts a monthly follow-up survey of all young people leaving YTS. A 10 per cent. sample of leavers is followed up in more detail. The latest figures available from the sample show that over three quarters of employed YTS trainees who completed their training were retained by the same employer. In addition, more than 10 per cent. were in work with a different employer.

Mr. Richard Page asked the Paymaster General what percentage of YTS trainees obtain full-time employment *(a)* nationally and *(b)* in the Hertfordshire, South-West constituency.

Mr. Trippier: The Manpower Services Commission conducts a monthly follow-up survey of all young people leaving YTS. The latest results, covering those who left YTS between 1 April and 31 December 1985, show that 53 per cent. were in full-time work some three months after leaving YTS. A further 4 per cent. were in part-time work.

Information about YTS leavers in the Hertfordshire, South-West constituency is not available. However, latest results from Dacorum and Three Rivers local authority districts, which together cover most of the constituency, show that 72 per cent. of YTS leavers were in full-time work. A further 3 per cent. were in part-time work.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Paymaster General why his Department has stopped publishing figures relating to numbers employed on YTS schemes.

Mr. Trippier [*pursuant to his reply*, 23 June 1986, c. *14*]: Figures showing numbers of young people taking part in YTS are published regularly in the *Employment Gazette*.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Paymaster General how many young people were employed on or about to leave YTS schemes in the United Kingdom in May

Mr. Trippier [*pursuant to his reply*, 23 June 1986, c. *14*]: At the end of May the latest date for which statistics are available there were 250,327 young people intraining on YTS. Approximately 11,000 young people left the scheme in May.

Employment Policy

78. **Mr. Norman Atkinson** asked the Paymaster General whether Her Majesty's Government plan any further measures to assist the long-term unemployed beyond those announced on 20 May, *Official Report*, column 145.

Mr. Lang: The full range of help available to the long-term unemployed is set out in our "Action for Jobs" booklet. We regularly review all schemes carefully to ensure that they meet their objectives.

90. **Mr. Tom Cox** asked the Paymaster General if he will list the policies of his Department to help unemployed people over the age of 50 years into employment.

Mr. Lang: I refer the hon. Member to my reply on 18 March at column *179*. Older workers can benefit from most of the schemes outlined in "Action for Jobs".

Wage Levels

81. **Mr. Fatchett** asked the Paymaster General if he will update to April 1986 the change in wage levels of the top paid 20 per cent. compared with the lowest paid 20 per cent. since 1979.

Mr. Lang: Information in respect of April 1986 is being collected currently in the 1986 new earnings survey and will be available in October this year.

Social Security Claimants (Pre-paid Envelopes)

83. **Mr. Wallace** asked the Paymaster General whether he intends to restore pre-paid envelopes for use by unemployed claimants in rural areas.

Mr. Lang: I do not intend to restore pre-paid envelopes for use by unemployed claimants in rural areas to return their fortnightly claim forms. Most unemployed attend the unemployment benefit office in person each fortnight to sign on and claim unemployment benefit bearing any travelling costs involved. People living over six miles from their nearest office and some others with special travelling difficulties have the option of claiming by post instead. Since 6 April these "postal claimants" have been asked to pay the postage when returning their fortnightly claim forms. The change was made as a contribution to containing control of public expenditure and a move towards parity of treatment between postal claimants and those bearing regular travelling costs.

Sporting and Leisure Facilities

84. **Mr. Nicholas Winterton** asked the Paymaster General what assessment he has made of the effects of the business expansion scheme on covered sporting and leisure facilities.

Mr. Trippier: Companies providing covered sporting and leisure facilities will continue to be eligible for

investment under the business expansion scheme, provided that they meet the conditions on the backing of investment by property assets. I am anxious that the scheme should continue to encourage genuine risk-bearing investments, and my right hon. Friend the Financial Secretary to the Treasury will be monitoring the effects of the new provisions.

Pay Bargaining

86. **Mr. Cyril D. Townsend** asked the Paymaster General what is his policy towards methods of pay bargaining.

Mr. Lang: Other than in the limited exception of wages councils industries, I believe that the method of pay bargaining is a matter for employers and employees or their representatives to determine.

Job-finding Services

88. **Mr. Heathcoat-Amory** asked the Paymaster General what job-finding services are offered by his Department or the Manpower Services Commission to unemployed persons travelling as members of a commune.

Mr. Lang: The full range of assistance provided by the Manpower Services Commission is available, principally through jobcentres, to all unemployed persons alike on an equal basis. This includes providing information about jobs available locally and in other districts (including information about employers recruiting casual labour); advice on employment matters and schemes run by the Department of Employment and Manpower Services Commission; advice on and assistance with training and retraining; and normal job placing services.

Small Firms (Venture Capital)

89. **Mr. Sayeed** asked the Paymaster General what is the trend in venture capital investment in small firms.

Mr. Trippier: Industry sources indicate that a total of £279 million was invested by United Kingdom-based venture capital organisations in 597 United Kingdom companies in 1985. These figures represent increases of 22 per cent. and 3 per cent., respectively, over the corresponding figures for 1984. Information on the size of companies benefiting from these investments is not available although 30 per cent. of financings in 1985, representing 20 per cent. of the total amount invested, supported start-up or other early stage developments. In addition, direct investments by individuals under the business expansion scheme are providing significant amounts of equity capital for small companies.

Young People

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Paymaster General, for January, April, July and October, each year from 1974 to the latest available date, how many *(a)* 16 to 17-year-olds, *(b)* 18 to 19-year-olds and *(c)* 20 to 24-year-olds (i) there were in total, (ii) were recorded as unemployed, (iii) were in education, (iv) were in full-time work or self-employment, (v) were in part-time work or self employment or (vi) were in other categories, showing in each case, where possible, males and females, separately.

Mr. Lang: The full range of information requested is not available. The available labour force survey estimates for the age groups 16 to 19 and 20 to 24 years are shown in table 1.

Information on the ages of registered (up to October 1982) or claimant (since October 1982) unemployed males and females in the United Kingdom is published regularly in *Employment Gazette* (currently table 2.7) and is available in the Library.

Estimates of the labour market status of those aged 16 to 17 in Great Britain, derived from Department of Employment, Manpower Services Commission and Department of Education and Science sources, are shown in table 2 for the years for which they are available.

Table 1—Labour Force Survey data for Great Britain on persons aged 16-19, 20-24 living in private households: Spring each year

thousands

Age	*1979*		*1981*		*1983*		*1984*		*1985*	
	Males	*Females*	*Males*	*Females*	*Males*	*Females*	*Males*	*Females*	*Males*	*Females*
16-19										
In employment*	1,067	931	1,012	932	964	889	1,003	915	1,018	948
In employment full-time†	1,002	838	840	727	764	623	797	655	803	663
In employment part-time†	41	75	122	181	118	203	169	242	172	266
Unemployed‡	156	155	304	245	316	237	284	230	257	207
Inactive students‖	478	489	474	481	522	527	488	466	450	413
Others¶	37	119	37	110	51	133	33	129	38	133
Total	1,738	1,694	1,827	1,768	1,853	1,775	1,807	1,740	1,763	1,702
20-24										
In employment*	1,679	1,202	1,563	1,234	1,562	1,274	1,626	1,311	1,708	1,361
In employment full-time†	1,578	1,056	1,417	1,058	1,521	1,128	1,575	1,126	1,639	1,165
In employment part-time†	12	117	18	121	30	136	47	182	68	196
Unemployed‡	120	115	291	175	361	197	377	227	357	210
Inactive students‖	125	81	158	108	155	114	158	114	138	96

Age	1979 Males	1979 Females	1981 Males	1981 Females	1983 Males	1983 Females	1984 Males	1984 Females	1985 Males	1985 Females
Others ¶	27	486	35	492	68	531	63	525	77	550
Total	1,951	1,884	2,047	2,009	2,146	2,115	2,225	2,177	2,281	2,218

* Includes those who did not state if they worked full or part-time; and those on a Government employment scheme or, in 1979 and 1981 only, who were self employed who were not asked if their work was full or part-time.

† The definition of full-time and part-time is based on the respondent's own assessment, not on the number of hours worked.

‡ Those without a job and looking for work in the reference week, or prevented from seeking work by temporary sickness or holiday, or waiting for the results of a job application or waiting to start a job they had already obtained.

‖ Inactive students are those students not classified as in employment or unemployed. Those who reported doing paid work are classified as in employment. In 1979 and 1981 all students who said they were seeking work were classified as unemployed, but in later years those who said they were seeking work but not available to start a job because they had to complete their education were classified as inactive.

¶ Mainly for females looking after house or home, and sick and disabled.

The figures for 1985 are preliminary estimates.

Table 2

Education/labour market status of young people in Great Britain aged 16 and 17 years : January each year*

Thousands

	1974	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986†
Total population	1,550	1,785	1,830	1,860	1,840	1,815	1,765	1,730
Full-time education‡	470	600	655	700	735	685	675	665
YTS/YOP	—	70	135	180	235	275	275	265
Claimant/registered unemployed‖	45	130	235	275	285	270	260	240
Other¶	1,035	985	810	705	585	585	555	560

* Ages as at 31 August of preceding year.

† Provisional.

‡ Excluding YTS/YOP.

‖ Claimant unemployed for 1983-86: registered unemployed prior to 1983.

¶ Mainly those in employment outside YTS. Also includes some who are seeking work but not claiming benefit (for 1983-86) or not registered for employment (prior to 1983), some of whom are neither employed nor seeking work (e.g. because of domestic responsibilities) and net errors in the other estimates.

Mr. Stern asked the Paymaster General how many additional young people have been employed as a result of the current requirement for an employer to notify the local careers office if he intends to employ a young person.

Mr. Trippier: The current requirement is for notification after employment has begun. It does not encourage employment of young people, is burdensome and little use appears to be made of the information where it is provided. The Government announced their intention to repeal the requirement in the White Paper "Building Businesses . . . Not Barriers".

Labour Force Survey

Mr. Wainwright asked the Paymaster General when the next labour force survey is expected to be published; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. and learned Friend to my hon. Friend the Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames) on 16 April 1986 at columns *388-89*.

Preliminary results of the 1985 labour force survey were published in the May 1986 edition of the *Employment Gazette*, which is available in the Library.

Radiation

Mr. Frank Cook asked the Paymaster General if he will take steps to ensure that a dose of 500 mSv. to the lungs, breast, red bone marrow or gonads is not received by workers.

Mr. Trippier: The Ionising Radiations Regulations 1985 specify a dose limit in terms of effective dose equivalent for the whole body of 50 $mSvy^{-1}$ and a dose limit for individual organs in terms of dose equivalent of 500 $mSvy^{-1}$.

Both requirements must be met. In practice, one or other will be limiting; whichever limit is achieved first will set the ceiling. In the case of irradiation of lungs, breast, bone marrow or gonads singly, the overriding limit will be the whole body effective dose equivalent limit of 50 mSv which will be reached before the individual organs mentioned receive 500 mSv.

Magnox Nuclear Reactors

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Paymaster General if he will increase the resources available for assessing the safety of Magnox nuclear reactors; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: Decisions on the allocation of resources to particular areas of work are a matter for the Health and Safety Commission and Executive subject to the limits set by the Government on their total salary expenditure and manpowr. The safety of Magnox nuclear reactors is kept under constant review by Her Majesty's nuclear installations inspectorate.

Equal Opportunities

Mr. Janner asked the Paymaster General whether he will make a statement on the operation and effect of the code of practice of the Equal Opportunities Commission.

Mr. Lang: Since the code came into operation only on 30 April 1985, it is too early to assess its effect. The code was, however, warmly welcomed by the Government, CBI and TUC, and over 60,000 copies have now been sold. I

understand that the EOC has had a number of requests from firms and other employing organisations for help in preparing and implementing equal opportunities policies as a result of the code.

Highfields Task Force

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Paymaster General if the Highfields task force is receiving the full co-operation of Leicester city council and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke [*pursuant to his reply*, 23 June 1986, c. *13*]: I would prefer that the Highfields task force should work in close co-operation with Leicester city council. My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Industry and I have both held separate meetings with the council to explain our plans and seek its assistance with them. I have to say we both encountered a certain amount of hostility from some councillors. I very much hope therefore that the council, which is still considering its relationship with the task force, will now give the initiative its full support so that the task force and the city council can start working together to tackle the urgent problems in Highfields.

Circular 109/252 (School Leavers)

Mr. Frank Field asked the Paymaster General when circular 109/252 was issued; when it was withdrawn; and how many changes in the rules relating to claims from school leavers occurred between those two dates;

(2) if he will investigate the circumstances in which a telex was sent to local unemployment benefit offices referring to circular 109/252 which was three years old and which contained incorrect information about entitlement to benefits; and if he will make a statement.

(3) what steps he is taking to ensure that those young people who hav been discouraged from claiming supplementary benefit by staff in local unemployment benefit offices on the basis of the erroneous information contained in circular 109/252 are now encouraged to make a claim.

Mr. Lang [*pursuant to his reply*, 23 June 1986, c. *14*]: Circular 109/252 was issued on 4 February 1983 and withdrawn on 11 June 1986. There were no actual changes to the rules relating to claims from school leavers between those dates. However, following a decision on appeal to a tribunal of commissioners, revised guidance was issued to UBOs in April 1985 and February 1986; this guidance related to claims made by Easter school leavers.

A telex was issued to UBOs on 30 May 1986 as a result of queries from UBOs which were faced with large volumes of school leaver claims.

To dispel any confusion, a further telex was issued on 11 June 1986 clarifying the position for mid-summer term school leavers and cancelling circular 109/252. The telex reaffirmed the guidance previously given — that, as a general rule, people who leave school mid-way through the summer term are not entitled to supplementary benefit until the first Monday in September. UBOs have been reminded throughout that any young person wishing to make a claim should not be discouraged from doing so.

Occupational Medicine and Hygiene Laboratories (Sheffield)

Mr. Dobson asked the Paymaster General what is the estimated cost of relocating in Sheffield the occupational medicine and hygiene laboratories of the Health and Safety Executive; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier [*pursuant to his reply*, 23 June 1986, c. *15*]: It is estimated that the capital cost of relocating those parts of the occupational medicine and hygiene laboratories at present situated at Cricklewood, and a small number of Health and Safety Executive headquarters staff in Sheffield, to a new site adjacent to the laboratories' existing Sheffield premises would be about £6·4 million. The cost of transferring staff, equipment and stores would be about a further £900,000.

Technical and Vocational Initiative (Batley and Spen)

Mrs. Peacock asked the Paymaster General what technical and vocational initiative proposals he has approved for the Batley and Spen constituency.

Mr. Trippier [*pursuant to his reply*, 23 June 1986, c. *15-16*]: A proposal for a technical and vocational education initiative project from Kirklees education authority was approved to start in autumn 1984, but was subsequently withdrawn by the local authority before negotiations were completed.

No further proposals have been received.

DEFENCE

Armed Forces (Racial Discrimination)

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many racial discrimination complaints from any of the branches of the armed forces have been investigated under the existing redress of grievance procedures.

Mr. Freeman: Since the introduction of the Race Relations Act 1976 there have been no complaints made and investigated under the redress of grievance procedures.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Mentally Handicapped People

Mr. Hume asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) what is the current level of provision for mentally handicapped adults in the Dungannon area;

(2) what is the level and nature of provision for mentally handicapped adults in each local government district in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Needham: The information is not available in the form requested. The following table gives the available information in respect of specialist health and personal social services provision for mentally handicapped adults in the Health and Social Services Boards' units of management:

Unit of management	Mental handicap hospital beds	Residential places	Day places
Eastern Board			
Muckamore Abbey Hospital	787	—	—
East Belfast and Castlereagh Community	—	58	151
North and West Belfast Community	—	26	233
South Belfast Community	—	34	454
North Down and Ards	36	93	140
Down	—	19	100
Lisburn	—	51	229
Eastern Board total	823	281	1,307
Northern Board			
Antrim and Ballymena	—	—	125
Coleraine, Ballymoney and Moyle	—	9	133
Larne, Carrickfergus and Newtownabbey	—	54	334
Magherafelt and Cookstown	—	—	118
Northern Board total	—	63	710
Southern Board			
Armagh and Dungannon	376	9	225
Craigavon and Banbridge	46	23	110
Newry and Mourne	20	54	97
Southern Board total	442	86	432
Western Board			
Londonderry, Limavady and Strabane	209	12	280
Omagh	—	8	86
Fermanagh	—	13	64
Western Board total	209	33	430
Northern Ireland total	1,474	463	2,879

Mr. Hume asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what consideration has been given to the provision of a day service in Dungannon for mentally handicapped adults.

Mr. Needham: There are 50 day care places available for mentally handicapped adults at the Sperrinview centre, Dungannon. At present there are no plans to provide additional day care places at Dungannon.

Mr. Hume asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many mentally handicapped adults there are in each local government district in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Needham: Information is not available in the form requested. Details of the number of mentally handicapped adults in contact with the social services departments of the Health and Social Services Boards are set out in the following table.

Mentally handicapped adults (persons aged 16 and over) in contact with the social services departments of the Health and Social Services Boards—31 December 1984

Unit of management	Number
East Belfast and Castlereagh	300
North and West Belfast	661
South Belfast and Muckamore Abbey Hospital	209
North Down and Ards	362
Down	215
Lisburn	197
Eastern Board Total	*1,944*
Antrim and Ballymena	*357*
Coleraine, Ballymoney and Moyle	*243*
Magherafelt and Cookstown	*180*
Larne, Carrickfergus and Newtownabbey	*424*
Northern Board Total	*1,204*
Craigavon and Banbridge	*315*
Armagh and Dungannon	*639*
Newry and Mourne	*262*
Southern Board Total	*1,226*
Londonderry, Limavady and Strabane	*527*
Omagh	*160*
Fermanagh	*192*
Western Board Total	*879*
Northern Ireland Total	*5,253*

RUC Stations (Visits)

Mr. Proctor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many requests to visit Royal Ulster Constabulary stations have been referred to the Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary, in accordance with standing instructions, for the latest availabe 12-month period, from *(a)* Ministers of the Crown, *(b)* hon. and right hon. Members, *(c)* members

of the Northern Ireland Assembly, *(d)* councillors and *(e)* other dignatories; how many have been refused; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: Requests for visits to Royal Ulster Constabulary stations are a matter for the Chief Constable who has to take into accont a number of factors, not least the operational commitments of the force.

Dog Licences

Mr. Dover asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what lessons have been learnt from the trial period of dog licences at £5 per annum introduced in 1985.

Dr. Boyson [*pursuant to his reply*, 9 June 1986, c. *84*]: Since the incidence of dog nuisance was more acute in Northern Ireland than in Great Britain, the introduction of this order has been welcomed as a positive move in lessening the problem.

Royal Victoria Hospital, Belfast

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will state, in relation to catering equipment in the corridor kitchen of the Royal Victoria hospital, Belfast, *(a)* where the equipment, which was returned eventually, was used by the board and where it was stored before use, *(b)* which firm or firms supplied catering equipment to the Royal Group, *(c)* when the catering equipment was to be used for the supply of food to day centres in north and west Belfast removed from use, *(d)* what was the cost of the equipment, its age and when it was removed from use and *(e)* subsequent to the invitation of tenders on 17 May 1984, to whom they were circulated and in what papers.

Mr. Needham [*pursuant to his reply*, 23 June 1986, c. *44*]: These are matters which are within the day-to-day management responsibility of the Eastern Health and Social Services Board. However, I understand that the equipment was stored in the Royal Victoria hospital and then transferred to Musgrave park hospital and Belfast city hospital. Non-usable items were sold as part of a general consignment of scrap.

The following firms have supplied catering equipment to the Royal Group since 1978.

Berkel Ltd.
J. N. Fulton
Hobart Manufacturing
J. Stotts
Stamex Limited
Hoylake
Gilmore
Mulcahy Group
Stott Benham
Stephens Catering
Calvert Electric
Universal Business Machines
A-Z Refrigeration
Caterware
Edmunds Catering
Millbrook Catering
A-Z Tec Refrigeration
Crypto Peerless
HTI Services
Catering Equipment Engineers

No catering equipment in the corridor kitchen was to be used exclusively for the supply of food to day centres in north and west Belfast.

The replaced equipment was in excess of 12 years old and its original cost is not readily available. The replacement cost was £55,741 (excluding VAT). It was removed from use in December 1984.

Invitations to tender were not issued on 17 May 1984. Tenders were invited from the following firms on 17 April 1984:

Stephens Catering
Mulcahy Group
Grundy (Calvert Electric)

As these were the only firms in Northern Ireland capable of supplying the equipment concerned, invitations to tender were not advertised in the press.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Immigration Rules

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish any information taken into consideration by his Department in the preparation of the "Statement of Changes in the Immigration Rules", HC503, concerning households originating from *(a)* the old Commonwealth, *(b)* the new Commonwealth and *(c)* the European Community and accepted as homeless and in priority need of accommodation by (i) Tower Hamlets London borough council and (ii) other local authorities in England and Wales.

Mr. Waddington: The amendments that the Government made last summer in the "Statement of Changes in the Immigration Rules" (HC503), clarifying and strengthening the maintenance and accommodation requirements are designed to provide better safeguard for public funds. In making these changes, the Government were conscious of the additional demands that newcomers can place upon a variety of scarce resources, including public housing. In particular, as I stated in the debate in the House on 23 July 1985, at column 954, we had in mind the cost to the London borough of Tower Hamlets of maintaining families in bed and breakfast accommodation.

Bill of Rights

Mr. Wallace asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent representations he has received in favour of a Bill of Rights.

Mr. Mellor: Since the beginning of 1985, 11 representations in favour of a Bill of Rights, most advocating the incorporation of the provision of the European Convention on Human Rights, have been received.

Representation of the People Act 1985

Mr. Iain Mills asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action he is taking to inform United Kingdom citizens abroad about the Representation of the People Act 1985.

Mr. Mellor: A major publicity campaign will be mounted following the approval of the Representation of the People Regulations 1986 which are now before Parliament. Advertisements will be placed in newspapers in countries where there are large numbers of Britons, in overseas editions of United Kingdom newspapers, and in other publications read by Britons living abroad. Copies of the declaration form to be used by overseas electors, and an explanatory leaflet will be available at consular offices and diplomatic missions and from electoral registration officers; copies have also been offered to the political parties. Many other publicity activities will be initiated, including an interview which will be made available to foreign radio stations. The BBC World Service also plans to give coverage.

Cigarettes (Advertising)

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how the ban on advertising of cigarettes on television is implemented.

Mr. Giles Shaw: In May 1965, the Government issued a direction to the ITA, the forerunner of the IBA, banning the broadcast advertising of cigarettes and cigarette tobacco. This direction remains in force under section 8(5) of the Broadcasting Act 1981. It is for the IBA to ensure that the independent programme companies comply with the direction.

Police National Computer

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will take steps to co-ordinate and tighten the existing guidelines operated by each police force in relation to access to *(a)* police computers generally and *(b)* the police national computer; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what action he proposes to implement the guidelines proposed in paragraph 38 of the report by the Police Complaints Authority on the police national computer as the basis for instructions to police forces regarding practices and procedures in relation to the national computer; if he will set a time scale for chief officers of police to comply; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Access to the computer systems in operation in individual police forces is a matter for the chief officer concerned. The Association of Chief Police Officers has established a working party on data protection which will be issuing recommendations to chief officers covering the use, access, security and disclosure of information held on police computer systems.

As regards the police national computer, I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, Central (Mr. Lord) on Wednesday, 18 June at columns 540-41.

Drug Abuse

Mr. Geraint Howells asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what measures he intends to take to seek to prevent the growing incidence of drug abuse in rural areas; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: The many measures we are taking are set out in "Tackling Drug Misuse: a summary of the Government's strategy" which we sent to hon. Members at the end of March. Our aim is to prevent drug misuse wherever it may occur, whether in rural areas or elsewhere.

Police Property

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many flats and houses are owned by *(a)* the Metropolitan police and *(b)* other police forces in England and Wales; and how many in each category are currently occupied.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The stock of houses and flats held in 1985, the latest date for which information is available, was as follows:

	Total Stock	*Occupied*	*For Sale‡*
Metropolitan Police*	3,703	2,796	638
Other police forces in England and Wales†	14,810	12,378	992

* As at 31st December 1985.
† Information derived from reports of inspections of police forces carried out by Her Majesty's Inspectors of Constabulary during 1985.
‡ Identified as surplus to requirements and sanctioned for sale.

Jurors

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to seek to reform the method of random selection of jurors; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: Proposals affecting the jury system were canvassed in the White Paper on plans for criminal justice legislation. Decisions on these will be taken in the light of comments received. We have no other plans for change.

Prison Department Housing (Hammersmith)

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will list the number of one, two, three and four-bedroom flats or houses owned by the Prison Department in Hammersmith; and how many in each category are currently occupied.

Mr. Mellor: The information is as follows:

Flats/houses	*Number owned*	*Occupied*
One bedroom	—	—
Two bedroom	—	—
Three bedroom	*37	24
Four bedroom	3	2

* 12 unfit for occupation because of structural defects.

Mrs. Eva Stein

Mr. Steen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he hopes to be able to grant an entry visa to Mrs. Eva Stein, formerly of 40 Garden Road, Orchards, Johannesburg, reference No. EC/STE/E, who applied to the British consulate in Johannesburg to emigrate to England in January of the current year.

Mr. Waddington: Mrs. Stein's application was received in the Home Office on 2 June. We have decided that entry clearance should be granted, and the entry clearance officer in Johannesburg will be instructed accordingly in the course of the next few days.

Heysel Stadium, Brussels

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what information he has about the home towns of those British citizens in respect of whom the Belgian authorities have made requests for extradition in connection with the events at the Heysel stadium, Brussels in May 1985;

(2) in respect of how many British citizens requests for extradition have been made by the Belgian authorities in connection with the events at the Heysel stadium, Brussels in May 1985.

Mr. Mellor: We have not yet received any such requests.

Broadwater Farm Estate, Tottenham

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will take steps to arrange for the report commissioned by the Metropolitan police on police actions during the events at the Broadwater Farm Estate, Tottenham in 1985, to be circulated to all police stations in the Metropolitan police area; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I understand from the Commissioner that a report on the outcome of his public order review will be circulated to all divisional stations shortly.

Immigration

Mr. Richard Page asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether there has been any change in the panel of three advisers appointed to consider representations from persons required to leave the country on security or political grounds, who have no right of appeal under the Immigration Act 1971.

Mr. Hurd: I intend to retain the presently constituted panel, all of whom have agreed to reappointment for a further term of three years with effect from 8 August 1986. The panel comprises the right hon. Lord Justice Lloyd as chairman with Mr. David Neve and the right hon. Sir Patrick Nairne, GCB, MC, MA as the other members. Sir John Garlick, KCB and Mr. Edward Hewlett are the reserve members.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Teachers of the Deaf

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science on what evidence he satisfied himself as to the expected adequacy of supply of teachers of the deaf following the implementation of the ACSET proposals.

Mr. Chris Patten: My right hon. Friend took particular account of the views of ACSET and of HMI.

Hull (Secondary Schools)

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he will announce his decision on the allocation of pupils proposals of Humberside education committee for secondary schools in the Hull education division.

Mr. Dunn: These proposals will not now come to my right hon. Friend for decision. The Humberside education committee decided on 18 June 1986 to withdraw the proposals and commence consultations with a view to republication. My right hon. Friend will in due course consider the republished proposals which will be for implementation in September 1987.

WALES

Ruthin-Mold Road (Investigation)

Mr. Harvey asked the Secretary of State for Wales, in view of the further serious accident on the Ton-yr-Unto bend, on the Ruthin-Mold road, whether the detailed investigation into the long-term solution has now been completed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Investigations into a long term solution to the problems posed by the Tan-yr-Unto bend are proceeding as rapidly as possible. It is important to identify the most sensible solution but I assure my hon. Friend that I shall make a further announcement as soon as I can. In the meantime we are doing all possible to improve the safety of the existing road: a double safety barrier, an earth bund and an arrestor bed for runaway vehicles are being constructed at the bend. Completion of these measures is expected by the end of July.

Grammar Schools

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Wales what percentage of secondary schools in Wales are grammar schools; and what were the comparable figures for 1979, 1970 and 1960, respectively.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The information is as follows:

Grammar schools in Wales as a percentage of all maintained secondary schools

January	*Percentage*
1985	0·8
1979	2·9
1970	19·4
1960	28·6

Dogs

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will now state his proposals on continuation or re-issue of dog licences, the appropriate level of such licences, and the provision of powers to local authorities to control the pollution of pavements by dogs.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Future arrangements for dog licensing and associated matters remain under consideration. We will announce our conclusions as soon as possible.

TRANSPORT

Coach Parking (London)

94. **Dr. Twinn** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what action he plans to take to improve tourist coach parking facilities in London.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Department's report "Tourist Coaches in London" was published in March.

The report's main proposals include better information, a non-cash payment scheme using magnetic cards (coachcard), more on-street spaces near tourist attractions, more off-street spaces, coach couriers to give advice on-street about parking facilities and more effective enforcement. A number of these proposals are being tried out this summer.

Details of the proposals were announced last week. A copy of the announcement has been placed in the Library of the House.

Road Safety

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will detail what discussions he is having with family organisations on how best to combat road accidents; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Earlier this year, I invited Family Forum and affiliated organisations of its choice to a discussion of how this part of the voluntary movement could become more closely involved in road safety activity. Representatives of the Child Accident Prevention Trust, the Children's Society, the National Childbirth Trust and the National Childminding Association also attended. Since then I have had various formal and informal contacts with Family Forum and other voluntary bodies.

Such organisations and their members have an important part to play in helping to reduce the toll of deaths and injuries — and their tragic social and economic consequences — by providing families throughout the life cycle with practical support, information and publicity on road safety issues. The Department and others with statutory road safety responsibilities wish to encourage their efforts and would welcome similar support and recognition of them from the media and other influential parts of the community.

Road Haulage (Maintenance and Safety)

Mr. Snape asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he is satisfied with the overall standard of maintenance and safety within the road haulage industry.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: No. The failure rate at the annual heavy goods vehicle test remains too high at nearly 23 per cent. On average over 18 per cent. of vehicles inspected at the roadside are issued with prohibitions.

British Rail (Locomotives and Coaches)

Mr. Snape asked the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the statement made by his predecessor on British Rail Engineering on 20th May, *Official Report*, column 188, if he will publish in the *Official Report* *(a)* the current figures for British Rail locomotive and coaching availability and *(b)* the British Rail locomotive and coaching availability targets under the new manufacturing and maintenance policy.

Mr. David Mitchell: It is for BRB management to decide what rolling stock availability it requires to provide its services. I do not have the information requested.

British Rail (Performance)

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the answer of 17 June, if he will take steps to ensure that British Rail furnishes his Department with information relating to train punctuality for the larger intermediate stations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: No. The detailed monitoring of punctuality is a matter of management of the Railways Board.

British Rail

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the answer of 17 June, what is the definition of sector in the context of sector-wide standards set for British Rail.

Mr. David Mitchell: The sectors referred to are the three sectors — Inter City, London and south-east (recently renamed Network South-East) and provincial — which since 1982 have made up the Railways Board's passenger business. In the case of Inter City and Network South-East, the board has set punctuality standards which apply to the sector as a whole. In the case of provincial, because of the diverse nature of the services which make up the sector, separate punctuality standards apply for particular service groups.

M40 (Holton Interchange)

Mr. Stott asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what measures his Department proposes to take to ensure that the new interchange at Holton will not be used by motorway traffic when the northern section of the M40 is open to traffic and while the southern section is still under construction;

(2) what effect he estimates his Department's proposals to construct a new interchange at Holton will have on the number of vehicles using the B4027 through the villages of Forest Hill, Stanton St. John and Islip.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We hope to have the northern and southern sections of the M40 extension ready for use at about the same time. The object of proposals to be published shortly is to improve the safety of the existing junction of the B4027 with the A40. The restriction and volume of traffic using the B4027 are matters for the highway authority, Oxfordshire county council, which would have the right to object to our proposals.

Petersfield-Liphook Bypass

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Transport when a decision is expected on the Petersfield-Liphook bypass.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I hope to make an announcement by the autumn.

Drivers' Hours

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Transport what representations his Department has received from the Transport and General Workers Union concerning changes in the drivers' hours and rest period regulations; what reply has been sent; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I shall answer this question shortly.

ENVIRONMENT

Waste Disposal Authorities (Pollution)

Dr. Roger Thomas asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many prosecutions have been taken out against waste disposal authorities for polluting rivers and streams for each year since 1980.

Mrs. Rumbold: The information requested is not held centrally. Water authorities are responsible for controlling pollution of rivers and streams and for taking any necessary enforcement action, although it is also open to individuals to institute proceedings.

Sewerage

Dr. Roger Thomas asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how often sewage sludge dumped from pipelines is sampled for analysis; and on how many occasions that samples have been taken they have exceeded the permitted levels for *(a)* list I substances and *(b)* list II substances.

Mrs. Rumbold: Sampling frequencies of discharges from water authority sewage treatment works vary considerably according to the size of the works and the nature of the receiving matters. Public registers maintained by each water authority contain details for individual discharges of the consents to discharge and the samples taken.

Dr. Roger Thomas asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to how much sewage is disposed of into the Mersey estuary from *(a)* pipelines and *(b)* ships.

Mrs. Rumbold: Discharges to the Mersey estuary from land-based outfalls are controlled by the North-West water authority. Information about the discharges is not held centrally, but is available from the public register maintained by that authority.

Discharges from ships are controlled by my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. However, I understand that there are no authorisations for the disposal of sewage from ships into the Mersey estuary.

Housing Statistics

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to *(a)* how many and *(b)* what percentage of houses in (i) the public and (ii) the private sector in each local housing authority area are now empty.

Sir George Young: The latest available information is from the local authorities' housing investment programme returns for 1 April 1985. The figures are:

Vacant dwellings as a per cent. of all dwellings at 1 April 1985 (HIP 1)

	Local authority housing association		*Other public sector*		*Private sector*	
	Number	*Percentage of stock*	*Number*	*Percentage of stock*	*Number*	*Percentage of stock*
Region 1—North (excluding Cumbria)						
Hartlepool	228	1·99	24	1·73	—	—	635	2·92
Langbaurgh	409	2·35	53	4·53	5	5·56	1,558	4·06
Middlesbrough	454	2·50	39	1·56	2	2·35	1,250	3·66
Stockton-on-Tees	574	3·01	41	2·80	11	3·29	1·464	3·19
Chester-le-Street	203	2·70	—	—	n.a.	n.a.	291	2·30
Darlington	181	2·17	—	—	—	—	1,775	6·01
Derwentside	259	2·06	4	0·72	49	7·74	1,202	5·57
Durham	146	1·27	—	—	67	10·93	783	4·00
Easington	776	4·06	72	6·71	249	8·17	293	1·80
Sedgefield	558	3·64	7	0·62	8	3·85	477	2·51
Teeside	9	0·68	n.a.	n.a.	—	—	n.a.	n.a.
Wear Valley	88	1·07	11	0·97	—	—	657	3·84
Alnwick	15	0·50	—	—	—	—	210	2·49
Berwick-upon-Tweed	7	0·19	—	—	—	—	42	0·51
Blyth Valley	158	1·57	10	0·69	46	8·95	536	2·97
Castle Morpeth	55	1·33	n.a.	n.a.	213	20·11	242	1·79
Tynedale	4	0·09	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Wansbeck	166	1·72	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a	n.a.	n.a.
Gateshead	1,133	3·13	88	2·82	n.a.	n.a.	1,803	3·88
Newcastle upon Tyne	1,788	3·80	305	5·89	66	9·69	2,351	3·79
North Tyneside	1,076	3·71	89	3·09	37	9·27	2,002	4·00
South Tyneside	233	0·76	28	0·91	19	4·99	791	2·65
Sunderland	1,477	3·22	63	1·62	436	4·81	2,274	4·05
Region 2—Yorkshire and Humberside								
Beverley	10	0·18	—	—	—	—	1,052	3·00
Boothferry	118	2·47	4	2·92	—	—	1,300	6·79
Cleethorpes	41	1·14	—	—	—	—	n.a	n.a.
East Yorkshire	23	0·46	—	—	n.a.	n.a.	1,400	5·09
Glanford	22	0·57	—	—	—	—	1,093	5·00
Great Grimsby	94	1·13	5	1·05	5	5·26	850	3·31
Holderness	12	0·47	1	1·23	8	4·73	939	5·85
Kingston upon Hull	1,056	2·26	60	3·14	10	5·00	3,000	5·34
Scunthorpe	181	1·95	19	7·39	—	—	471	3·09
Craven	40	1·83	—	—	—	—	557	3·22
Hambleton	9	0·18	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	953	4·05
Harrogate	108	1·74	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Richmondshire	56	1·99	—	—	402	17·02	802	6·44
Ryedale	3	0·08	6	0·70	36	7·83	1,319	4·63
Scarborough	103	1·37	4	1·04	52	11·18	1,498	4·06
Selby	35	0·62	—	—	—	—	—	—
York	111	1·04	10	1·49	—	—	800	2·71
Barnsley	663	2·10	50	11·93	67	3·41	2,174	4·19
Doncaster	506	1·46	27	5·25	3	0·63	2,900	3·88
Rotherham	743	2·15	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.

	Local authority housing association				Other public sector		Private sector	
	Number	Percentage of stock	Number	Percentage of stock	Number	Percentage of stock	Number	Percentage of stock
Sheffield	2,544	2·77	133	3·68	28	6·86	5,452	4·50
Bradford	1,835	4·86	219	4·42	60	10·00	5,217	3·96
Calderdale	786	4·94	10	0·61	—	—	2,669	4·50
Kirklees	926	2·57	75	4·59	9	2·47	6,737	6·00
Leeds	1,207	1·30	100	1·44	20	6·67	6,030	3·28
Wakefield	546	1·21	11	1·08	283	11·18	1,840	2·59
Region 3—East Midlands								
Amber Valley	153	1·96	27	3·95	8	4·00	1,638	4·61
Bolsover	187	2·20	9	5·81	18	6·29	830	4·33
Chesterfield	200	1·45	35	8·97	12	3·00	1,235	5·00
Derby	579	2·74	110	3·00	4	1·11	3,561	5·85
Erewash	83	0·97	11	5·53	9	2·81	1,373	4·30
High Peak	84	1·34	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	1,556	6·26
North East Derbyshire	87	0·78	3	2·40	13	15·85	305	1·21
South Derbyshire	24	0·50	—	—	10	3·42	617	2·94
West Derbyshire	13	0·31	—	—	—	—	1,114	4·96
Blaby	9	0·27	—	—	18	7·96	592	2·32
Charnwood	29	0·34	—	—	—	—	1,545	3·51
Harborough	34	1·01	14	11·02	9	3·91	581	2·93
Hinckley and Bosworth	133	2·56	—	—	—	—	1,003	3·42
Leicester	988	2·87	108	2·08	n.a.	n.a.	3,851	5·60
Melton	24	0·85	—	—	27	7·80	682	5·01
North West Leicestershire	109	1·79	5	0·63	35	17·24	1,125	4·80
Oadby and Wigston	28	1·49	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	319	1·85
Rutland	10	0·51	—	—	—	—	350	3·97
Boston	25	0·42	—	—	—	—	860	5·69
East Lindsey	46	0·76	—	—	295	24·67	2,956	7·59
Lincoln	297	2·83	23	5·72	19	5·86	1,202	5·83
North Kesteven	40	0·76	—	—	751	46·10	1,256	5·23
South Holland	17	0·30	—	—	—	—	1,052	5·29
South Kesteven	164	1·76	2	0·42	80	8·49	1,782	6·06
West Lindsey	70	1·40	5	4·03	260	22·63	1,626	6·45
Corby	298	2·92	—	—	—	—	300	3·23
Daventry	145	2·81	—	—	10	9·43	534	3·00
East Northamptonshire	53	0·98	—	—	n.a.	n.a.	705	3·51
Kettering	100	1·64	—	—	15	8·88	889	3·99
Northampton	565	3·07	3	0·34	5	2·98	2,131	4·72
South Northamptonshire	24	0·51	—	—	4	8·33	979	4·72
Wellingborough	126	1·79	6	1·44	—	—	712	3·98
Ashfield	198	1·83	—	—	42	5·61	1,066	3·60
Bassetlaw	243	2·38	—	—	n.a.	n.a.	2,672	n.a.
Broxtowe	112	1·63	1	0·18	12	4·62	806	2·43
Gedling	150	2·52	23	2·84	23	2·22	678	1·98
Mansfield	221	2·07	14	2·50	35	2·93	—	—
Newark and Sherwood	93	1·13	—	—	68	2·97	1,140	3·79
Nottingham	1,069	2·33	323	6·36	44	9·91	3,635	6·14
Rushcliffe	69	1·52	—	—	40	9·76	n.a.	n.a.
Region 4—Eastern								
Luton	100	0·81	—	—	50	24·27	1,499	3·13
Mid Bedfordshire	49	0·60	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	1,234	4·00
North Bedfordshire	265	3·16	37	2·59	86	17·20	2,412	6·11
South Bedfordshire	77	0·94	n.a.	n.a.	—	—	n.a.	n.a.
Aylesbury Vale	78	0·69	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	1,351	3·59
Chiltern	42	0·81	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	416	1·47
Milton Keynes	191	2·74	—	—	538	3·96	—	—
South Bucks	28	0·76	—	—	—	—	487	2·46
Wycombe	108	1·04	16	2·96	27	3·55	1,634	3·56
Cambridge	203	1·86	7	0·43	10	5·26	1,099	4·00
East Cambridgeshire	28	0·55	—	—	28	13·21	630	3·78
Fenland	38	0·68	—	—	n.a.	n.a.	1,136	5·33
Huntingdonshire	47	0·53	5	0·82	119	7·23	1,883	5·00
Peterborough	230	2·32	11	0·48	535	7·17	2,172	6·10
South Cambridgeshire	49	0·62	2	0·43	27	2·27	1,698	5·00
Basildon	86	1·43	—	—	359	2·22	378	1·06
Braintree	156	1·32	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	1,600	5·14
Brentwood	29	0·76	7	2·25	20	1·60	650	2·92
Castle Point	26	1·06	—	—	—	—	750	2·51
Chelmsford	284	2·84	—	—	20	4·94	n.a.	n.a.
Colchester	52	0·56	4	0·50	201	9·49	1,646	4·00
Epping Forest	237	2·45	14	3·23	4	2·92	1,163	3·26
Harlow	273	1·53	—	—	6	6·06	242	2·28
Maldon	8	0·32	—	—	3	3·23	534	3·21

	Local authority housing association				Other public sector		Private sector	
	Number	Percentage of stock	Number	Percentage of stock	Number	Percentage of stock	Number	Percentage of stock
Rochford	15	0·57	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Southend-on-Sea	85	1·02	1	0·07	6	8·00	2,300	4·03
Tendring	16	0·36	—	—	36	4·62	2,110	4·19
Thurrock	350	2·19	234	100·00	314	100·00	n.a.	n.a.
Uttlesford	30	0·72	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Broxbourne	180	3·46	n.a.	n.a.	4	0·31	924	3·97
Dacorum	307	1·85	13	1·00	11	2·30	636	1·98
East Hertfordshire	137	1·56	—	—	2	0·42	1,021	3·10
Hertsmere	217	2·67	5	1·50	n.a.	n.a.	480	2·00
North Hertfordshire	62	0·52	12	1·02	4	0·97	1,112	3·88
St. Albans	29	0·36	2	0·29	27	4·40	804	2·18
Stevenage	116	0·82	—	—	—	—	272	2·12
Three Rivers	102	1·64	5	2·98	45	5·43	516	2·39
Watford	55	0·85	—	—	3	0·95	701	3·22
Welwyn Hatfield	183	1·21	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	790	4·00
Breckland	286	3·72	—	—	n.a.	n.a.	2,220	7·04
Broadland	9	0·22	—	—	n.a.	n.a.	1,056	3·04
Great Yarmouth	103	1·29	2	0·53	6	4·51	1,364	5·14
Kings Lynn and West Norfolk	110	1·13	10	1·48	115	8·65	1,750	4·34
North Norfolk	46	0·73	—	—	400	34·25	2,680	8·28
Norwich	628	2·67	34	1·62	3	2·31	1,040	3·90
South Norfolk	45	0·75	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	1,970	5·97
Babergh	56	1·06	—	—	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Forest Heath	2	0·04	—	—	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Ipswich	185	1·55	16	0·74	37	13·86	782	2·30
Mid Suffolk	37	0·75	—	—	3	1·24	990	4·27
St. Edmundsbury	58	0·64	—	—	30	2·75	n.a.	n.a.
Suffolk Coastal	75	1·23	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	1,085	3·10
Waveney	96	1·45	11	1·13	30	8·72	1,656	4·68
Region 5—Greater London								
Greater London Council	2,137	4·89	•	•	•	•	•	•
City of London	7	0·41	—	—	—	—	—	—
Barking and Dagenham	511	1·54	n.a.	n.a.	6	1·89	720	2·87
Barnet	302	1·69	n.a.	n.a.	50	1·69	n.a.	n.a.
Bexley	157	1·39	53	3·00	52	1·54	3,352	5·10
Brent	825	3·82	327	5·36	25	5·00	3,050	4·69
Bromley	212	1·25	133	3·06	n.a.	n.a.	3,225	3·31
Camden	1,247	3·68	180	3·46	32	13·17	4,000	9·17
Croydon	286	1·41	106	3·32	11	23·91	3,297	3·30
Ealing	363	1·79	370	8·22	5	2·23	2,000	2·50
Enfield	472	2·37	n.a.	n.a.	60	6·71	2,284	2·90
Greenwich	1,058	2·86	142	4·42	185	4·91	2,081	4·88
Hackney	3,185	6·95	480	6·15	97	27·48	2,358	10·46
Hammersmith and Fulham	679	3·58	659	7·59	43	19·55	4,882	11·77
Haringey	971	4·02	244	4·36	4	1·53	3,244	6·25
Harrow	159	1·85	46	5·04	47	7·93	1,245	1·89
Havering	336	2·00	52	4·32	12	5·00	1,644	2·30
Hillingdon	312	1·65	26	1·97	48	2·00	2,800	4·00
Hounslow	326	1·60	40	1·44	11	1·50	2,630	4·70
Islington	2,586	6·29	392	5·50	118	7·72	3,200	12·85
Kensington and Chelsea	343	3·86	828	7·31	47	18·01	8,080	15·15
Kingston upon Thames	119	1·78	26	2·92	18	2·91	1,363	2·90
Lambeth	1,729	3·54	375	4·97	300	16·39	3,610	7·17
Lewisham	2,228	5·28	325	5·83	18	16·67	2,542	5·24
Merton	260	1·98	20	1·45	95	26·91	2,810	5·30
Newham	2,173	6·99	332	9·03	38	22·22	2,400	5·01
Redbridge	275	2·42	39	3·45	20	3·51	2,581	3·45
Richmond upon Thames	154	1·69	33	1·68	5	1·84	3,028	5·05
Southwark	3,203	5·13	300	4·55	200	15·38	1,550	6·60
Sutton	212	1·76	14	0·67	11	2·78	873	1·67
Tower Hamlets	1,534	8·22	228	5·01	1,321	4·26	405	5·00
Waltham Forest	551	2·67	110	4·23	24	4·00	2,500	3·99
Wandsworth	1,887	4·84	201	3·01	34	6·94	2,800	4·46
Westminster	839	3·62	384	4·41	108	11·36	7,500	10·89
Region 6—South Eastern								
Bracknell	98	0·93	16	1·61	2	0·26	350	1·70
Newbury	53	0·66	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Reading	291	2·96	1	0·11	20	8·30	1,188	3·05
Slough	169	1·56	—	—	n.a.	n.a.	450	1·83
Windsor and Maidenhead	67	0·87	2	0·33	100	9·62	596	1·39
Wokingham	40	1·10	5	1·11	29	2·58	736	1·86

	Local authority housing association				Other public sector		Private sector	
	Number	Percentage of stock	Number	Percentage of stock	Number	Percentage of stock	Number	Percentage of stock
Brighton	152	1·34	36	3·42	6	1·63	2,989	5·89
Eastbourne	17	0·33	10	0·79	2	3·12	—	—
Hastings	42	0·85	24	4·67	5	4·39	1,305	4·70
Hove	128	2·80	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	3,124	8·96
Lewes	61	1·37	5	0·77	31	8·45	1,234	4·30
Rother	72	1·76	3	0·83	7	4·29	600	1·94
Wealden	10	0·23	1	0·15	6	2·28	1,338	3·03
Basingstoke and Deane	158	1·30	—	—	n.a.	n.a.	750	2·10
East Hampshire	31	0·62	3	0·93	82	11·48	820	2·69
Eastleigh	105	1·97	3	0·47	—	—	1,220	3·91
Fareham	29	0·83	6	4·00	9	2·83	716	2·32
Gosport	38	0·66	6	0·72	300	7·69	696	3·50
Hart	8	0·28	—	—	—	—	932	3·91
Havant	42	1·05	3	2·22	70	0·83	800	2·48
New Forest	28	0·39	3	0·63	64	9·25	2,233	4·07
Portsmouth	360	2·40	80	3·91	181	10·65	2,477	4·60
Rushmoor	100	1·80	20	3·72	297	10·72	804	4·20
Southampton	276	1·26	75	3·26	35	10·26	2,150	3·89
Test Valley	560	7·36	2	0·42	224	18·64	748	2·95
Winchester	106	1·54	10	1·92	15	4·05	1,210	4·10
Medina	79	2·40	—	—	380	57·40	441	1·77
South Wight	5	0·21	—	—	—	—	600	3·12
Ashford	232	2·61	—	—	6	3·68	1,153	4·52
Canterbury	90	1·23	6	0·92	10	1·89	1,374	3·41
Dartford	90	1·33	8	1·78	43	19·72	682	3·19
Dover	112	1·41	12	2·16	16	1·23	1,200	3·97
Gillingham	85	1·86	5	3·14	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Gravesham	160	1·92	3	1·03	18	18·18	820	3·07
Maidstone	40	0·45	2	0·57	49	10·19	—	—
Rochester upon Medway	563	5·04	30	5·12	21	6·77	2,357	5·49
Sevenoaks	108	1·40	—	—	—	—	1,001	3·05
Shepway	35	0·76	—	—	52	8·75	1,563	4·88
Swale	98	1·14	n.a.	n.a.	35	11·44	1,024	2·92
Thanet	105	1·40	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Tonbridge and Malling	167	2·32	10	1·91	44	13·50	727	2·50
Tunbridge Wells	36	0·55	4	0·35	31	11·61	1,400	4·55
Cherwell	55	0·65	—	—	—	—	1,520	4·97
Oxford	160	1·88	5	0·52	15	3·90	1,270	4·60
South Oxfordshire	77	0·99	2	0·68	22	0·97	1,227	3·10
Vale of White Horse	33	0·51	5	1·83	34	2·00	800	2·65
West Oxfordshire	20	0·39	1	0·36	177	11·19	695	2·73
Elmbridge	193	3·17	25	3·05	8	2·97	1,201	3·09
Epsom and Ewell	19	0·77	—	—	n.a.	n.a.	545	2·40
Guildford	125	1·65	5	0·66	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Mole Valley	14	0·30	2	0·43	42	11·63	925	3·79
Reigate and Banstead	86	1·16	6	0·74	53	4·62	965	2·75
Runnymede	31	0·70	—	—	11	2·28	830	3·55
Spelthorne	43	0·93	n.a.	n.a.	21	5·60	778	2·63
Surrey Heath	19	0·52	17	10·49	139	15·96	1,031	4·42
Tandridge	64	1·51	—	—	31	10·73	742	3·16
Waverley	53	0·76	—	—	—	—	1,125	3·19
Woking	114	2·33	15	2·37	74	15·42	1,191	4·42
Adur	41	1·01	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Arun	112	2·04	—	—	—	—	2,025	4·08
Chichester	37	0·51	4	0·70	30	5·29	n.a.	n.a.
Crawley	68	0·55	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	174	0·96
Horsham	18	0·29	16	1·94	—	—	1,000	2·94
Mid Sussex	40	0·80	10	1·11	30	3·55	1,299	3·47
Worthing	31	0·99	4	0·41	5	1·75	1,675	4·48
Region 7—South West								
Bath	108	1·41	—	—	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Bristol	370	0·88	50	1·05	—	—	5,137	4·61
Kingswood	67	1·28	3	0·57	10	8·77	649	2·39
Northavon	43	0·72	—	—	65	25·00	1,080	2·89
Wansdyke	22	0·40	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Woodspring	193	2·16	—	—	n.a.	n.a.	1,500	2·75
Caradon	15	0·33	—	—	—	—	1,418	5·64
Carrick	32	0·60	4	2·19	41	17·30	1,178	4·42
Kerrier	25	0·60	—	—	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
North Cornwall	36	0·79	5	1·93	53	9·04	998	4·11
Penwith	29	0·73	—	—	5	11·36	1,000	4·79
Restormel	5	0·11	—	—	—	—	1,260	4·44
Isles of Scilly	1	0·68	—	—	—	—	—	—

	Local authority housing association				Other public sector		Private sector	
	Number	Percentage of stock	Number	Percentage of stock	Number	Percentage of stock	Number	Percentage of stock
East Devon	60	1·00			47	9·22	1,192	2·93
Exeter	84	1·02	14	0·91	26	7·22	802	1·85
Mid Devon	39	0·79	2	0·75	1	0·96	862	4·65
North Devon	12	0·28			8	1·37	532	1·87
Plymouth	408	1·82	70	2·43	138	3·00	2,947	4·66
South Hams	29	0·71			8	3·28	1,269	4·76
Teignbridge	103	1·90	n.a.	n.a.			1,308	3·66
Torbay	42	0·92	9	1·03	26	13·20	2,107	4·67
Torridge	19	0·74	1	1·79	27	36·99	386	2·19
West Devon	11	0·57			80	14·71	800	5·23
Bournemouth	54	0·81					1,213	2·19
Christchurch	18	1·01			2	6·36	417	2·58
North Dorset	46	1·33	5	1·86	27	3·39	520	3·43
Poole	18	0·27	1	0·11	39	9·61	1,842	4·12
Purbeck	18	0·78	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	806	5·55
West Dorset	27	0·44			n.a.	n.a.	1,040	3·87
Weymouth and Portland	62	1·54	2	1·06	140	15·10	340	1·94
Wimborne	5	0·20	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	838	3·05
Cheltenham	39	0·58	10	1·01	5	7·69	1,846	6·63
Cotswold	46	0·87	1	0·22	250	n.a.	1,600	7·27
Forest of Dean	32	0·59			n.a.	n.a.	1,340	5·98
Gloucester	85	1·29	4	0·78	15	4·89	1,027	3·83
Stroud	92	1·22	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	1,613	4·89
Tewkesbury	40	0·94	n.a.	n.a.	48	3·84	802	3·00
Mendip	54	0·81	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	1,019	3·66
Sedgemoor	39	0·58	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	1,125	3·80
South Somerset	30	0·25			111	15·02	2,120	5·06
Taunton Deane	40	0·46	4	0·78	30	7·87	1,326	5·03
West Somerset	16	0·75			n.a.	n.a.	280	2·52
Kennet	48	0·81			500	15·11	785	4·74
North Wiltshire	93	1·20			379	16·82	1,477	4·90
Salisbury	96	1·14			420	13·95	1,494	5·31
Thamesdown	219	1·52	17	1·11	9	2·05	1,533	3·30
West Wiltshire	79	1·10	4	0·92	42	4·60	1,201	4·02
Region 8 West Midlands								
Bromsgrove	69	1·49	n.a.	n.a.	28	0·95	581	2·38
Hereford	22	0·43			36	14·06	330	2·45
Leominster	20	0·95	n.a.	n.a.	8	16·00	614	4·73
Malvern Hills	128	2·26	6	2·55	n.a.	n.a.	1,496	4·83
Redditch	188	1·85	20	4·12	2	4·44	566	3·39
South Herefordshire	6	0·25					890	5·60
Worcester	25	0·38	11	1·40	4	2·35	697	3·18
Wychavon	77	0·93					1,099	3·89
Wyre Forest	110	1·39	9	5·63			1,056	3·82
Bridgnorth	40	1·11					717	4·87
North Shropshire	16	0·44	5	3·23	n.a.	n.a.	751	5·00
Oswestry	2	0·07					350	3·67
Shrewsbury and Atcham	88	1·22	7	2·85	45	10·42	926	3·35
South Shropshire	24	1·25					1,246	9·47
The Wrekin	217	1·91			644	6·61	425	1·70
Cannock Chase	79	0·89			7	0·59	766	3·72
East Staffordshire	123	1·73	21	5·05	6	2·96	1,775	6·03
Lichfield	121	1·90	6	1·40	4	0·71	750	2·95
Newcastle-under-Lyme	204	1·65	28	5·76	13	2·32	1,044	3·10
South Staffordshire	52	0·79	20	3·51	11	3·57	1,039	3·43
Stafford	148	1·75	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Staffordshire Moorlands	26	0·61	3	2·33	n.a.	n.a.	1,000	3·16
Stoke-on-Trent	535	1·83	127	4·31	66	12·00	3,186	4·70
Tamworth	323	4·11	2	0·27			616	3·90
North Warwickshire	41	0·84			11	2·38	813	4·84
Nuneaton and Bedworth	182	1·93	13	1·94	12	0·97	1,120	3·57
Rugby	85	1·51	9	0·80	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Stratford-on-Avon	94	1·25			6	0·77	872	2·73
Warwick	122	1·51	19	1·13	30	10·45	1,182	3·37
Birmingham	2,805	2·81	880	4·84	70	3·50	5,580	2·26
Coventry	1,028	4·03	104	2·74	20	5·75	3,478	3·83
Dudley	734	1·99	7	0·31	45	7·40	2,900	3·72
Sandwell	2,267	4·04	80	3·62	10	2·86	1,843	3·03
Solihull	438	2·63	23	1·97	3	1·95	1,139	2·00
Walsall	851	2·20	40	1·70	3	2·83	1,038	1·86
Wolverhampton	1,903	4·71	137	5·90	38	4·64	1,848	3·41

	Local authority housing association				Other public sector		Private sector	
	Number	Percentage of stock	Number	Percentage of stock	Number	Percentage of stock	Number	Percentage of stock
Region % North West including Cumbria								
Chester	107	1·23	10	2·13	44	6·89	1,523	4·25
Congleton	34	0·65			13	16·25	732	2·80
Crewe and Nantwich	194	2·25	11	4·09	16	4·27	1,511	5·00
Ellesmere Port and Neston	89	0·99	12	4·48			522	2·48
Halton	157	1·59	12	1·01	626	7·29	948	3·72
Macclesfield	156	1·81	3	0·47	20	0·86	2,300	4·89
Vale Royal	155	1·55			23	13·14	1,416	4·34
Warrington	267	2·02	24	2·34	208	4·34	2,123	4·35
Allerdale	95	1·48	130	2·53	11	4·00	1,589	6·00
Barrow-in-Furness	84	1·73	7	4·58	11	6·78	841	3·52
Carlisle	329	2·66	20	4·18	32	5·02	4,536	6·00
Copeland	158	2·41	62	1·81	10	2·89	986	5·70
Eden	31	1·18			n.a.	n.a.	1,861	7·09
South Lakeland	34	0·58	n.a.	n.a.	10	6·67	1,034	2·99
Blackburn	418	2·97	51	3·73	3	6·38	2,817	7·64
Blackpool	179	2·40					1,581	2·91
Burnley	600	8·17	80	9·84	1	1·14	1,691	5·75
Chorley	73	1·66	45	10·87	167	11·36	1,357	4·69
Fylde	22	0·84	2	1·52	39	7·69	4,550	17·44
Hyndburn	117	2·52	36	9·60			1,522	5·67
Lancaster	43	0·76					1,499	3·51
Pendle	162	3·08	20	5·48			1,598	5·40
Preston	459	4·00	132	8·56	114	5·10	1,885	5·29
Ribble Valley	22	1·17					890	5·26
Rossendale	200	3·30	60	15·54			2,089	10·70
South Ribble	158	3·70			93	4·30	1,030	3·39
West Lancashire	285	2·62			20	13·16	1,226	4·34
Wyre	35	0·87	10	29·41			1,122	3·17
Bolton	473	1·81	44	1·96			2,796	3·74
Bury	328	2·80	30	1·78	30	1·85	1,585	2·99
Manchester	4,767	5·89	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	6,600	7·05
Oldham	1,339	5·10	57	2·87			n.a.	n.a.
Rochdale	889	4·07	60	3·31	240	3·93	2,800	4·88
Salford	1,822	4·29	127	3·34			n.a.	n.a.
Stockport	281	1·69	59	1·98	23	1·17	2,141	2·33
Tameside	592	2·78	69	4·56	170	3·63	2,820	4·85
Trafford	256	1·78	18	1·39	126	3·50	2,629	3·96
Wigan	543	1·60	67	6·36	57	24·36	3,177	3·83
Knowsley	405	1·53			20	10·00	1,371	4·51
Liverpool	2,509	3·95	975	5·59	60	25·32	6,148	5·41
St. Helens	257	1·26	71	3·41	14	2·53	2,026	4·32
Sefton	328	1·80	163	3·51	n.a.	n.a.	6,239	6·87
Wirral	694	2·78	156	3·72			4,515	4·27

n.a. = Not available
* Not applicable

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has on (*a*) how many and (*b*) what percentage of homes in (i) the public and (ii) the private sectors in England and Wales are now empty.

Sir George Young: The latest available information for England is from the local authorities' housing investment programme returns for April 1985 and it was given in answer to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) on 19 December 1985 at column *263*. For information on housing in Wales, I refer the hon. and learned Member to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Inner Area Programme (Leicester)

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to assume greater central control over the operation of the inner area programme; if he will detail the amount to be given to Leicester under the programme; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: All partnership and programme authority inner area programmes are subject to approval by Ministers; there are no plans to change these arrangements. The inner area programme allocation for Leicester for 1986-87 is £5·43 million.

North Pennines

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to announce his decision on the inspector's report on the public inquiry into the proposed north Pennines area of outstanding natural beauty.

Mr. Waldegrave: It is hoped to announce the decision during the summer.

Brookwood Lye (Planning Inquiry)

Mr. Onslow asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he now expects to announce his decision on the Brookwood Lye planning inquiry.

Mr. Tracey: Shortly.

Model Water Byelaws

Sir Trevor Skeet asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when the new model water byelaws will be published; and when he expects water undertakers to make new byelaws.

Mr. John Patten: The new model water byelaws are being published today by Her Majesty's Stationery Office on behalf of my Department, the Welsh Office and the Scottish development department. I am placing copies in the Library.

The new model will provide the basis for byelaws made by the 50 separate water undertakers in England, Wales and Scotland aimed at preventing waste, misuse and contamination in consumers' water installations. In conjunction with the Secretaries of State for Wales and Scotland I am consulting the water undertakers with a view to the introduction of new water byelaws based on the model in a co-ordinated national exercise during 1987.

Milton Keynes

Mr. Benyon asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether, following the reviews of progress of development at Milton Keynes, he is now able to define a more precise target for the winding up of the development corporation.

Mr. Tracey: On 4 February 1981, my right hon. Friend the then Secretary of State for the Environment indicated that the target date for winding up Milton Keynes development corporation, along with a number of other new town development corporations, should be the late 1980's. We have been reviewing that conclusion.

We are impressed by the very high rates of growth the development corporation has achieved in both housing and employment investment in recent years. We would like these rates to be maintained. We also recognise the corporation's success in attracting private investment and wish to see its continuing efforts to widen the involvement of the private sector.

Nevertheless, key tasks remain for the corporation, such as promoting the further development of central Milton Keynes and in opening up for development the outer parts of the designated area of the new town, for which the special powers and concentration of effort which a development corporation brings are desirable. We will also wish to ensure that the considerable opportunities for further growth and investment in Milton Keynes are fully safeguarded.

In the light of these considerations my right hon. Friend has decided to set 1 April 1992 as the target date for winding up Milton Keynes development corporation. The final decision and formal order will be made in the usual way after further consultations nearer the date.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

St. Stephen's House (Photocopying)

Mr. Cohen asked the Lord Privy Seal (1) if he will take steps to ensure that the photocopying facilities in St. Stephen's house are restored to full working order as soon as possible; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will take steps to provide more modern photocopying facilities at St. Stephen's house; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Biffen: I understand that there have been a small number of serviceability problems with the copying machines on the first floor of St. Stephen's house and I would be grateful if the hon. Member could write to me if he has any specific points to make. I have, in any event, asked the Serjeant at Arms to get in touch with him direct about the provision of copying machines in St. Stephen's house.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Southern Africa (Job Dependency)

92. **Mr. Teddy Taylor** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what estimate he has made of the number of British jobs which depend directly or indirectly on the maintenance of trading relationships with southern Africa; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: No estimate has been made of the number of jobs dependent on the maintenance of trading links with the whole of the southern African region. However, given the current levels of trade with South Africa, our best estimate is that the equivalent of 120,000 United Kingdom jobs may be involved in the export of goods and services to that country. If trade is disrupted with adjoining states also, this total would be further increased.

Blank Audio Tapes

Mr. Hubbard-Miles asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what consultations he has held with the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany on the operation of a levy on blank audio tapes in that country; and the problems they have encountered.

Mr. Pattie: Although the Federal Republic of Germany has had a levy on recording equipment since 1965, a levy on blank audio and video tape was introduced only in 1985. I have not formally consulted the German Government on how well these relatively new schemes are operating but contacts between my officials and their German counterparts have not identified any serious problems.

Mr. Hubbard-Miles asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what proportion of home taping on blank audio cassette tapes of more than 35 minutes duration is for the purpose of time shifting.

Mr. Pattie: Time-shifting is an activity associated with recording from television. We have received no evidence that recording from radio for time-shift purposes, rather than for the purpose of retention and repeated play-back, is a significant activity.

Trade Names

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the number of trade names registered at 31 December 1985.

Mr. Pattie: Approximately 260,000 trade marks were registered at 31 December 1985.

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will state *(a)* the number of new

trade names registered during 1985, (*b*) the number of trade name registrations renewed during 1985, and (*c*) the number of trade name registrations which expired and were not renewed during 1985.

Mr. Pattie: The number of new marks registered in 1985 was 16,154 and the number of registrations renewed was 14,098. A total of 8,578 registrations expired and were not renewed during 1985.

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when the service offered by the trade marks branch of the Patent Office of supplying to certain public libraries paper copies of trade names submitted for registration was introduced; when this service was discontinued; why it was discontinued; and which public libraries had been receiving those lists of trade names and their owners.

Mr. Pattie: The Trade Marks Registry started to provide certain public libraries with paper index slips of marks in word form (not pictorial marks) in 1958. The service was discontinued in 1980 because it could not be justified against the constraints on Patent Office resources. The list of public libraries which had been receiving the index slips is as follows:

Libraries to receive word mark index slips

1. Aberdeen City Library
2. Central Library, Belfast
3. Birmingham Reference Library
4. Dublin Public Library
5. Glasgow Commercial Library
6. Hatfield Polytechnic Library
7. Central Library, Hull
8. Central Library, Leeds
9. Central Library, Liverpool
10. City Business Library, London
11. Central Library, Manchester
12. County Library, Nottingham
13. Sheffield City Library
14. Central Library, Wolverhampton

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if all registered trade names are now held on computer; and if it is technically possible to print out these trade names on microfiche.

Mr. Pattie: All registered trade marks are now held on computer. It would be technically possible after a further development programme to print out details of the registrations on microfiche.

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will produce on microfiche, a list of the trade names on the register, with the name and address of the owners, the date of the first registration, and the registration number; if he will ensure that it is regularly updated, in a way similar to the updates provided for the microfiche directory of companies; and if he will make it his policy to sell this information at a reasonable price to libraries and others; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Pattie: I do not plan to produce this information on microfiche. The Government have announced that the Patent Office is to be established as a non-departmental public body. I think it right that the new office should be left free to decide what services it can provide within its general remit to promote awareness of intellectual property and to commercialise its resources and expertise for the benefit of industry and commerce.

Trade Marks Register

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if any commercial agents for trade marks have been supplied with, or are being supplied with, information in an electronic form from the trade marks register; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Pattie: The Patent Office currently has non-exclusive contracts with three commercial organisations in the field of information supply: Pergamon, Compumark, and Computer Patent Annuities. The contracts are on a fully commercial basis. They involve the delivery by the Patent Office of a full list of trade marks with period amendments to keep it up to date. The information is supplied on magnetic tape.

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is his policy towards providing access to the information held on the register of trade marks about trade names and the identity and location of their owner.

Mr. Pattie: It is official policy to encourage access to information on the register of trade marks. That information is presently supplied to commercial organisations which make it available through a subscriber service. Additionally, a full set of indices is made available for public use at the Trade Marks Registry and the register is open to public inspection.

Uranium

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if, pursuant to the answer of 25 March, *Official Report*, column *397*, he will take steps to collect information about the amount of uranium, by country of procurement imported for civil nuclear use in the United Kingdom for each year since 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: Statistics in trade in uranium are not available for publication for reasons of commercial confidentiality.

South Africa

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what steps have been taken to ensure implementation of the embargo on the importation of arms and armaments from South Africa.

Mr. Alan Clark: All open individual import licences for arms and ammunition, which are issued only to registered firearms dealers, have been endorsed to the effect that they are no longer valid for imports originating in the Republic of South Africa. Applications for specific import licences must be made for each proposed importation. No arms or armaments are procured from South Africa for the armed forces.

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, pursuant to the answer of 18 June, *Official Report*, column *569*, whether the target wage level for British firms operating in South Africa is the minimum living level plus 50 per cent. or plus 30 per cent. as calculated by the University of South Africa; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Milcom Electronics UK Ltd.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on his Department's investigations into the case of Milcom Electronics UK Ltd. in the context of the arms embargo on South Africa;

(2) what steps have been taken to enforce the embargo on the import of arms from South Africa since the discussions between his Department and Milcom Electronics UK Ltd.

Mr. Alan Clark: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

Semi-Arid Tropics (Research)

Mr. Spencer asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if, pursuant to his reply to the hon. and learned Member for Leicester South, on 16 June, *Official Report*, column *379*, he will list in the *Official Report* the 16 research and development schemes at British institutions which support the International Crop Research Institute for Semi-Arid Tropics research programme.

Mr. Raison: The information is as follows:

	Scheme Title	*Administering Body*	*Start and End Dates*		*Total Cost* £
1.	Downy Mildew on Pearl Millet	University of Reading	5 February 1979	31 March 1985	287,243
2.	Measurement of Nitrogen Fixation with Particular Reference to Associative Symbioses	Rothamsted Experimental Station	1 August 1981	30 September 1986	213,825
3.	Mechanistic Bases for Breeding Resistance to Ergot in Millet	Imperial College	1 March 1983	31 March 1988	121,790
4.	Microclimatology of Millet and Groundnut	University of Nottingham	1 October 1983	30 September 1986	324,192
5.	Characterisation of Resistance and Tolerance Mechanisms against the Parasitic Angiosperm Striga Hermonthica	Birkbeck College	1 April 1985	31 March 1988	108,621
6.	Sorghum New Foods	Tropical Development and Research Institute	1984	1987	148,113
7.	Mycotoxin content of Sorghum	Tropical Development and Research Institute	1985	1988	154,125
8.	Resistance in Sorghum to Stemborer	Tropical Development and Research Institute	1984	1986	59,121
9.	Measurement of Resistance in Sorghum to R Dominica	Tropical Development and Research Institute	1984	1987	22,218
10.	Utilisation of Sorghum Processing By-Products	Tropical Development and Research Institute	1984	1987	96,395
11.	Heliothis: Integrated Pest Management Strategy	Tropical Development and Research Institute	1984	1987	169,995
12.	Heliothis: Flight Potential	Tropical Development and Research Institute	1984	1987	207,063
13.	Heliothis: Biogeographical Studies	Tropical Development and Research Institute	1984		216,730
14.	Establishment of Plant Breeding Selection Criteria, the Use of Chemical Processing and of Supplementary Feed for Improvement of the Nutritive Potential of Straw	Tropical Development and Research Institute	1985	1988	238,418
15.	Heliothis: Reproductive Potential	Tropical Development and Research Institute	1985	1988	226,000
16.	Production of Mycotoxins of Fungi which Colonise Sorghum	Tropical Development and Research Institute	1985	1988	18,973

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Terrorism

Mr. Stanbrook asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the countries which have been designated as parties to the European convention on the suppression of terrorism under section 8 of the Suppression of Terrorism Act 1978, with the dates on which each country ratified the convention; and what other countries have signed the convention but have not ratified it.

Mr. Eggar: The following represents the latest position of adherence to the European convention on the suppression of terrorism:

Country	*Signed*	*Ratified*
United Kingdom	27 January 1977	24 July 1978
Austria	27 January 1977	11 August 1977
Belgium	27 January 1977	31 October 1985
Cyprus	27 January 1977	26 February 1979
Denmark	27 January 1977	27 June 1978
Federal Republic of Germany	27 January 1977	3 May 1978
Iceland	27 January 1977	11 July 1980
Italy*	27 January 1977	28 February 1977 11 September 1981
Luxembourg	27 January 1977	
Netherland	27 January 1977	18 April 1985
Norway	27 January 1977	10 January 1980
Portugal	27 January 1977	14 December 1981
Sweden	27 January 1977	15 September 1977
Switzerland	27 January 1977	19 May 1983
Turkey	27 January 1977	19 May 1981
Spain*	27 April 1978	20 May 1980
Liechtenstein*	22 January 1979	13 June 1979

* Spain, Italy and Liechtenstein are shortly to be designated under Section 8 of the Suppression of Terrorism Act 1978. All other countries listed above are already designated.

France, Greece and Republic of Ireland have signed but not ratified the European convention on the suppression of terrorism. Malta has neither signed nor ratified the convention.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

European Union

Mr. Cash asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the policy of Her Majesty's Government towards a federal or quasi-federal interpretation of the concept of the European union.

Mrs. Chalker: As my right hon. and learned Friend told the House on 23 April the Government's policy is reflected in the references to European union in the Single European Act, which invoke practical steps towards the unity essential to Europe if it is to maintain and enhance its economic and political position in the world.

Heysel Stadium, Brussels

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has about the number of Italian citizens whose extradition has been sought by the Belgian authorities in connection with the deaths at the Heysel stadium, Brussels in May 1985.

Mr. Eggar: I have no information on this matter, which is primarily one for the Belgian and Italian authorities.

South Africa

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to the answer of 18 June, *Official Report*, column 569, if he will state exactly what constituted the misquote in the European Economic Community code of conduct of European firms operating in South Africa; if he will further state if this misquote resulted from a mistranslation; whether the European Economic Community Foreign Ministers themselves misquoted the previous code; on what date he first realised there was a misquote; which departments have issued the document with the misquote; what steps are being taken to trace these documents; whether any incorrect codes have been issued to companies trading in South Africa; and if the misquote is being issued in documents by our European Economic Community partners.

Mrs. Chalker: The text of the new code of conduct issued by Ministers in Brussels on 19 November 1985 was issued as a press release by the Presidency. Unfortunately, in the footnote to the section on pay and wage structures the press release misquoted the 1977 code. The error was discovered soon afterwards and has been corrected. The new code will be published as a White Paper in due course.

Krugerrands

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the gap in time between the announcement of the decision to ban krugerrands and the implementation of it.

Mrs. Chalker: My right hon. and learned Friend announced the decision to introduce a ban on imports of all gold coins from South Africa in a written reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley) on 23 May. The ban came into effect at midnight the same day.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Radiation

Mr. Frank Cook asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if members of the Committee on the Medical Aspects of Radiation in the Environment have been required to sign declarations under the Official Secrets Act; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Brent, South (Mr. Pavitt) on 16 May at columns *587-88*.

Babies (Clinical Research)

Mr. Coombs asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) of 12 June, what evidence he has as to the incidence of breaches of or infringement against the codes of practice relating to clinical research practised on sick or premature babies without parental consent or knowledge; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: We are aware of the recent report of the working group of the Institute of Medical Ethics on medical research on children. I understand that the study was not set up because the institute had reason to believe

that unethical or harmful research was being undertaken into children in the United Kingdom. However, the report did suggest that certain breaches of existing codes of practice may be taking place, but no direct evidence has been brought to my attention. We will take the working group's report into account in considering the need for renewed departmental guidance on this subject.

Childhood Dysfunction

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what training the teaching staff in teaching hospitals have in diagnosing early childhood dysfunction.

Mr. Whitney: The paediatric content of the post-graduate training of teaching staff in teaching hospitals is a matter for the hospitals and the royal colleges.

National Radiological Protection Board

Mr. Boulkes asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what plans he has to increase the level of financial support to the National Radiological Protection Board; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: The National Radiological Protection Board's grant from this Department is agreed annually after considering the board's expenditure proposals and the extent to which these will be funded from income from technical services provided or contract research undertaken. We have not yet received the board's proposals for 1987-88.

Supplementary Benefit

Mr. Irving asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the estimated impact on the standards of living of those claiming social security benefit of the Government's proposals to make such recipients of benefits pay 20 per cent. of their rates.

Mr. Newton: It is not sensibly possible to generalise in the way implied by my hon. Friend's question, since this proposal is part of a wider pattern of changes which, being designed to produce a fairer and better targeted benefit structure, necessarily varies in its effects on different individuals and groups. The technical annex to the White Paper "Reform of Social Security" does, however, contain tables showing, on certain illustrative assumptions about benefit rates and other matters, the possible overall effect of the proposals both with and without a 20 per cent. contribution to domestic rates.

Hospital Waiting Lists (Merseyside)

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will provide details of the waiting list for each specialty for every hospital on Merseyside.

Mr. Whitney: The number of persons awaiting admission to each specialty at each of the hospitals in the Liverpool, St. Helens and Knowsley, Southport and Formby, South Sefton and Wirral district health authorities is given in the table.

Number of persons on in-patient waiting lists on 31 December 1985 (provisional)

District Health Authority, hospital and specialty	*Total cases*
Liverpool District Health Authority	
Saint Paul's Eye Hospital	
Ophthalmology	549
Total	549
Women's Hospital	
Gynaecology	655
Total	655
Royal Liverpool Hospital	
General Surgery	619
Ear, nose and throat	313
Traumatic and orthopaedic	622
Urology	584
Oral surgery	195
Gynaecology	331
Pathology	10
Total	2,674
Broadgreen Hospital	
Cardiology	294
General surgery	894
Traumatic and orthopaedic	286
Urology	211
Thoracic surgery	8
Oral surgery	386
Cardiac surgery	103
Total	2,182
Newsham General Hospital	
Dermatology	10
Traumatic and orthopaedic	241
Total	251
Mill Road Maternity Hospital	
Gynaecology	95
Total	95
Alder Hay Children's Hospital	
Ear, nose and throat	384
Traumatic and orthopaedic	176
Ophthalmology	33
Urology	59
Plastic surgery	260
Oral surgery	38
Psychiatry children	7
Paediatric surgery	416
Paediatric dentistry	31
Total	1,404
Royal Liverpool Children's Hospital	
Cardiology	187
Traumatic and orthopaedic	10
Oral surgery	55
Paediatric surgery	77
Paediatric dentistry	8
Total	337
St. Helens and Knowsley District Health Authority	
Whiston Hospital	
General surgery	247

District Health Authority, hospital and specialty	Total cases
Ear, nose and throat	645
Traumatic and orthopaedic	505
Plastic surgery	930
Gynaecology	619
Total	2,946
St. Helens Hospital	
General surgery	274
Traumatic and orthopaedic	308
Ophthalmology	90
Total	672
Southport and Formby District Health Authority	
Southport General Hospital	
General surgery	360
Traumatic and orthopaedic	121
Ophthalmology	304
Gynaecology	313
Total	1,098
Southport Promenade Hospital	
Geriatrics	6
Spinal Injuries	18
Total	24
Greaves Hall Hospital	
Mental handicap	4
Psychogeriatric	10
Total	14
South Sefton District Health Authority	
Walton Hospital	
Neurology	141
General surgery	486
Ear, nose and throat	745
Traumatic and orthopaedic	398
Ophthalmology	17
Urology	130
Oral surgery	98
Neurosurgery	166
Gynaecology	400
Anaesthetics	52
Gastroenterology	80
Total	2,713
Fazakerley Hospital	
General surgery	109
Traumatic and orthopaedic	781
Gynaecology	340
Total	1,230
Wirral District Health Authority	
Arrowe Park Hospital	
Rheumatology	5
General surgery	391
Ear, nose and throat	798
Traumatic and orthopaedic	25
Ophthalmology	283
Oral surgery	139
Gynaecology	638
Total	2,279
Clatterbridge Hospital	
General medicine	1
Geriatrics	1
General surgery	432
Traumatic and orthopaedic	345
Radiotherapy	112
Total	891

AIDS

Sir Bernard Braine asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what recommendation he has received from his Department's acquired immune deficiency syndrome working party on the provision of needles and syringes to drug misusers.

Mr. Hayhoe: The expert advisory group on AIDS is still considering this matter and has yet to make recommendations.

Road Accidents (Emergency Treatment Fee)

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he now expects to introduce legislation to abolish the road traffic accident emergency treatment fee.

Mr. Whitney: The Government intend to introduce legislation to abolish the emergency treatment fee payable to health authorities under section 155 of the Road Traffic Act 1972 at the earliest convenient opportunity.

Special Payments (Loans)

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what guidance is given by local officers of his Department to claimants seeking special needs or emergency payments regarding approaches to loan companies; what advice is given in this context as to the availability of low interest loans from reputable money lenders; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Major: People who do not qualify for supplementary benefit in the normal way can be considered for urgent needs payments under the Supplementary Benefit (Urgent Cases) Regulations. In these circumstances, they are asked whether they already have credit or loan facilities available.

However, the Department does not expect claimants to negotiate new commercial loan facilities in any circumstances and therefore does not give guidance about making approaches to loan companies or money lenders.

Domestic Assistance Addition

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the number of persons *(a)* receiving the domestic assistance addition and the average weekly payment and *(b)* receiving the domestic assistance addition for the travelling expenses incurred by a caring relative and the average weekly payment for each of the past five years.

Mr. Major: The information to 1984 (the latest available date) is as follows:

	Total number of domestic assistance additions (thousands)	Average weekly amount £
1980	4	1·37
1981	5	2·51
1982	4	3·83
1983	2	3·59
†1984	1	3·92

* These amounts do not take account of the effect of the available scale margin in relevant cases so that the average amount of benefit actually received would be somewhat lower than shown.

† Provisional figures.

Source: Annual statistical inquiries.

No information is available about the number and amounts included within the domestic assistance additions in respect of the travelling expenses incurred by a caring relative.

NHS (Resources)

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the growth in real terms in the amount of resources devoted to the National Health Service and available for patient care in 1984-85 in absolute and percentage terms, taking account of demographic factors and the impact on costs of technological advances.

Mr. Hayhoe: Total expenditure on the National Health Service in 1984-85 increased by 2·8 per cent. (£360 million) in real terms of which 1·4 per cent. (£180 million) was spent on pay and price increases, leaving the remaining 1·4 per cent. available for services. The table shows the increase in resources from higher spending and cost improvement available to the Hospital and Community Health Service (HCHS) in 1984-85 and estimated demographic pressure. It is not possible accurately to measure the effect of technological change on costs. It is not possible to provide similar data for the National Health Service as a whole.

These figures do not fully reflect the significant increases in patient care which took place. In 1984-85 health authorities achieved cost improvement programmes of over £100 million (equivalent to 1·1 per cent. of revenue resources). In 1984 the number of in-patient cases rose by 159,000 (2·6 per cent.), day cases by 90,000 (11 per cent.) and out-patient and accident and emergency attendances by 690,000 (1·4 per cent.). Overall, services to patients increased by 3 per cent. more than sufficient to meet demographic pressure and to take advantage of the opportunities offered by medical progress.

	£ million	per cent.
Real Growth in expenditure*	121	1·4
Cost improvement (Cash releasing)	105	1·1
Total Resources	226	2·5
of which		
Pay and price†	130	1·5
Services	96	1·0
Demographic Pressure	52	0·6

* As measured against the gross domestic product deflator.

† Represents the increase in HCHS pay and prices compared with general inflation.

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what proportion of gross national product was devoted to expenditure on the National Health Service in each year since 1981; what equivalent information he has about other Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries; and to what factors he attributes any difference between the figures for the United Kingdom and the average for the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

Mr. Hayhoe: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Patients (Statistics)

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the change in (*a*) the number of in-patients dealt with by medical and dental staff and (*b*) the number of out-patients treated in the period from 1975 to 1984; and to what factors he attributes the trends shown by the figures.

Mr. Whitney: I am sorry I cannot give the hon. Member the precise information he seeks. Information on individual patients is not available centrally. The relevant available statistics are given in the table. The figures show a rise in the numbers of cases treated, reflecting the more intensive use of beds and greater use of day case treatment. The figures for 1975 and 1982 were affected by the industrial action in the Health Service.

Hospital activity England all specialties

Thousands

Year	In-patient discharges and deaths	Day case attendances	Outpatients	
			New	Total attendances
1975	4,975·8	421·7	6,925·9	30,947·5
1976	5,254·6	480·5	7,498·5	32,396·4
1977	5,345·0	536·2	7,612·1	33,282·2
1978	5,370·3	562·2	7,711·9	33,950·3
1979	5,400·1	592·1	7,713·5	34,099·7
1980	5,670·0	670·8	7,942·2	35,243·0
1981	5,759·9	713·9	8,024·7	35,571·4
1982	5,719·6	706·5	8,097·0	35,651·2
1983	6,018·6	813·2	8,310·9	36,519·6
1984	6,177·5	902·9	8,508·1	37,042·7
Index: 1975 = 100				
1975	100·0	100·0	100·0	100·0
1976	105·6	114·0	108·3	104·7
1977	107·4	127·2	109·9	107·5
1978	107·9	133·3	111·3	109·7
1979	108·5	140·4	111·4	110·2
1980	114·0	159·1	114·7	113·9
1981	115·8	169·3	115·9	114·9
1982	115·0	167·5	116·9	115·2
1983	121·0	192·8	120·0	118·0
1984	124·2	214·1	122·8	119·7

Research Grants

Mr. Dorrell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what are his plans for the Department's small grant scheme for processing spontaneous applications for research grants; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: Costs of the small grants scheme have risen from £207,000 in 1983-84 to an expected £340,000 this year and thus form a growing proportion of the Department's total research budget. This has had the inevitable effect of reducing the opportunities for developing the main commissioned research programme in the priority areas. In order, therefore, to increase

the emphasis that is placed on these priority projects, no new applications to the small grants scheme are currently being considered. A decision on the future of the scheme will be made when the new chief scientist is appointed.

Mentally Ill and Mentally Handicapped People

Mr. Irving asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what proportion of the housing schemes funded by the Housing Corporation in each year since 1980 have been for the *(a)* adult mentally ill and *(b)* adult mentally handicapped.

Sir George Young: I have been asked to reply.

I regret that the information on Housing Corporation funded schemes since 1980 is not available in the form requested and could not be obtained other than at disproportionate cost. An analysis of fair rent schemes based on evidence provided by housing associations in 1984 was, however, published in the Housing Corporation's corporate plan 1985. This showed that 3 per cent. of the people housed by associations were mentaly ill and a further 3 per cent. mentally handicapped.

North-Western RHA (Computers)

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what discussions he has had with the North Western regional health authority concerning the DHSS audit report and the authority's conduct in relation to the procurement and development of the integrated personnel system and the patient administration system computers.

Mr. Whitney [*pursuant to his reply*, 23 June 1986]: The audit report has been considered by the authority which has now submitted its formal written comments. These will now be considered by the Department.

Cancer (West Cumbria)

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the progress in implementing recommendations numbered 5 to 7 of the report of the advisory group, chaired by Sir Douglas Black, on the incidence of cancer in West Cumbria.

Mr. Whitney: We are advised that the position in respect of these recommendations is as follows.

Recommendation 5

Following extensive consultation between all involved United Kingdom Departments, Ministers have agreed in principle to the funding of a unit to carry out the work recommended by the advisory group. Provisional arrangements have been made on the siting and funding of this unit. As soon as these are confirmed I will inform the House.

Recommendations 6 and 7

The Medical Research Council has recently produced an interim report for the Department in response to our request last year. This is now being considered.

Work on the direct measurement of radionuclides in post-mortem tissues from the northern region is being undertaken by the National Radiological Protection Board in collaboration with local clinicians and pathologists. The board also has an experimental programme to investigate factors that may affect gastro-intestinal absorption.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment has contracted for studies using a mobile whole body monitor to provide information on the levels of gamma emitters in members of the population in the northern region and throughout the United Kingdom. He is also sponsoring work to identify the presence of radionuclides in household dust. This study was started prior to the publication of the Black report, is continuing and will provide the information necessary to assess the radiological impact of this possible exposure route. This work is a more extensive follow-up of a pilot study carried out by the National Radiological Protection Board, the results of which were published.

My right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has carried out studies into the ingestion of plutonium and americium by adults in West Cumbria and elsewhere through the consumption of shellfish from the Sellafield area; the results have been published. He has, in addition, established a comprehensive monitoring programme for radioactivity in food and agriculture which extends to the terrestrial environment the same sort of coverage as already exists for the marine environment.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 25 June 1986

EMPLOYMENT

EC (Labour and Social Affairs Council)

Mr. Forman asked the Paymaster General if he will make a statement on the European Community Labour and Social Affairs Council he'd in Luxembourg on 5 June.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I represented the United Kingdom at this Council. The Council agreed the directive on equal treatment in occupational social security schemes, the recommendation on the employment of the disabled and the resolution on the promotion of equal opportunities for women. A new joint United Kingdom, Irish and Italian paper on the labour market was tabled for discussion and welcomed by the Council.

The agreement on the directive for equal treatment between men and women in employers' pensions or sick pay schemes is a major step forward in giving women valuable financial security on terms which are fair in comparison with those available to men. It will prohibit discrimination between men and women in the conditions of membership of schemes, in the level of contributions and subject to certain exceptions in the level and type of benefit. The United Kingdom Government wish to encourage and support the provision of good occupational schemes to workers and welcomes the directive for the important part it will play in ensuring that these schemes throughout the Community look after women workers as successfully as their male colleagues.

The United Kingdom Government welcome the recommendation on the employment of the disabled which encourages member states to adopt measures promoting fair employment and training opportunities for disabled people. The Government also welcome the fact that agreement on the terms of the resolution has been reached so rapidly. United Kingdom policy and practice is already consistent with the terms of the resolution.

I was also pleased to support the resolution on the second action programme to promote equal opportunities for women. I particularly welcome the attention which it gives to education and training policies which can expand women's occupational choice and encourage their entry into new technology jobs and entrepreneurship. The United Kingdom is already implementing a number of the measures suggested in the programme and will continue to promote equality of opportunity.

The joint United Kingdom, Irish and Italian paper on "Employment growth into the 1990s—a strategy for the labour market"—was tabled as forecast in my earlier reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, Moorlands (Mr. Knox) of 3 June, at columns 423-24. The paper, which proposes measures in four main areas—promoting enterprise and self-employment; flexible patterns and conditions of work; training; and steps to help long-term unemployed people—was welcomed by the Council, which agreed to continue its work on the paper during the United Kingdom presidency, particularly at the informal meeting of EC Employment Ministers in September. It remains our aim to secure the adoption of an employment strategy along the lines of the paper later this year.

The Council also discussed a presidency note on the long-term unemployed. On behalf of the United Kingdom Government I was able to support its conclusions aimed towards giving more priority to the problems of long-term unemployed people. We will be looking to take the proposals in the paper forward in the United Kingdom presidency within the context of an overall labour market strategy.

In a discussion on the so-called Vredling directive, the Council reached conclusions recalling their earlier view that before further progress on the directive could be made a solution had to be found to the fundamental problems posed by the fact that in some member states the issue was essentially one for voluntary agreements between employers and employees. The Council concluded that it would not hold further discussions on the draft directive before the beginning of 1989, but that in the meantime the Commission should be invited to follow closely developments in the member states.

The Council was unable to reach agreement on the draft directive on equal treatment for self-employed women and on proscribing certain carcinogens. In the latter case the United Kingdom Government would have been prepared to support a text proposed by the presidency, but other countries had fundamental objections to it. In the former case the United Kingdom shared the reservations attached by the Republic of Ireland relating to the establishment of an unsuitable legal framework for the employment status of those who assist their spouses in the running of their businesses.

Finally, the Commission stated its view to the Council that in view of the lack of progress on the draft directive on parental leave, the Council would instead put forward proposals for a series of actions in the area of sharing family and occupational responsibilities.

Publications (Welsh Language)

Mr. Wigley asked the Paymaster General if he will list those forms, leaflets and pamphlets published by his Department that are available either in a Welsh language or a bilingual Welsh-English version.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: My Department currently produces a total of 22 forms, two leaflets and seven posters in the Welsh language.

Forms

B1
B1 (Student)
B1 (S/L)
UB25
UB40X
UB40Z
UB77
LOC11G App G7
UB78
UB83 (Pen)
UB85
UB86
UB86B
UB123LV
UB123(PE)
UB123(PR)
UB461
UB534

UB605A
UB607
UB730
UB733

Leaflets

UBL18 Unemployment Benefit What you must do
UBL35(W) Student Claims to benefit at Easter and Christmas

Posters

UBP11 Current Unemployment Benefit rates
UIP44 Notice to claimants about punctual attendance
UBP82 Times of attendance
UBP86 Please produce Inland Revenue form P45

In addition, we have three locally prepared posters available from Caernarfon unemployment benefit office:

(*a*) Advising claimants that certain forms and leaflets are available in Welsh (to be displayed in all unemployment benefit offices.)

(*b*) Advising claimants that there is a Welsh speaking member of staff in the unemployment benefit office. (To be displayed in offices where Welsh speaking staff are working.)

(*c*) UBP35 advertising the claimant appointment system introduced to avoid unnecessary queues.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Crown Prosecution Service

Mr. Gerald Howarth asked the Attorney-General, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Cannock and Burntwood on 26 March, *Official Report*, column 469, what progress is being made towards establishment of the Crown prosecution service in England and Wales; when he now expects the Director of Public Prosecutions to promulgate to Crown prosecutors the code provided for by section 10 of the Prosecution of Offences Act 1985; if he has any plans to seek to alter the constitutional relationship between himself and the Director of Public Prosecutions; and what will be the relative status of the code and the existing guidelines for prosecution promulgated by the Attorney-General in March 1983.

The Attorney-General: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Home Department made a commencement order last week which will have the effect of bringing the Crown prosecution service into operation in those parts of England and Wales where it is not already established on 1 October 1986. The Director of Public Prosecutions is today issuing to members of the Crown prosecution service the code for Crown prosecutors required by section 10 of the Prosecution of Offences Act 1985. The code reaffirms and expands my earlier guidance so as to provide a public statement of the fundamental principles according to which the Crown prosecution service will discharge the duties placed upon it by Parliament as well as its policies on the specific matters mentioned in section 10.

By providing clear and open criteria as the basis for decisions by crown prosecutors, the code complements the director's accountability to me. I am, of course, in turn accountable to Parliament. However, the constitutional position of the director in relation to Her Majesty's Government will be unaffected. Prosecution policy is not a matter for Her Majesty's Government; such prosecution policies as the Director of Public Prosecutions may adopt are a matter for his independent judgment, subject only to superintendence by me in my capacity as a Law Officer and not as a member of Her Majesty's Government.

I welcome this opportunity to reaffirm the principles enunciated in this House on 29 January 1951, at column 681, by the then Attorney-General (now the noble Lord, Lord Shawcross) which remain as valid today as they were at the time of that classical exposition of the relationship between the Law Officers, the Director of Public Prosecutions and Her Majesty's Government.

In applying those policies to individual cases and deciding whether the interests of public justice will be served by a prosecution, it will be the duty of the director and the staff of the Crown prosecution service to acquaint themselves with all the relevant facts, and for this purpose the scope of the considerations which may be taken into account may be very wide. But there is one consideration which is altogether excluded and that is the repercussion of a given decision upon the personal fortune of either the Attorney-General for the time being or his party's or the Government's political fortunes; that is a consideration which never enters into account. Apart from that, those responsible for taking decisions whether to prosecute (whether it be myself, the director or a Crown prosecutor) may have regard to a variety of considerations, all of them leading to the final question – would a prosecution be in the public interest, including in that phrase, of course, in the interests of justice?

The code now supersedes the existing guidelines and accordingly I propose to invite all other prosecuting authorities and those, such as the police, who are responsible for initiating criminal proceedings to adopt it to the extent that it is applicable to their respective functions. All those whom my officials have been able to consult have indicated that they are willing to do so.

I have caused a copy of the code to be placed in the Libraries of both Houses pending incorporation in the manner prescribed by section 10 of the Prosecution of Offences Act 1985 in the director's annual report for 1986-87.

Publications (Welsh Language)

Mr. Wigley asked the Attorney-General if he will list those forms, leaflets and pamphlets used in the courts of Wales which are available in the Welsh language or in a bilingual Welsh-English format.

The Attorney-General: The forms listed are currently available in Welsh. All other forms, leaflets and pamphlets can be translated into Welsh on request. Additionally, a bilingual notice is attached to county court summonses that a Welsh translation will be provided on request.

	Form
County Court Forms	
N1	Default summons (Fixed Amount)
N2	Default summons (Unliquidated)
N3	Fixed date summons (pre-trial review)
N9	Forms of admission, defence and counterclaim to accompany Forms N1, 2, 3, 4
N18	Notice of reference to arbitration
N19	Order referring proceedings to arbitration
N232	Notice to parties of day fixed for hearing
N233	Notice to parties of day fixed for pre-trial review or for giving instructions
Divorce County Court Forms	
D8	Divorce Petition—notes for guidance
D8A	Statement as to arrangements for children
D8(2)	Notice of Proceedings—Party other than Spouse

Form	
D8(3)	Notice of Proceedings—Respondent Spouse
D8(5)	Notice of Proceedings—Respondent Spouse
D9D	Notice of receipt of Acknowledgment of service
D10(2)	Acknowledgment of Service—Party other than Spouse
D10(5)	Acknowledgment of Service—Respondent Spouse
D29A	Decree Nisi—Dissolution
D29B	Decree Nisi—Dissolution
D29D	Decree Nisi—Dissolution
D36	Notice of application for Decree Nisi to be made Absolute
D37	Certificate making Decree Nisi Absolute (Divorce)
D61	Orders Supplementary to Decree Nisi
D65	Declaration—no children
D67	Declaration—Satisfaction
D75	Affidavit of Means
D80B	Affidavit by petitioner in support of petition
D84	Request for directions for Trial Special Procedure
D88	Number slip
D92	Application for Exemption of fees in Matrimonial Proceedings

Crown Court Forms	
5222	Jury Summons
5013	Witness notice: After conditional witness order
5014	Witness notice: Failure to attend
5015	Notice to Defendent of suspended sentence
5018	Notice of: Fine, Forfeited recognisance, Costs, Compensation
5020	Notice to Defendant on breach of binding over order
5032	Result of appeal order
5037A	Order discharging probation order
5040	Conditional Discharge Order
5053	Certificate of reasons for refusal to state a case
5071	Summons where defendent has not been committed
5072	Witness summons
5074	Summons—offence committed during suspended sentence
5075	Summons—breach of probation or conditional discharge
5085	Listing information
5101	Surety on probation
5103	Recognisance, keep the peace and sureties
5104	General recognisance and sureties
5105	Order of recognisance to keep proper care: Criminal Proceedings (C & YP Act 1969 S7 [7])
5202	Notice to show cause
5206	Certificate for loss of earnings
5212	Letter of excusal for attendance
5213	Letter of non-excusal for attendance
5224	Letter of withdrawal of jury summons
5225	Letter of excusal
5226	Letter of non-excusal
5227	Letter requesting further information
5229	Letter of postponement
5230	Release from jury service
5234	Certificate of Attendance
5227	Jury Service—Explanatory Leaflet

DEFENCE

Falkland Islands (Gazelle Helicopter)

Mr. Bellingham asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will make a statement about the loss of an Army Gazelle helicopter in the Falkland Islands on 6 June 1982.

Mr. Stanley: I will set out, as fully as is possible at this distance in time, the circumstances surrounding the loss of the Gazelle.

2. On 6 June 1982, night flying conditions were excellent with a clear sky and a prominent moon and a wind speed of some 20 knots. There is no evidence of any restrictions on night flying. The Gazelle was flying from 5 Brigade headquarters, at Darwin, to Pleasant Peak, a distance of some 19 nautical miles. A radio rebroadcast station had been established there the previous day in order to provide a communications link between the headquarters and the 2nd Battalion the Parachute Regiment which had reached Fitzroy. There were problems with this link, and the Gazelle was taking spares and the officer commanding the Signals Squadron and a technician to investigate. It had been intended that the flight would go on to Fitzroy and then return to Darwin the next day. The helicopter's identification friend or foe (IFF) was switched off because it had been established that at that time the use of this equipment caused interference with other weapons systems critical to the battle. Five Brigade was in contact with the Gazelle until it was shot down, and those at the rebroadcast site saw an explosion and reported it to the headquarters almost immediately. It cannot now be ascertained with certainty whether any unit other than 5 Brigade was aware at that time of the helicopter's flight. At first light a search was mounted and the wreckage found. The two aircrew and two passengers were found to have been killed.

3. On the same day, 6 June, suspicions arose that the helicopter had been shot down by a Sea Dart missile fired from HMS Cardiff; but these suspicions fell well short of certainty, and indeed the situation was confused. The eastward advance of our forces through East Falkland was still in progress at the time, and the initial reaction to the loss of the helicopter was that there could still be Argentinians in the area. An investigation on the ground was unable to determine with finality whether Argentinian action or the missile from HMS Cardiff was responsible. In the circumstances of continuing operations it was decided that a board of inquiry was not required, and the helicopter was reported as lost in action. In view of the doubts about the cause, the commanders at the time understandably took the view that it would be wrong to add to the grief of the relatives by telling them that the Gazelle might have been lost as a result of an error on their own side.

4. After the conflict the investigation into the loss of the Gazelle was continued, and a study of missile fragments found in the wreckage commenced at the Royal Aircraft Establishment Farnborough in 1982. The coincidence of the Sea Dart firing and the Gazelle's loss at the same time and in the same vicinity had been noted, and a Sea Dart missile casing had later been found several hundred yards from the wreckage. However, the scientific tests by RAE in 1982 led to the conclusion that the missile fragments were not from a Sea Dart.

5. Drawing on this work, the Army Air Corps submitted evidence in December 1982 to the Southampton coroner who held the inquest into the death of one of those killed whose body had been repatriated. It was stated that scientific analysis of warhead fragments found in the wreckage indicated that the aircraft had been destroyed by an anti-aircraft missile of a type known to have been in the possession of the enemy. It is now known that this was not correct, and the coroner has been informed accordingly.

6. Since 1982 work has continued on the lessons of the conflict, and this led to the scientific evidence being assessed afresh. A review was carried out by RAE Farnborough in the latter part of 1985 of the findings of the 1982 tests by RAE to which I have referred. The 1985 review, which was completed in November, concluded that there could be no definitive conclusion as to the exact

source of the missile fragments recovered from the crash site. This led the Ministry of Defence to conclude in the light of all the available evidence that the Sea Dart missile fired by HMS Cardiff must be adjudged the probable cause of the loss of the helicopter.

7. The question whether the relatives of those killed in the Gazelle should be told of the conclusions drawn from the revised assessment was given very careful consideration. The prime concern was to minimise the additional distress which such news would cause; however it was concluded that they should be informed, and this was done on 23 May.

8. With the benefit of hindsight, and divorced from the pressures of war, it is arguable that the 1982 decision not to hold a formal inquiry into the loss of the Gazelle was mistaken. Regarding the question whether the relatives of those killed should have been told earlier that the helicopter might have been lost through action by our own side, the deep concern of the Ministry of Defence has been not to cause further anguish to relatives until the facts were clear. We are very sorry indeed for any additional distress that the relatives have suffered.

NATO (Permanent Representative)

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Defence if the United Kingdom permanent representative in NATO is authorised to agree policy matters on behalf of Her Majesty's Government.

Mr. Stanley: The principal NATO committees, including the North Atlantic Council and the defence planning committee, meet both in permanent and ministerial session. The United Kingdom's permanent representative represents Her Majesty's Government's policy to NATO in meetings in permanent session, acting on instructions as necessary, and is responsible to United Kingdom Ministers.

Chemical Weapons

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Defence what machinery exists within the NATO Alliance for deciding about the use of chemical weapons in war.

Mr. Stanley: No chemical weapons are declared to NATO and no machinery has been established within NATO specifically to decide on the use of United States of America chemical weapons in war. However, were consideration to be given to using such weapons in the NATO area, there would no doubt be consultation at the highest political level. In NATO headquarters, the defence planning committee would be the appropriate forum.

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if the deployment of chemical warheads for cruise missiles in the United Kingdom will require the prior approval of Her Majesty's Government;

(2) what is the policy of Her Majesty's Government towards the NATO force goal that includes modernisation of the United States share of a NATO chemical deterrent.

Mr. Stanley: I refer the hon. Member to the replies I gave to the right hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) on 28 April 1986 at column 665 and 15 May 1986 at column *546*.

Armed Forces (Homosexuality)

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many members of the armed forces in 1985 were disciplined on the ground of male or female homosexuality; under what military regulations they were charged and disciplined; of the total number disciplined in that year, how many were *(a)* discharged administratively, *(b)* dishonourably discharged, *(c)* court-martialled and *(d)* given military prison sentences; and, in these cases, what was the minimum, maximum and average length of sentence, respectively.

Mr. Freeman: No member of the services is disciplined purely on the ground of being a homosexual. If an individual has committed no offence, he will usually be administratively discharged, which is not a disciplinary procedure. However, homosexual practice is an offence under each Service Discipline Act, and may lead to administrative discharge for action under the Acts, which may result in dismissal or imprisonment.

I refer the hon. Member to the statistics for 1981-84 given by my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement on 8 March 1985 at column *624-6*.

The information for 1985 is as follows:

	Royal Navy		*Army*		*Royal Air Force*	
Administrative discharge	7		23		24	
Dismissal Dismissal* with disgrace	5		6		3	
Court martialled†	3		19		3	
Summary trial†	7		—		—	
Prison sentence	‡6		‖11		‖3	
	Detention	*Prison*	*Detention*	*Prison*	*Detention*	*Prison*
Minimum sentence days	28 days (suspended)	—	56 days	2 years	70 days	90 days
Maximum sentence	90 days	—	9 months	6 years	84 days	90 days
Average sentence	42 days	—	4 months	4 years	77 days	90 days

* The term "dishonourable discharge" does not exist in the British Armed Forces; it is assumed that dismissal and dismissal with disgrace are referred to.

† Figures refer to number of cases brought, not to the number of convictions.

‡ Relates to detention in Royal Navy detention quarters only.

‖ Includes military detention and civil prison sentences.

Armed Forces (Racial Discrimination)

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he has had with the Commission for Racial Equality regarding alleged racial discrimination in the armed forces; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: There have been a number of contacts between officials of the Ministry of Defence and the Commission for Racial Equality. These contacts which were of a routine nature, related to general race relations policies and practices in the armed forces.

Royal Navy (Meal Charges)

Mr. Gould asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he has any plans to require Royal Navy personnel to contribute to the cost of their meals when on board ship; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: There are no such plans. As discussed at paragraphs 79 to 82 of the review body's 15th report, Cmnd. 9784, the Armed Forces Pay Review Body will be considering the overall remuneration package for those at sea in a future review.

Publications (Welsh Language)

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list those leaflets, pamphlets and forms published by his Department for use in Wales which are printed in Welsh or in a bilingual Welsh-English format.

Mr. Freeman: No leaflets, pamphlets or forms, published by the Ministry of Defence, are printed in Welsh or in a bilingual Welsh-English format.

UN (Military Budgets)

Sir Hector Monro asked the Secretary of State for Defence what response the United Kingdom has made to the latest United Nations exercise on the reduction of military budgets; and how this compares with the record of Warsaw Pact countries.

Mr. Stanley: The United Kingdom has replied to the questionnaire on military expenditure issued by the UN this year, as it has done every year since 1982. None of the Warsaw Pact nations has provided any input, with the sole exception of Romania which provided a response, albeit an incomplete one, for the first time last year. This refusal by most of the Warsaw Pact to participate is most regrettable.

Test Ban Treaty

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will now make it his policy to seek a mandate for the ad hoc committee of the conference on disarmament at Geneva to commence the negotiation of a comprehensive test ban treaty.

Mr. Eggar: I have been asked to reply.

As we have made clear on numerous occasions, it would be premature to resume negotiations until progress has been made in resolving verification issues.

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the specific ways in which Her Majesty's Government are working towards the achievement of a test ban treaty.

Mr. Eggar: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Member to the remarks made by my hon. Friend the Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, the Member for Mid-Sussex (Mr. Renton) during the Adjournment debate on 26 March at column 1049.

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the answer of 13 May, *Official Report*, column 542, if he will list any discussions Her Majesty's Government have held with the Government of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics since January 1980 on the absence of any effective verification procedures for a comprehensive test ban treaty.

Mr. Eggar: I have been asked to reply.

We have discussed arms control matters, including nuclear testing issues, with the Soviet Government on a number of occasions, most recently when my hon. Friend the Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, the Member for Mid-Sussex (Mr. Renton) saw Mr. Karpov on 18 April.

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the answer of 13 May, *Official Report*, column 542, if Her Majesty's Government are currently holding any discussions with the Government of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics in pursuit of Her Majesty's Government's wish to find a way to eliminate nuclear weapons as soon as possible; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. and learned Friend will have an opportunity to discuss the broad ranges of arms control issues, including current nuclear arms control negotiations, when the Soviet Foreign Minister visits the United Kingdom on 14-15 July. However, as my right hon. and learned Friend said in a speech to the Foreign Press Association on 17 March, nuclear weapons will continue for the foreseeable future to make an essential contribution to preserving peace.

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for Defence pursuant to the answer given on 13 May, *Official Report*, column 542, if Her Majesty's Government plan to hold any discussions with the Government of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on the absence of effective verification measures for a comprehensive test ban treaty; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: I have been asked to reply.

As my right hon. and learned Friend has informed the House, the Soviet Foreign Minister will be visiting the United Kingdom on 14-15 May and we expect the discussion will cover a wide range of issues including arms control.

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the further measures on verification that are required of the Soviet Union in order that progress can be achieved on a comprehensive test ban.

Mr. Eggar: I have been asked to reply.

It is not possible to specify the measures that might be required in advance of further discussion at the conference on disarmament, which we favour.

Naval Ships (Video Recordings)

Mr. Allen McKay asked the Secretary of State for Defence why, when Her Majesty's ships are in port in

Great Britain or within the three mile limit video recording cannot be played where the recording system is one relayed from a central source whereas they can be played if the playback is of an individual system; if he will take steps to permit video recordings to be played back on board Her Majesty's ships at all times, irrespective of the source of the playing back; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman [*pursuant to his reply*, 18 June 1986, c. 579]: Because individuals are not permitted to bring personal video recorders on board Her Majesty's ships, the ship's own public system is the only means of showing video recordings. There is a unique and very advantageous arrangement between the Royal Naval Film Corporation and the film distributors, which allows the screening of very recent releases at low cost over the ships' systems, where they do not compete with normal commercial outlets. This arrangement is of great benefit to the Navy as a whole, and we certainly wish to continue to honour it; but under its terms it is not generally possible to allow video recordings of commercial films to be played back over the ships' system while in port, or at anchor less than two miles from a commercial cinema.

Entry and Search Powers

Mr. Michael Brown asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many officials for whom he has responsibility currently have the power to enter and search premises, subject to statutory conditions; and, in each case, if he will indicate the statutory authority under which power is exercised.

Mr. Lee: I shall be writing to my hon. Friend.

Royal Wedding

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether live ammunition will be issued to members of the armed forces for the wedding of His Royal Highness Prince Andrew.

Mr. Stanley: It is not intended that members of the armed forces undertaking ceremonial duties in connection with the wedding of His Royal Highness Prince Andrew will be issued with live ammunition.

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the total estimated cost to his Department of providing security and ceremonial services at the wedding of His Royal Highness Prince Andrew.

Mr. Stanley: I shall answer shortly.

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many members of the armed forces will be engaged in duties connected with the wedding of His Royal Highness Prince Andrew.

Mr. Stanley: On present estimates some 1,600.

Trident

Mr. Soames asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many jobs will be dependent on the Trident project programme in 1988.

Mr. Lee [*pursuant to his reply*, 23 June 1986, c. 25]: In 1988 the number of job opportunities created by the Trident programme in United Kingdom industry will be nearly at its estimated peak of 27,000, including over 2,000 construction jobs on the Clyde. In addition, some 11,000 civilians are presently employed by the Ministry of Defence on nuclear weapons-related activities.

Defence Programme

Mr. Soames asked the Secretary of State for Defence what percentage of gross domestic product will be spent on the defence programme in 1988-89 compared with 1978-79 and 1985-86.

Mr. Stanley [*pursuant to his reply*, 23 June 1986, c. 28]: The information requested is as follows:

	per cent.
1978-79	4·3
1985-86	5·1
1988-89	4·4

The calculations are based on the following figures:

(1) Defence expenditure as published in the 1986 public expenditure White Paper (Cmnd. 9702), except for 1985-86 which reflects estimated outturn. The Defence expenditure figure for 1978-79 is actual outturn and that for 1988-89 is planned provision.

(2) The Central Statistical Office's latest estimates for money GDP at market prices for 1978-79 and 1985-86. The forecast figure for 1988-89 is taken from the 1986 financial statement and Budget report (HC 273).

SP70 Howitzer

Mr. Soames asked the Secretary of State for Defence what are the technical problems delaying the SP70 howitzer's entry into service; and when he expects them to be overcome.

Mr. Lee [*pursuant to his reply*, 23 June 1986, c. 25]: The main problem faced is the reliability of the equipment in particular in the areas of the turret and ammunition handling system. A review of the programme is currently being undertaken to determine the best way ahead. This is being pursued as a matter of urgency but it is not possible to say when decisions will be reached.

Mr. Soames asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the precise dates of the concept stage, of the feasibility study stage, of the project definition stage, and of the full development stage of the SP70 155 mm howitzer; and if he will list the specific reasons of the delay at each stage.

Mr. Lee [*pursuant to his reply*, 23 June 1986, c. 25]: Because it is a collaborative project, SP70 does not fit exactly into the framework in the question. The main milestones in its history are:

Date	*Activity*	*Remarks*
1969	Start of collaborative studies	
1970	Start of formal project study	
1973	Start of Phase A development	Design changes to overcome deficiencies in meeting the required performance.
1977	Phase A development suspended	Difficulties in meeting the operational requirement.

Date	Activity	Remarks
1978	Start of Phase B development	This followed a design review aimed at improving the design increasing reliability, and reducing costs
1985	Germany ceased development funding following evaluation trials. Phase B suspended.	System reliability inadequate.

VC10 Aircraft

Mr. Soames asked the Secretary of State for Defence when he intends to convert further VC10 aircraft to tankers; and what is the reason for the delay.

Mr. Lee [*pursuant to his reply*, 23 June 1986, c. 25]: We plan to invite competitive bids for the conversion of further VC10 aircraft to tankers in the first half of 1987. The aircraft are not required to enter service until the early 1990s and the question of delay does not therefore arise.

Tucano Basic Trainer

Mr. Soames asked the Secretary of State for Defence how long is the delay on the Tucano basic trainer programme; and what is the reason for it.

Mr. Lee [*pursuant to his reply*, 23 June 1986, c. 25]: There will be a few months' delay in the delivery of the first aircraft but it is hoped to recover most of the slippage later in the delivery programme. The delay has occurred because the initial phases of the programme took a little longer than expected and there was an industrial dispute which is now resolved. There are no technical problems.

Torpedo Programme

Mr. Soames asked the Secretary of State for Defence what measures he has introduced into the torpedo programme to increase competition.

Mr. Lee [*pursuant to his reply*, 23 June 1986, c. 26]: We insist on the maximum use of competition at subcontractor level and we monitor contracts to ensure that this is effectively achieved. We also plan to go to competitive tender for future torpedo production orders, starting with Spearfish which is now under development.

Procurement Executive

Mr. Soames asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many people work for the Procurement Executive; how many are civilians; and how many have service personnel.

Mr. Lee [*pursuant to his reply*, 23 June 1986, c. 27]: At 1 May 1986 the number of people working in the Procurement Executive was 36,138 civilian personnel and 1,527 service personnel.

Mr. Soames asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he is satisfied with the operation of the Procurement Executive management board.

Mr. Lee [*pursuant to his reply*, 23 June 1986, c. 27]: Yes.

Mr. Soames asked the Secretary of State for Defence who are the members of the Procurement Executive management board.

Mr. Lee [*pursuant to his reply*, 23 June 1986, c. 27]: The membership of the Procurement Executive management board is as follows:

Chief of Defence Procurement — Chairman
Controller, R&D Establishments, Research and Nuclear — Controller of the Navy
Master General of the Ordnance
Controller Aircraft
Head of Defence Export Services
Deputy Under Secretary of State (Defence Procurement)
Deputy Under Secretary of State (Finance)
Deputy Under Secretary of State (Civilian Management)
Director of Procurement Policy — Secretary
In Attendance: Director General of Defence Contracts

Mr. Soames asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many secondments there have been both inwards and outwards in 1985-86 from the Procurement Executive.

Mr. Lee [*pursuant to his reply*, 23 June 1986, c. 27]: The figures for Procurement Executive secondments inwards and outwards for 1985-86, excluding Royal Ordnance plc, were as follows:

	Number
Outward	87
Inward	52

Equipment Programmes

Mr. Soames asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list all the equipment programmes in which he is experiencing management or contractual difficulties; and if he will specify what precise steps he is taking to overcome them.

Mr. Lee [*pursuant to his reply*, 23 June 1986, c. 27]: The cost of the MOD equipment programme is currently running at some £8·5 billion a year, and we have extant at any one time some 100,000 contracts. Clearly, in a programme of this size, it would not be possible to answer the question without totally disproportionate effort.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

White Salt

Mr. Coombs asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when the report of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission on white salt is to be published; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: The report is published today.

The commission found that the market shares of Imperial Chemical Industries plc and British Salt Ltd., a wholly owned subsidiary of Staveley Industries plc, constitute a monopoly situation in relation to the supply of white salt. The commission also found that the lack of price competition in the United Kingdom and the pricing of white salt in the United Kingdom market are attributable to this monopoly situation and operate against the public interest.

The commission has concluded that British Salt has chosen to follow the price increases of ICI, despite significant cost differences between the two companies which favour British Salt as the lower cost producer. Although the commission did not consider that the procedure for determining prices amounted to collusion, in its view it has resulted in a restraint of competition and

domestic price increases made by the two companies being greater than they would have been with effective competition.

The commission found evidence of significant existing barriers to entry in the market, and discovered several factors suggesting, when taken together, that new entry on a significant scale was unlikely: notably the advantages conferred by economies of scale, the length of time needed to develop boreholes, existing mineral rights and the present degree of excess capacity which favour the established producers. The commission, however, finds no evidence to suggest that the companies have excluded potential competitors through uncompetitive practices.

As there appears to be little likelihood of the adverse effect on prices being remedied by new entrants or competition from imports, the commission has recommended a system of price control intended to break the link between the price increases of British Salt and ICI's costs, but without depriving either company of the incentive to improve efficiency.

The commission recommends that prices should be controlled by reference to increases in a weighted index of production costs. However, the commission considers that it would be both impracticable and unnecessary to exercise direct control of both companies' prices either by a single composite index or by a separate index for each company. The application of price controls to British Salt alone — as the commission recommends — would effectively ensure that no competitor can raise prices beyond the levels charged by British Salt without jeopardising its market share.

I accept the findings and recommendations of the commissions report. I am consequently asking the Director General of Fair Trading to consult British Salt and Staveley Industries with a view to obtaining from them undertakings designed to limit the prices of white salt sold in the United Kingdom by British Salt in accordance with the principles and suggested input cost index set out in the commission's report.

European Regional Development Fund

76. **Mr. Galley** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how much European regional development fund non-quota infrastructure aid for textile and steel closure areas has been allocated by the European Economic Community Commission to the United Kingdom; how much has been spent; and how much has been committed.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The non-quota programmes approved by the European Commission in respect of certain areas in the United Kingdom suffering from the decline in the textile and steel industries provide for aid from the European regional development fund of about £50·7 million in respect of infrastructure measures. £21 million of this has been committed to specified projects, and £6·5 million has already been spent. In addition, the Commission announced last March that around £7·5 million will be made available to the United Kingdom under the steel non-quota regulation. The necessary amendment to the United Kingdom's programme has not yet been submitted, but it is likely that infrastructure measures would receive about half of this additional money.

Entry and Search Powers

Mr. Michael Brown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many officials for whom he has responsibility currently have the power to enter and search premises, subject to statutory conditions; and if he will, in each case, indicate the statutory authority under which power is exercised.

Mr. Butcher: Officials for whom the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry has responsibility have powers of entry and search under the following statutory provisions:

Wireless Telegraphy Act 1949, Section 15.
Trade Descriptions Act 1968, Section 28(1)(a) and (3).
Crystal Glass (Descriptions) Regulations 1973, Regulation 8(3) (SI 1973/1952).
Textile Products (Indications of Fibre Content) Regulations, Regulation 9(2) (SI 1973/2124).
Hallmarking Act 1973, Section 9(3).
Fair Trading Act 1973, Sections 29(1)(a) and (3), 123(1).
Prices Act 1974, paragraph 3 of Schedule and paragraphs 9 and 11 (not at present active).
Calibration of Tanks and Vessels (EEC Requirements) Regulations 1975, Regulation 9(1)(b) (SI 1975/2125).
Alcoholometers and Alcohol Hydrometers (EEC Requirements) Regulations 1977, Regulation 13(1)(b) (SI 1977/1753).
Consumer Safety Act 1978, Schedule 2, paragraphs 3 and 5 Taximeters (EEC Requirements) Regulations 1979, Regulation 15 (SI 1979/1379).
Industrial Development Act 1982, Schedule 1, paragraph 1(2).
Telecommunications Act 1984, Sections 37 and 79 (79 to be read with Section 15 of the Wireless Telegraphy Act 1949).
Construction Plant and Equipment (Harmonisation of Noise Emission Standards) Regulations 1985 (SI 1985/1968).
Companies Act 1985, Section 448.

It is not possible to say how many officials (even in theory) could exercise these varied powers.

Assisted Areas

Mr. Steen asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how much has been spent in each area under the assisted area scheme in each of the last three years *(a)* on capital account and *(b)* on revenue account; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The following grant payments were made under the regional selective assistance and old and new-style regional development grant (RDG) schemes in the last three years.

£ million

Region-Country	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*
North-East	82·6	76·1	61·7
North-West	130·7	121·1	95·4
Yorkshire and Humberside	32·3	36·0	30·7
East Midlands	16·9	10·2	8·3
West Midlands	—	1·8	6·6
South West	9·8	11·3	10·6
Scotland	166·2	138·4	149·1
Wales	87·3	111·0	106·2

Revenue expenditure is not eligible for grant under the RDG schemes although payments of new-style RDGs may be related to the number of jobs created. It is not possible to provide a breakdown of payments of regional selective assistance in the form requested, but the bulk is related to capital expenditure. The Secretaries of State for Scotland and Wales are responsible for the administration of these schemes in their respective territories.

Steel Industry

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) what has been the percentage change in English steel production since 1979;

(2) what has been the percentage change in Welsh steel production since 1979.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The following is the information for the percentage change in steel production between 1979 and 1985 for England and Wales.

Steel industry in England and Wales
Percentage change in steel production between 1979 and 1985

	Per cent.
England	-30·2
Wales	-31·9

Source: Iron and Steel Statistics Bureau.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) how many persons work in the steel industry in England at the present; and what are the corresponding figures for each year since 1979;

(2) how many persons work in the steel industry in Wales at the present time; and what are the corresponding figures for each year since 1979.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The following is the information for the total labour force employed in ECSC activities in the steel industry for the years 1979 to 1986 (end March), in England and Wales.

Steel industry in England and Wales:
*Total labour force employed in ECSC activities**
Thousands (at year end)

	England	*Wales*
1979	91·7	51·8
1980	69·5	32·2
1981	53·8	24·9
1982	44·1	23·0
1983	36·5	21·2
1984	34·9	21·1
1985	32·9	20·6
†1986	32·2	20·6

* The figures supplied relate to employment in ECSC activities, compiled by the Iron and Steel Statistics Bureau, and are published in *Eurostat* for the United Kingdom as a whole.
† End March.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) what was *(a)* the total output of steel and *(b)* the output of various categories of steel from the plants in England in the last year for which figures are available and for each year since 1979;

(2) what was *(a)* the total output of steel and *(b)* the output of various categories of steel from plants in Wales in the last year for which figures are available, and for each year since 1979.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The following is the information on *(a)* crude steel production for the years 1979 to 1985 and *(b)* output of steel by category for the years 1979 to 1984, in England and Wales.

Steel Industry in England and Wales
(a) Crude Steel production
million tonnes

	England	*Wales*
1979	12·9	6·9
1980*	7·0	3·0
1981	9·2	4·4
1982	7·9	4·1
1983	8·3	4·9
1984	8·2	5·0
1985	9·0	4·7

* Affected by BSC strike
Source: Iron and Steel Statistics Bureau

Steel Industry in England and Wales
(b) Output of Steel by category
million tonnes

	England		*Wales*	
	Long products*	*Flat† products*	*Long* products*	*Flat† products*
1979	6·3	2·4	0·6	4·0
1980	4·2	1·2	0·4	1·8
1981	4·9	1·3	0·5	2·8
1982	4·2	1·2	0·5	2·8
1983	4·2	1·1	0·6	2·9
1984	4·2	1·1	0·7	3·1

* Long products, for example bars, rods and sections.
† Flat products, for example wide coil, sheets, plates and hot rolled narrow strip.
Source: European Coal and Steel Community; Investment in the Community Coalmining and Iron and Steel Industries.

Common Market

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he expects to make available to the public and to Parliament the report by the President of the Council of Ministers of the European Economic Community on the completion of the Common Market (11019/85) issued in Brussels on 5 December 1985; and if he will now list in the *Official Report* the proposals it contains and the policy of Her Majesty's Government in relation to each proposal.

Mr. Alan Clark: A copy of the programme is available in the Library of the House. The Internal Market Council on 23 June took note of a new presidency programme of proposals to be discussed by the Council of Ministers during the period 1 July 1986 to 1 July 1987. The Government's policy on each is set out in the explanatory memoranda which are submitted in to the House in accordance with the normal scrutiny procedures. The programme includes a number of items on which Commission proposals are still awaited. Following are the proposals listed in the action programme for the next 12 months:

Control of goods

1. *Various controls*
   1. Simplification of Community transit procedure: discontinuance of presentation of transit advice note and guarantee
   2. Duty-free admission of fuel contained in the fuel tanks of commercial motor vehicles
   3. Road transport: abolition of control of quotas at border crossings
   4. Passenger transport: abolition of border controls related to transport authorisations
   5. Introduction of common border posts ("banalisation")
   6. Frontier facilitation of goods traffic (amendment to Directive 83/643 COM(85))
   7. Counterfeit goods
   8. Right of appeal
   9. Temporary importation of containers
   10. Outward processing/Standard exchange
   11. Entry in the accounts
   12. Debtor (person liable for a customs debt)

Veterinary and plant health controls

13. Live animals of the bovine species: amended eradication directives to provide for final eradication of tuberculosis, brucellosis and leucosis in all member states including Portugal and Spain
14. Live animals of the porcine species: amend, strengthen and extend directives for the eradication of classical swine fever in the Community as a whole and of African swine fever in Sardinia, Spain and Portugal
15. Production and trade in medicated feedingstuffs
16. Boar meat
17. Personnel responsible for inspection
18. Minced meat and similar
19. Antibiotic residues
20. Control of residues
21. Pedigree of bovine animals
22. Pedigree of porcine animals
23. Aujeskÿ's disease and swine vesicular disease
24. Semen of animals
25. Amendment of Directives 72/461/EEC and 72/462/EEC
26. —Amendment of Directive 77/99/EEC on meat products —Imports of meat products from third world countries (animal and public health)
27. Definition of Community plant health inspectorate (amending Directive 77/83)
28. Amendments to Article 15 of Directive 77/93 (improvements to the operation of safeguard provisions)
29. Amendment of three directives concerning animal feedingstuffs (aflatoxin)
30. Budget proposal enabling establishment of Community plant health inspectorate
31. Proposal for a Directive concerning the fixing of guidelines for the evaluation of additives used in animal feedingstuffs
32. Proposals for fixing maximum levels for pesticide residues in feedingstuffs
33. Proposal to amend the Annex to Directive 76/895/EEC concerning residues of pesticides on and in fruit and vegetables (ethoxyquin and diphenylamine)
34. Proposal for the placing of plant protection products on the market
35. Proposal for the improvement of Community systems of certification of seeds

Control of Individuals

36. Seventh Directive relating to exemptions in international travel: tax-free sales
37. Tax reliefs to be allowed on the importation of goods in small consignments of a non-commercial character
38. Directive on the easing of controls at intra-Community borders

Free movement of goods

New approach in technical harmonisation and standards policy

39. Proposal for the extension of information procedures on standards and technical rules (amendment of Directive 83/189/EEC)
40. Recognition of tests and certificates
41. Proposal for *pressure vessels*, in order to implement the new approach
42. Safety of toys
    Chemical properties of toys
    Proposal for a Council Directive on electrical toys

Tractors and agricultural machinery

43. Controls and indicators of agricultural and forestry tractors —COM(80) 849
44. Roll-over protection structures (incorporating two bars mounted in front of the driver's seat) on narrow-track wheeled agricultural or forestry tractors—COM(84) 400

Motor Vehicles

45. Measures to be taken against air pollution by gases from engines of motor vehicles
46. —Exhaust emissions of commercial vehicles
47. —Diesel particulates
48. —Speed limits
49. Motor cycle exhaust noise—COM(84) 438

Food Law

50. Definition of spirituous beverages and aromatized wines
51. General Directive on food additives (partial amendment of existing directives)
52. General Directive on materials and articles in contact with food (amendment)
53. General Directive on food for particular nutritional uses (amendment)
54. General Directive on food labelling (amendment)
55. General Directive on quick-frozen food
56. Flavourings
57. Extraction solvents
58. Preservatives (amendment)
59. Infact formulae and follow-up milks (dietetic foods)
60. Cocoa and chocolate-consolidation
61. Obligation to indicate ingredients and alcoholic strength
62. Modified starches
63. Fruit juices etc. (amendment)
64. Jams etc. (amendment)
65. Proposal for a Directive amending Directive 79/581/EEC on consumer protection in the indication of the prices of foodstuffs
66. Additives—colourings—8th amendment (COM(85) 474)
67. 4th amendment—antidioxides Directive
68. Proposal on sizes of bottles and other prepackages

Pharmaceuticals and high-technology medicines

69. Proposals for Directives concerning the placing on the market of high-technology medicinal products including those derived from biotechnology
70. Proposal amending Directive 75/318/EEC concerning the testing of proprietory medicinal products
71. Proposal amending Directive 81/852/EEC concerning veterinary medicinal products
72. Proposal for a Council Recommendation concerning tests relating to the placing on the market of proprietary medicinal products
73. Proposal for a Council Directive amending Directive 65/65/EEC concerning proprietary medicinal products

Chemical products

74. Good laboratory practices and verification of their application in tests on chemical substances COM(85) 380
75. Proposal for a Directive on the inspection and verification of good laboratory practices
76. Council Directive relating to "Restrictions on the marketing and use of asbestos"
77. Classification, packaging and labelling of dangerous preparations

Other items

78. Limitation of noise emitted by hydraulic and rope-operated excavators and by dozers, loaders and excavator-loaders COM(80) 468
79. Household appliances: airborne noise
80. Forklift trucks COM(79) 229
81. Helicopters' exhaust noise COM(81) 554
82. Protection of hotels against fire (proposal for a Recommendation)
83. Individual protective devices equipment:
    helmets for motorcycle drivers (result of notification on the basis of Directive 189/83)
84. Individual protective devices equipment:
    Safety boots and shoes (idem)
85. Proposal for a Directive on consumer protection in respect of the indication of prices for non-food products

Public procurement

86. Improvement of Directives on public procurement: supplies
87. Improvement of Directives on public procurement: works

Free movement of workers and professional persons

88. Proposal concerning the harmonization of income tax provisions with respect to the free movement of workers within the Community
89. Proposals for promoting student mobility and co-operation between further education establishments in different Member States
90. Proposal for the development of co-operation programmes between Member States for apprentices undergoing vocational training
91. Proposal for the development of youth exchanges in the Community including young people in vocational training and voluntary work abroad
92. Proposal for a Directive concerning transitional measures for access to activities in the technical field and for their exercise
93. Proposal for a Directive concerning the co-ordination of provisions in respect of training of engineers
94. Proposal for a Directive on the co-ordination of provisions relating to commercial agents
95. Proposal for a Council Directive on specific training in general medical practice
96. Right of Establishment:
    Proposal for a Directive setting up a general system of mutual recognition of higher education diplomas
97. Right of residence for nationals of Member States not yet or no longer employed
98. Proposals for co-operation between higher education and industry for advanced training relating to new technologies (Comett) (COM(85) 431)

Common Market for services

99. Proposal for a Directive on the annual accounts of banks
100. Proposal for a Recommendation on the harmonisation of the concept of own funds

Insurance

101. Proposal for a Directive to facilitate freedom to provide services in insurance other than life assurance
102. Proposal for a Directive on co-ordination of laws relating to legal expenses insurance
103. Proposal for a Directive concerning credit insurance

Transactions in securities

104. UCITS Directive: Jurisdictional clause
105. UCITS Directive: Special measures concerning certain investments

Transport

106. Air transport fares
107. Air transport: bilateral agreements, arrangements and memoranda of understanding between Member States
108. Air transport: application of EEC Article 85
109. Review of inter-regional air services Directive
110. Community quota for the carriage of goods by road between Member States: final stage
111. Access to the inland waterway freight market
112. Regulation on unfair pricing practices—maritime transport
113. Regulation on co-ordinated action to safeguard free access to cargoes in oceanic trade
114. Regulation applying EEC Article 85 to maritime transport
115. Non-resident carriers: national transport services
116. Maritime transport (freedom to provide services in the maritime transport sector)
117. Liberalisation of coach services

New Technologies and Services

118. Proposal for a Directive co-ordinating certain aspects of the national laws regulating advertising on radio and television and co-ordinating certain aspects of the national laws regulating copyright in simultaneous cable transmission of programmes
119. Standardisation of television
120. Standardisation I.T. and Telecom COM (85) 230

Capital Movements

121. Proposals for the liberalisation of operations such as the issue, placing and acquisition of securities representing risk capital, transactions in securities issued by Community institutions and long-term commercial credit

Intellectual and industrial property

122. Community Patent Convention
123. Creation of a Community Patent Appeal Court
124. Amended proposal for a Regulation on Community trade marks
125. Amended proposal for a First Directive on the approximation of the laws of the Member States relating to trade marks
126. Proposal for a Regulation on the rules needed for implementing the Community trade mark regulation
127. Proposal for a Directive on legal protection of micro-circuits

Taxation

128. Arbitration procedure concerning the elimination of double taxation
129. Common system of taxation applicable to parent companies and their subsidiaries
130. Common system of taxation of mergers, divisions and contributions of assets
131. Harmonization of taxes on transactions in securities

Removal of Fiscal barriers VAT

132. Proposal for a Council Decision providing for a standstill ensuring:
    no proliferation of VAT rates in Member States
    no widening of the gap between VAT rates in each Member State
133. Proposal for a 14th Directive concerning deferred payment on importation
134. Proposal relating to farmers subject to flat-rate taxation
135. Proposal on passenger transport
136. Proposal on special schemes for small businesses
137. 7th VAT Directive works of art, collectors' items, antiques and used goods
138. 12th VAT Directive concerning expenditure on which tax is not deductible
139. 13th VAT Directive concerning tax refunds to persons not established in the Community
140. 16th VAT Directive concerning imports by final consumers of goods which have already borne tax in another Member State
141. 18th VAT Directive concerning the abolition of certain derogations (Article 28(3) of Directive 77/388/EEC)
142. 19th VAT Directive: miscellaneous supplementary and amending provisions of Directive 77/388/EEC
143. Directive on the stores of ships, aircraft and international trains

Excise Duties

144. Proposal for a Council Decision providing for a standstill ensuring no introduction of new excise duties which give rise to border formalities
145. Proposals concerning harmonization of the structure of excise duties on alcoholic drinks
    COM(72) 225 final
    COM(82) 153 final
    COM(85) 150 final
    COM(85) 151 final
146. Proposal for excise duties on wine
147. Proposal concerning the introduction of a third stage concerning the harmonization of the structure of cigarette duty
148. Proposal concerning the harmonization of the structure of excise duties on mineral oils
149. Proposal concerning the harmonization of the structures of excise duties on other manufactured tobacco

EC (Council of Ministers)

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will state the nature of the main items of business discussed at the Internal Market Council of Ministers of the European Economic Community since May 1985, listing those decisions taken.

Mr. Alan Clark: Since May 1985 the Internal Market Council has discussed a wide range of measures aimed at reducing barriers to free trade in goods and services in the

Community. These include proposals on technical standards, freedom of establishment for the professions, freedom to provide financial services, and frontier formalities and customs controls. The Internal Market Council on 23 June noted a list of 31 measures adopted in this period as follows:

I. *The Removal of Physical Barriers*
- Sixth Directive on exemptions in international travel: increase to 350 ECU.
(Directive 85/348/EEC)
- Tax reliefs to be allowed on the importation of goods in small consignments of a non-commercial nature.
(adopted in part) (Directive 85/349/EEC)
- Duty-free admission of fuel contained in the fuel tanks of commercial motor vehicles.
(adopted in part) (Directive 85/347/EEC)
- Single document
  - = Introduction of a Community export declaration form.
(Regulation (EEC) No. 1900/85)
  - = 5th amendment of Regulation (EEC) No. 222/77 on Community transit.
(Regulation (EEC) No. 1901/85)
  - = Standardization and simplification of statistics of trade between Member States
(Regulation (EEC) No. 2954/85)
  - = Amendment of Regulation No. 1900/85 introducing Community export and import declaration forms
(Regulation (EEC) No. 1059/86)
- Inward processing traffic
(Regulation (EEC) No. 1999/85)
- Co-ordinated development of computerized administrative procedures (CD project)
(Decision 86/23/EEC)
- Conditions under which a person may be permitted to make a customs declaration
(Regulation (EEC) No. 3632/86)
- Origin (adaptation consequent upon enlargement)
  - = Regulation on the concept of "originating products" and methods of administrative co-operation in the trade between the customs territory of the Community, Ceuta, Melilla and the Canary Islands
(Regulation (EEC) No. 570/86)
  - = Regulation on the rules of origin for trade between Spain and Portugal in the period during which the transitional measures are applied
(Regulation (EEC) No. 846/86)
- Regulation abolishing certain postal charges for customs presentation
(Regulation (EEC) No. 1797/86)

II. *The Removal of Technical Barriers*
(Industrial sector)
- Restrictions on the marketing and use of PCBs (polychlorinated biphenyls)
(Directive 85/467/EEC)
- Restrictions on the marketing and use of asbestos
(adopted in part) (Directive 85/610/EEC)
- Accession to the European Agreement on detergents
(Decision adopted on (12 December 1985)
- Non-ionic detergents (amendment of the Directive)
(Directive 86/94/EEC)
- Ranges of nominal quantities and nominal capacities permitted for certain prepackaged products
(Directive 86/96/EEC)
- Tyre pressure gauges for motor vehicles
(Directive 86/217/EEC)
- Rear-mounted roll-over protection structures of narrow-track wheeled agricultural and forestry tractors
(Directive adopted on 26 May 1986)
- Power take-offs of wheeled agricultural and forestry tractors and their protection
(Directive adopted on 26 May 1986)
- Roll-over protective structures for certain construction plant
(Directive adopted on 26 May 1986)
- Falling-object protective structures for certain construction plant
(Directive adopted on 26 May 1986)
- Directive concerning the first phase of establishment of the mutual recognition of type approval for telecommunications terminal equipment
(agreed by council on 9 June 1986)

III. *Free movement for labour and the professions*
- Comparability of vocational training qualifications
(Decision 85/368/EEC)
- Co-ordination of provisions in respect of certain activities in the field of pharmacy
(Directives 85/432/EEC, 85/433/EEC and 85/434/EEC)
- Mutual recognition of qualifications in pharmacy
(Directive 85/433/EEC)

IV. *Common Market for Services* (Financial services)
Capital Movements
Creation of Suitable Conditions for Industrial Co-operation
- Undertakings for collective investment in transferable securities
(Directive 85/611/EEC)
- Liberalisation of the units of collective undertakings for investment in transferable securities
(Directive 85/583/EEC)
- European co-operation grouping
(Regulation (EEC) No. 2137/85)
- Liability for defective products
(Directive 85/374/EEC)

Mr. Maples asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the outcome of the European Community Council of Industry Ministers of 9 June.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The Industry Council, at which I represented the United Kingdom, heard a report from the European Commission on its consultations with member states on the Community regime for state aids to shipbuilding which should apply after the fifth directive expires at the end of 1986. The Commission will produce formal proposals for a new directive during the United Kingdom presidency of the Community.

The Council also reviewed progress on a number of measures in the high technology field. Of these the following were adopted:
- Directive concerning the first phase of the establishment of the mutual recognition of type approval for telecommunications terminal equipment.
- Resolution on the use of videoconference and videophone techniques.

The Council also held a preliminary discussion on public purchasing. The Commission is expected to put forward proposals in this area during the United Kingdom presidency.

Director General of Telecommunications (Report)

Mr. Evennett asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he has yet received the report by the Director General of Telecommunications for the year 1985, as required under section 55 of the Telecommunications Act 1984; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Pattie: Yes. The second report by the Director General of Telecommunications is being published today. It covers the period 1 January to 31 December 1985. Copies of the report have been laid before each House of Parliament.

Consumer Credit Act

Mr. Murphy asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will make a statement about the renewal of licences under the Consumer Credit Act.

Mr. Howard: I have today laid regulations to extend the period of standard licences under the Consumer Credit Act 1974 from 10 to 15 years.

The system of licensing has been in place for nearly 10 years. The Office of Fair Trading is in the process of computerising its licensing operation. In the long term this will benefit business by substantially reducing the time taken to process applications. I have therefore agreed to a request by the Director General for a five-year extension in the validity of licences to ensure that the computer system is fully operative well before the first licences issued are due for renewal.

The statutory instrument that I have laid is the Consumer Credit (Period of Standard Licence) (Amendment) Regulations 1986.

Birmingham City Council (Deputations)

Mr. Terry Davis asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list the Ministers in his Department who have met deputations from Birmingham city council in the current year, stating the date and the purpose of each meeting.

Mr. Peter Morrison [*pursuant to the reply*, 23 June 1986, c. 42]: I also met representatives of the Birmingham city council economic development committee with MPs on 11 March to discuss BL.

South Africa

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, pursuant to the answer of 18 June, *Official Report*, column *569*, whether the target wage level for British firms operating in South Africa is the minimum living level plus 50 per cent. or plus 30 per cent. as calculated by the University of South Africa; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark [*pursuant to his reply*, 24 June 1986]: The level of minumum wages required under the revised code of conduct for companies operating in South Africa, as agreed by EC Foreign Ministers last November, is the supplemented living level (SLL) for the district concerned, as calculated by the University of South Africa, for a family of average size. The code stresses that this level should be regarded as an absolute minimum and not as a target.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on his Department's investigations into the case of Milcom Electronics UK Ltd. in the context of the arms embargo on South Africa.

Mr. Alan Clark [*pursuant to his reply*, 24 June 1986]: I have no reason to believe that our international obligations in respect of the import of arms from South Africa are not being observed. If there is evidence to the contrary, I am willing to receive it.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what steps have been taken to enforce the embargo on the import of arms from South Africa since the discussions between his Department and Milcom Electronics UK Ltd.

Mr. Alan Clark [*pursuant to his reply*, 24 June 1986]: I would refer the hon. Member to my earlier replies of 24 June and today. It is not clear which are the alleged discussions the hon. Member refers to.

THE ARTS

Dance (Business Sponsorship)

Mr. John Carlisle asked the Minister for the Arts if he will make a statement on new business sponsorship of dance.

Mr. Luce: The Digital Equipment Company has today announced a major new sponsorship programme for dance. The programme is receiving matching funding under the Government's business sponsorship incentive scheme, which was a major influence in DEC's decision. This means that in total the programme will inject £500,000 new funding into dance. It is an imaginative sponsorship package covering the whole range of dance activity, and is an outstanding example of business and Government joining forces to support the arts. It will be welcomed by all who love dance. DEC deserves enormous credit.

WALES

School Equipment Costs

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make an estimate of the amounts of money provided each year by parents towards maintained school equipment costs in Wales for each year from 1979-80 to 1986-87; and if he will express the amount in cash terms and adjusted according to the gross domestic product deflator; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: This information is not available centrally.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Mentally Handicapped Persons

Mr. Hume asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many profoundly mentally handicapped children and young adults there are in each of the health and social services board areas in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Needham: Routine statistical data do not enable the identification of those clients who are profoundly mentally handicapped. The total number of young mentally handicapped clients in contact with the Social Services Departments of the Health and Social Services Boards at 31 December 1984 is set out in the following table.

Health and Social Services Board	*Mentally handicapped children (aged 0-15)*	*Mentally handicapped young adults (aged 16-24)*	*Total*
Eastern	463	520	983
Northern	272	337	609
Southern	225	262	487
Western	271	228	499
Northern Ireland	1,231	1,347	2,578

Mr. Hume asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) what was the budget allocation of each of the

health and social services boards in Northern Ireland for the provision of care and services to profoundly mentally handicapped children and young adults and their parents; and what proportion this represented of their total budget;

(2) how much each of the health and social services boards in Northern Ireland spent on the provision of care facilities and other services to profoundly mentally handicapped children and young adults in each of the last five years, for which such figures are available; and what proportion this represented of their total budget.

Mr. Needham: The information is not available.

Mr. Hume asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) what care facilities and other services for profoundly mentally handicapped children and young adults are provided for in the budget of each of the health and social services boards in Northern Ireland;

(2) what provision is made for daytime nursery-care of very young and profoundly mentally handicapped children in each of the health and social board areas in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Needham: Mentally handicapped people of all ages and degrees of handicap have access, in common with the rest of the population of Northern Ireland to a range of general health and personal social services. In addition, at 31 December 1984, the latest date for which figures are available, there were 118 day care places available in Northern Ireland specifically for mentally handicapped children aged 0-4, 957 places for those aged 5-15 and 982 places for young adults aged 16-24. Within this provision, the available information does not enable those who are profoundly mentally handicapped to be identified.

Mr. Hume asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) what provision is made for short-term care of profoundly mentally handicapped children and young adults in each health and social services board area in Northern Ireland;

(2) what guidelines his Department has as to a recommended level of accessibility of short-term care facilities for profoundly mentally handicapped children and young adults, in terms of numbers, bed places, and in terms of distance to travel;

(3) what summer recreation schemes are provided by each of the health and social services boards in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Needham: No specific guidelines have been issued by the Department of Health and Social Services but Health and Social Services Boards have been asked to include the profoundly mentally handicapped in determining priorities for the development of services for the mentally handicapped.

Short-term respite care is provided to varying degrees across the Province for mentally handicapped people of all ages and varying degrees of handicap. Short-term residential care is provided in some mental handicap hospitals and residential homes as appropriate on a year round basis. Alternative ways of providing families with a break such as short-term fostering schemes are being developed in some areas. In addition, during the summer holiday period, some short-term care is provided in holiday homes and summer camps. Day time activity schemes, some of which are run in co-operation with voluntary organisations, are also available in some areas. Details of these schemes are not held centrally.

Therapists

Mr. Hume asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many qualified specialists, speech therapists, physiotherapists, occupational therapists and music therapists each of the health and social services boards employ in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Needham: The information requested is as follows:

	Eastern Board	*Northern Board*	*Southern Board*	*Western Board*
Speech Therapists	62	35	16	23
Physiotherapists	245	61	48	30
Occupational Therapists	130	30	26	19

There is no music therapists grade in the health and personal social services in Northern Ireland.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Westminster Hall

Mr. Janner asked the Lord Privy Seal whether he will raise with the Services Committee the replacement of the railings in Westminster Hall; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Biffen: No. I accept that the existing railings are plain and functional in character; but demands on the parliamentary works programme are heavy at present and will remain so for the foreseeable future, and in these circumstances I do not regard replacement of the railings as a priority.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Prison Department Property

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will list the number of flats and houses owned by the prison department in England and Wales; and how many are currently occupied.

Mr. Mellor: On 31 March 1986, 8,258 flats and houses were owned by the prison department, of which 6,839 were occupied.

999 Calls

Mr. Stephen Ross asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will discuss with the chairman of British Telecom the possibility of ensuring that all 999 emergency calls have an immediate play back facility; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: All 999 calls are recorded by British Telecom; most are recorded also by the emergency service concerned.

British Telecom records these calls to enable it to monitor the quality of the service and to deal with allegations of mishandling. The recordings are retained for three months during which period access to them is granted only on the authority of a BT district manager following a request from a chief constable or other chief officer.

Data Protection

Mr. Maclean asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment he has made of the

implications for the effectiveness of the operation of the Data Protection Act of the current number of registrations under the Act.

Mr. Waddington: It is too early to make such an assessment. Applications for registration are still being received by the Date Protection Registrar, who is to carry out research into the impact of the Act on businesses and into the number of data users who may still need to register.

Naturalisation

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the criteria as to competence in the use of English for persons seeking naturalisation; whether there are different criteria for Vietnamese refugees; and whether it is standard practice for applicants to be interviewed.

Mr. Waddington: The language criteria and the practice on interviews were set out in the reply given to a question from my hon. Friend on 23 May at column 335. They apply to refugees as to other applicants and allow for the particular circumstances of all applicants, including refugees, to be taken into account.

Crime Prevention (Leicester)

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proposals he has for preventing crime in the inner city areas of Leicester; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The chief constable of Leicestershire gives a high priority to crime prevention in his force strategy. For example, efforts are being made to encourage the development of neighbourhood watch schemes in inner city areas. Also, the chief constable has recently launched a special publicity campaign to encourage an awareness of crime prevention in the city's Asian community using publicity material, provided by the Home Office, in five languages of the India sub-continent. In addition, Age Concern in Leicester manages a community programme funded scheme which provides, among other services, a security device fitting service for elderly householders.

Forms, Pamphlets, Leaflets (Welsh Language)

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list those forms, pamphlets and leaflets published by his Department which are available in either a Welsh language or a bilingual version.

Mr. Hurd: The Home Office currently publishes the following booklets, leaflets and posters in Welsh:

Danger from fire (Booklet and leaflet)
Complaints against the Police (Leaflet)
Electoral registration (Ten forms and a poster).

Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to extend the scope of the criminal injuries compensation scheme to include victims of joy riders in stolen cars; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: The scheme provides for compensation to be paid for personal injury attributable to a traffic offence where a deliberate attempt has been made to run the victim down. A person who has suffered injuries caused by a motor vehicle may also be within the scope of the scheme if he was attempting to prevent an offence or to apprehend a suspected offender. Other persons injured as a result of traffic offences, including those committed by drivers of stolen cars, have access to compensation through compulsory motor insurance and Motor Insurers' Bureau arrangements. The Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme is at present under review in preparation for legislation.

Domestic Pets

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prosecutions were taken against individuals for offences relating to control of domestic pets for the last five years which figures are available.

Mr. Mellor: The only information available to me, which may be incomplete relates to court proceedings for offences in connection with dogs and is published annually in "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales, Supplementary Tables, Volume 1" under offence classifications 111 (offences relating to dogs) and 171 (revenue offences concerning dog licences).

Royal Wedding

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what is the estimated total cost to the Metropolitan police of policing the wedding of His Royal Highness Prince Andrew;

(2) how many members of the Metropolitan police will be engaged in duties connected with the wedding of His Royal Highness Prince Andrew.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis tells me that he plans to deploy some 2,000 officers for this occasion at an estimated cost in police overtime of about £61,000. Other additional policing costs on transport, catering and so on, cannot be quantified at this stage.

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether live ammunition will be issued to members of the Metropolitan police for the wedding of His Royal Highness Prince Andrew.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that armed officers will be deployed as part of the security arrangements.

Extradition Warrants

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will make it his policy to delay the sealing of extradition warrants until relevant applications lying before the European Commission on Human Rights are decided;

(2) when the surrender warrant for Werner Bruchhausen's removal from the United Kingdom was sealed;

(3) what notice he took of Werner Bruchhausen's application to the European Commission on Human Rights in making his decision to remove him from the United Kingdom;

(4) at what time on Friday 13 June he executed the warrant for Mr. Bruchhausen's removal from the United Kingdom;

(5) what representations were made to him on Friday 13 June regarding the proposed extradition and removal of Werner Bruchhausen from the United Kingdom;

(6) why he decided to extradite Werner Bruchhausen on 13 June;

(7) what information was available to his Department on the application by Mr. Bruchhausen's legal advisers on 13 June for judicial review of his decision to surrender Werner Bruchhausen to the United States authorities.

Mr. Hurd: In May 1985 the United States Government applied for the extradition of Mr. Werner Bruchhausen on charges related to the illegal export of high technology equipment to the Soviet bloc. After my predecessor had issued the necessary orders to proceed the Chief Metropolitan Stipendiary Magistrate at Bow Street committed Mr. Bruchhausen to custody on 25 October 1985 on four counts of obtaining property by deception and eight counts of false accounting. Mr. Bruchhausen applied to the Divisional court for a writ of habeas corpus but this was refused, as was his petition for leave to appeal to the House of Lords. On 6 June Mr. Bruchhausen applied to the European Commission on Human Rights alleging irregularities in the extradition procedures (allegations which had already been rejected by both the Divisional court and the House of Lords). The United Kingdom is under no obligation under the European Convention on Human Rights to defer the removal of a person under the Extradition Act 1870 pending the consideration of a petition, nor do we understand it to be the practice of the Commission to ask for removal to be delayed except where, for example, there are allegations of likely ill-treatment in the country of destination. No such allegations were made in this case, nor was such a request made by the Commission. I therefore signed a warrant for the surrender of Mr. Bruchhausen at about 1 pm on 13 June and the warrant was executed later that afternoon. The Commission will be able to continue its consideration of the petition notwithstanding Mr. Bruchhausen's removal.

In the course of the afternoon of 13 June Mr. Bruchhausen's solicitor, who had been informed that I had already signed the surrender warrant, asked if the removal of Mr. Bruchhausen could be delayed while further representations were made. In subsequent conversation with the solicitor it was established that the basis of these representations would be that the offences for which Mr. Bruchhausen was to be extradited were political and that the petition had not been decided by the Commission. On further consideration of the arguments it seemed clear that they did not add to the case, which had already been fully considered by the Divisional court and myself. Although the possibility of an application for judicial review had been mentioned by the solicitor earlier in the week, time to prepare such an application did not form part of the case for an extention of the time limit for Mr. Bruchhausen's removal.

For the foregoing reasons, I am not prepared to make it a general policy to delay the signing of surrender warrants in extradition cases pending the consideration of petitions by the Commission.

Mr. D. Abbott

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the qualifications of Mr. D Abbott, an official of his Department; and in which division of his Department he works.

Mr. Hurd: Mr. D. J. Abbott is an established civil servant in respect of whom a certificate of qualification was issued by the Civil Service Commissioners in January 1958. He has spent the last two years in the extradition section of the Home Office general department.

Motoring Offences

Dr. Glyn asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the average time that elapses between motoring offences *(a)* generally and *(b)* drunk in charge, involving an accident and a prosecution; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: The available information relates to proceedings completed at magistrates' courts during the week ending 24 to 29 June 1985. The average time between date of offence and completion of proceedings in magistrates' courts was 18 weeks for all summary motoring offences and 13 weeks for offences relating to driving while under the influence of drink or drugs. Information is not separately available for offences arising from accidents.

Parole

Mr. Lyell asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) of prisoners serving sentences eligible for parole in each of the years 1983, 1984 and 1985, what proportion of what percentage served *(a)* less than 25 per cent., *(b)* less than 30 per cent., *(c)* less than 40 per cent., *(d)* less than 50 per cent., *(e)* less than 60 per cent. and *(f)* less than two thirds of their sentence;

(2) what proportion of prisoners sentenced were eligible for parole in each of the years 1983, 1984 and 1985.

Mr. Mellor [*pursuant to my reply*, 11 June 1986, c. *17*]: The available information is as follows, showing separately the two halves of 1984 to reflect the reduction from 30 June 1984 in the minimum qualifying period for parole from 12 to six months. Prisoners do not serve less than one third of their sentence unless they successfully appeal, die in custody or are transferred to a psychiatric hospital or to a prison outside England and Wales. Time served owing to loss of remission is not included but would increase the overall proportion of sentence served by around 1 per cent. Further information on the periods of licence recommended and on the lengths of sentences being served is given annually on the report of the Parole Board (Table 3, Appendix 4 of the latest issue, for 1985, HMSO June 1986).

Proportion of sentence served by prisoners eligible for parole by year of discharge

England and Wales

percentages

Proportion of sentence served	*1983*	*1984 Jan-June*	*1984 July-Dec*	*1985*
Less than 25 per cent.	1	*	*	*
25 but less than 30 per cent.	*	*	*	*
30 but less than 40 per cent.	14	13	21	23
40 but less than 50 per cent.	21	20	25	22
50 but less than 60 per cent.	28	30	30	26
60 per cent. but less than two thirds	37	37	23	28

* Less than 0.5 per cent.

In 1983 and the first half of 1984, about one tenth of prisoners discharged had been eligible for parole. In the second half of 1984 and in 1985 the proportion was about a quarter.

PRIME MINISTER

Royal Wedding

Mr. Canavan asked the Prime Minister what is the total estimated cost to all Government Departments of providing services at the wedding of His Royal Highness Prince Andrew.

The Prime Minister: The estimated net cost of providing services is approximately £40,000 but this does not include costs incurred by the Ministry of Defence, which are the subject of a separate written answer tabled by the hon. Member to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence.

Trooping of the Colour

Mr. Canavan asked the Prime Minister what is the total cost to all Government Departments of providing various services at the Trooping of the Colour.

The Prime Minister: The identifiable extra cost to Government Departments of providing services at the Trooping of the Colour 1986 was £11,594.

Birmingham City Council (Ministerial Deputations)

Mr. Rooker asked the Prime Minister if she will list the Ministers who have received deputations from Birmingham city council in the current year, stating the dates and the purpose of each meeting.

Mr. Peter Morrison [*pursuant to the replies*, 16 June 1986, c. *498*; 17 June 1986, c. *512-13* and 23 June 1986] I have been asked to reply.

I also met representatives of the Birmingham city council economic development committee with MPs on 11 March to discuss BL.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Freedom of Speech

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a list of all incidents reported to him in which students or invited speakers were denied the right to speak, asked not to appear, had invitations to speak withdrawn, were physically or otherwise stopped from speaking at universities or other institutions of higher education in the last two years; and if he will give a description of each such incident and details of any information he has on subsequent disciplinary action taken;

(2) whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a list of all incidents reported to him occurring in the last two years at universities and other institutions of higher education where students or duly-invited guests have met with violence where there is evidence that the cause was related to views they held.

Mr. Walden: The detailed information sought by the hon. Member is readily available only for the period since November 1985. Most incidents followed up by the Department have involved invited speakers rather than students. Some allegations have been received about action by students against other students, and two were pursued with the institutions.

The denial of free speech may of course be much greater than the following list reveals. Only reported incidents can be stated. There may be many other instances where the existence of a "no platform" policy or the threat of disruption has led to a controversial speaker not being invited. It is in the nature of the problem that such denial of free speech will not always be known.

SPEAKERS ASKED NOT TO APPEAR/INVITATIONS WITHDRAWN

1. *Guildford College of Law—October/November 1985*

In late October 1985, the press reported the alleged banning of meetings in mid-November 1985 and in February 1986 at which Mr. Jeffrey Archer and the Solicitor-General respectively had been invited to speak. The college, a small private establishment, explained that it could not accommodate other than strictly private meetings arranged by students on its premises. It assisted the College Conservative Association in finding and funding an alternative venue for Mr. Archer's meeting a few days later on premises provided by the University of Surrey. The college wrote to both Mr. Archer and the Solicitor-General to explain the position and invited the latter to speak on a later occasion as a guest of the college.

2. *University of Essex—6 November 1985*

The University Conservative Student Association had failed to give notification in accordance with established rules to the university authorities of their invitation to the hon. Member for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle), and was required to withdraw it.

3. *Sheffield University—26 November 1985*

Following the severe disruption that a small number of activists had caused at a debate addressed by Mrs. Victoria Gillick on 29 October, the university had supported the student union in concluding that a brief "cooling-off" period was needed before any further meetings were held on clearly controversial subjects. When, during this period, my hon. Friend the Member for Luton, North was invited by the Student Conservative Association to speak on the sporting boycott of South Africa, the university authorities supported the student union in cancelling the proposed meeting.

4. *York University—13 February 1986*

My hon. Friend the Member for Luton, North was invited to speak to students at the university by the Conservative

Student Association. The student union then re-adopted a "no-platform" policy against speakers deemed to be "racists". The university authorities immediately reinstituted legal proceedings against such a policy (action had lapsed when the student union at a mass meeting overturned the no-platform policy in October of the previous year). In order to avoid confrontation before a legal ruling and an injunction could be obtained, the university authorities cancelled the proposed meeting.

5. *Leeds Polytechnic—20 February 1986*

My hon. Friend the Member for Luton, North accepted the conclusion of the director, Mr. Christopher Price, reached on the basis of police advice, that his visit should be postponed to a later date.

6. *Bristol Polytechnic—March 1986*

Mr. Ray Honeyford was invited by Bristol Polytechnic Conservative Students Association to address a student meeting. The proposed meeting, said to have been advertised by the student association in emotive terms, had caused much local controversy. Although the polytechnic authorities were prepared to allow the meeting to proceed, with the intention of preparing against disruption, the governing body decided that the meeting should not take place "at the present time on polytechnic premises".

SPEAKERS PHYSICALLY OR OTHERWISE STOPPED HEARD BUT MET WITH VIOLENCE

1. Manchester University—8 November 1985

The Minister of State, at the Home Office, my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Ribble Valley (Mr. Waddington) was invited by the University Conservative Student Association to speak on the Government's immigration policy. The meeting was held in the student union's premises. It was violently disrupted and my hon. and learned Friend was forced to leave. The university initiated disciplinary proceedings against four students. Following an appeal by all four students against the decision of the disciplinary committee, it was decided on 21 March that three of the appeals be rejected and one upheld.

2. Bradford University—13 February 1986

My hon. Friend the Member for Luton, North (Mr. John Carlisle), was invited by Bradford University Conservative Student Association to address a mainly student audience on politics, sport and South Africa. Shortly after he arrived my hon. Friend was knocked down and assaulted by a group of young men. Those involved were said not to be students. The university's student union deplored the incident and immediately offered to co-operate with the police in any investigation.

3. Sunderland Polytechnic—16 February 1986

My hon. Friend the Member for Darlington (Mr. Fallon), was invited by the Student Christian Movement at Sunderland polytechnic to speak to students on the "Future of the North East". The student union at the polytechnic supported the invitation, providing a room and the necessary facilities. The meeting passed without incident. After the meeting, whilst talking to students in the student union bar, Mr. Fallon was struck in the face by a person who is believed to be an associate member of the bar (possibly an ex-student of the polytechnic). The student union deplored the incident and sent a formal apology to my hon. Friend on 19 February. My hon. Friend declined a police invitation to prosecute.

4. Oriel College, Oxford—17 February 1986

My hon. Friend the Member for Luton, North (Mr. John Carlisle), was invited by Oxford University Monday Club to speak about sporting links with South Africa. A number of people barricaded themselves in the room at Oriel college where the meeting was to be held and so prevented the meeting from going ahead. Only one student was identified as having been present and it has been accepted that he was attempting to clear the room. The university believes that those responsible for the incident were members of the Socialist Workers Party from outside the university. Mr. Carlisle has been invited back to the university, but no date has yet been agreed for his visit.

5. Bolton Institute of Higher Education—5 March 1986

My hon. Friend the Member for Buckingham (Mr. Walden), Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science, was jostled by demonstrating students who attempted to prevent his entry to the institute, where he was to address a meeting. The students union declined on invitation to a meeting with him. Following police intervention, my hon. Friend gained access to the institute.

6. University of East Anglia—24 April 1986

My hon. Friend the Member for Luton, North (Mr. John Carlisle), was invited by the University Conservative Student Association to speak to students on sporting links with South Africa. The student union voted to mount a silent vigil on the steps of the hall where the meeting was due to take place. Conservative students were prevented from entering the building when some of the demonstrators blocked the steps and resisted police attempts to move them. Mr. Carlisle was forced to cancel his proposed speech. Some of those involved were said to be from outside the University. The university authorities proposed to take action against any of those involved whom they could identify as students of the university.

An additional incident not covered by the question, but where freedom of speech was denied, concerned Professor Vincent of the University of Bristol, whose lecture was disrupted by students of the university. Disciplinary action was subsequently taken by the university against 7 students.

ALLEGATIONS OF INTIMIDATION OF STUDENTS BY STUDENTS

1. Polytechnic of North London—1984

During the summer of 1984, fellow students attempted to exclude Mr. Patrick Harrington, a National Front Organiser, from lectures at the Polytechnic. Mr. Harrington obtained a High Court injunction to prevent the picketing against him. In December 1984, a committee of inquiry was established by ILEA into the management of the polytechnic.

2. University of Essex—May 1985

An article was published in the *London Evening Standard* on 20 May 1985 which alleged Left-wing intimidation of students at Essex university. The university, supported by a number of its student societies, denied the allegations. The author of the article is understood later to have admitted that the article contained a number of inaccuracies and falsehoods.

Elderly People (Care and Treatment)

Mr. MacKenzie asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science which Scottish universities make special courses available to doctors who wish to specialise in the care and treatment of elderly people; and what information he has to how many students are presently enrolled in such courses.

Mr. Walden: I understand that the University of Glasgow and the University of Edinburgh each provides occasional one-week courses in geriatric medicine for qualified doctors, and that enrolements on these are normally between 25 and 30.

Publications (Welsh Language)

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list any forms, leaflets and pamphlets in relation to university education in Wales which his Department has issued in Wales in a bilingual or Welsh language format.

Mr. Walden: The Department has not issued any such documents.

Institute for Motor Disorders, Budapest

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has any plans to visit Hungary, and in particular the Institute for Motor Disorders in Budapest.

Mr. Dunn: Neither I nor my right hon. Friend have any plans to visit Hungary at present.

Schools Repairs (West Yorkshire)

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the estimated cost of carrying out outstanding urgent repairs to West Yorkshire schools as notified to him by local education authorities.

Mr. Dunn: There is no requirement for local education authorities to notify my right hon. Friend of the extent of outstanding repairs to schools. The information requested is therefore not available centrally.

School Attendance

Mr. Key asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will introduce legislation to require the children of parents of no fixed abode to attend schools or participate in schemes of regulated education otherwise than at school; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: Under the Education Act 1944 it is already the duty of the parent of every child of compulsory school age to cause him or her to receive efficient education suited to his or her age, ability, and aptitude, and to any special educational needs he or she may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise. Local education authorities also have a duty under the Act to ensure that the parents of any children of compulsory school age in their area are performing this duty.

Russian Language

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many pupils were presented for O-level and A-level Russian in each year since 1979 in England and Wales.

Mr. Chris Patten: The information requested is not available centrally for school pupils. The table gives the numbers of all candidates entered for examinations, other than overseas examinations, in Russian set by the English examining boards.

GCE O-level and A-level entries in Russian Summer examinations

	O-level Entries	*A-level Entries*
1979	1,756	396
1980	1,768	372
1981	1,433	372
1982	1,429	377
1983	1,326	313
1984	1,279	307
1985	1,375	307

Source: Survey of Examining Boards in England.

Information on the numbers of candidates entered for examinations set by the Welsh Joint Education Committee is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Departmental Procedures (Review)

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has any plans to review his Department's procedures, under sections 12 to 16 of the Education Act 1980.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The procedures followed are designed to enable the efficient discharge of the responsibilities conferred by the Act, but I have decided that there would be advantage in a scrutiny of them; I have particularly in mind the need to reduce the time taken to reach decisions.

I have appointed Mr. J. A. M. Mitchell CB, CVO, MC, formerly secretary of the Scottish Education Department, to undertake the scrutiny with the following terms of reference:

i. to examine the respective responsibilities for the organisation of schools of the Secretary of State, the local education authorities, and the governors of aided schools, as embodied in Sections 12-16 of the Education Act 1980, taking account of the Secretary of State's policies as set out in the White Paper "Better Schools";

ii. to consider the procedures adopted by the Department in assisting the Secretary of State to discharge his functions under these Sections;

iii. to assess the appropriateness and cost-effectiveness of these procedures;

iv. to identify options for change, including legislative options if appropriate, to assess the estimated manpower and financial implications for central government, taking account of any for local government, and to make recommendations.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Test Ban Treaty

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has an estimate of the date by which solutions to the technical difficulties of adequately verifying a comprehensive nuclear test ban will become more apparent.

Mr. Eggar: No. But it will be difficult to make progress while some countries refuse to agree to an appropriate mandate for an ad hoc committee at the conference on disarmament to discuss these issues.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if, when the Soviet Foreign Minister, Mr. Shevardnadze visits the United Kingdom, he proposes to take any new initiatives with regard to *(a)* a comprehensive test ban treaty, *(b)* a freeze on new nuclear weapon deployments, *(c)* tactical nuclear weapons in East and Western Europe, *(d)* intermediate-range nuclear weapons in East and West Europe or *(e)* strengthening the anti-ballistic missile treaty.

Mr. Eggar: We look forward to pursuing a broad dialogue on arms control and other issues when the Soviet Foreign Minister visits the United Kingdom on 14-15 July. It would not be appropriate to go into detail at this stage.

Women (Job Opportunities)

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) what is the policy of his Department concerning job opportunities for women as distinct from men at senior levels of the Diplomatic Service; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he has any plans to improve job opportunities for women as distinct from men at senior levels of the Diplomatic Service.

Mr. Eggar: The Foreign and Commonwealth Office, as an equal opportunities employer, is committed to equal opportunity for employment and advancement, regardless of sex. Current efforts to recruit more women into the administrative grades of the Diplomatic Service, and to make it easier for women officers to reconcile career and

family, should in time ensure a higher proportion of women at more senior levels. (In 1985 competitions, 46 per cent. of the total intake into the administrative grades, and 57 per cent. of the DS9 intake, were women.)

Spain (British Tourists)

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many British tourists have been *(a)* killed, *(b)* seriously injured and *(c)* slightly injured in Spain in each of the past three years.

Mr. Eggar: I regret that the statistics requested are not readily available. Not all cases are reported to us. Even for those that are it would require a disproportionate amount of time to provide figures in the categories indicated.

Spain (Ministerial Visit)

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Enfield, North (Mr. Eggar) will make a statement on his recent visit to Spain.

Mr. Eggar: I paid an official visit to Spain from 15 to 19 June. I visited Malaga, Madrid and Palma de Mallorca. During the visit I saw our consular operations in action at first hand, looked at the problems faced by British tourists and held discussions with Senor Barrionueve, the Interior Minister. I also met with a wide range of central and local government officials, tour operators, British tourists and residents.

Mr. Oliver Tambo

Mr. John Carlisle asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he or his ministerial colleagues intend to hold discussions with Mr. Oliver Tambo of the African National Congress during Mr. Tambo's visit to London.

Mr. Anderson asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy to meet President Oliver Tambo of the African National Congress during his visit to London on 23 June; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: As my hon. Friend and the hon. Gentleman will now be aware, I met Mr. Tambo in London yesterday. I underlined the importance of suspending violence on all sides in South Africa in order to promote a constructive dialogue.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Asset Sales (Revenue Loss)

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the latest estimate of the annual loss of revenue to the Exchequer for the years 1986 to 1987 and 1987-88 as a result of the sale of assets since 1979.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Commercial Bank of Wales (Subsidiary)

Mr. Foulkes asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has received about alleged misappropriations of funds of an Isle of Man based subsidiary of the Commercial Bank of Wales; wh assessment has been made of the implications within t United Kingdom; and what action he has taken.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The Commercial Bank of Wales (I of Man) Ltd. is the supervisory responsibility of the I of Man authorities. I understand that in the course normal contacts between regulatory bodies the Bank England has been informed by the Isle of M Government Financial Supervision Commission of th matter and assured that there is no risk to deposito funds.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Dairy Herds (Prohibition Order)

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Minister of Agricultur Fisheries and Food how many dairy herds are located the areas of Cumbria and Wales covered by th prohibition order affecting sheep referred to in h statement of 20 June; what information is available to hi about the nature and level of contamination of mi produced by those herds during May; and if he will list th information he has as to the creameries and dairies which the milk from those areas was delivered durin May.

Mrs. Fenner: Approximately 554 and 908 dairy herd are located respectively in the areas of Cumbria and nort Wales designated under the Food Protection (Emergenc Prohibitions) Order 1986. The data published by m Department on 20 June, a copy of which is in the Librar of the House, contains the results from individual farm creameries and dairies since the beginning of May. Thes show that the levels of both radioiodine and radiocaesiun in cows milk and dairy products have always been we below those at which any precautionary action would nee to be considered.

SCOTLAND

Radioisotopes

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Scotland in the light of the answer of 21 May, *Official Report* column *192*, regarding radiological monitoring, wha facilities the National Radiological Protection Board ha to measure particular radioisotopes; if there are any radioisotopes which the board cannot measure but some sites operated by the nuclear industry can measure; and i he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: The Scottish centre of the National Radiological Protection Board in Glasgow is equipped to measure total alpha, beta and gamma activity in samples and analyses for individual radionuclides, after radiochemical separation if necessary, by alpha and gamma spectrometry. The centre and nuclear sites in Scotland use similar techniques and equipment.

Radiation

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the doses in sieverts as a direct result of the Chernobyl disaster received by *(a)* the critical population in Scotland, *(b)* children under the age of 12 years and *(c)* pregnant women.

Mr. Ancram: Preliminary estimates of the radiation doses received by the population of the United Kingdom from the Chernobyl accident have been published by the National Radiological Protection Board. The Board's assessment, which took into account monitoring information obtained over Scotland, considered doses received by adults and one year old children representative of individual members of the population. To allow for the variation from one area to another in the amount of activity deposited, separate assessments were made for southern and northern areas. Those for northern areas are appropriate to Scotland.

The Board's results show that the representative doses due to the Chernobyl incident to people in northern areas, in the year May 1986 to April 1987, are 0·9 millisieverts* for a 1 year old child and 0·3 millisieverts* for an adult. Doses to children aged between one and 12 years will be less than those to one year olds because the significance of ingestion of radio-activity in milk decreases with age. Doses to adults are representative of those received by pregnant women.

* 1 millisievert = 10^{-3} sieverts.

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the annual wholebody dose implied by the figure cited in the answer of 21 May, *Official Report*, column *227*, for the committed dose for the thyroids of Glasgow children; and what are the consequential implications for the excess cancer deaths total among children presently aged under 15 years.

Mr. John MacKay: The annual wholebody dose implied by the figures contained in the answer of 21 May, *Official Report*, column *227*, was 90 microsieverts. All the measurements taken were below this level. Indeed 80 per cent. of the children examined were found to have activity levels below the detection threshold of the apparatus used.

The most probable outcome is that no additional cancer deaths amongst children presently aged under 15 years will have been incurred.

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if, using figures for the levels of radioactivity to which the Scottish population were exposed as a result of the Chernobyl disaster, he will estimate the number of excess fatal cancers expressed per 10,000 population, expected to occur over the next 35 years amongst the Scottish population so exposed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: I refer the hon. Member to the reply which I gave him on 23 May at column *227*.

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if there are any plans to establish further sites for monitoring radioactivity in Scotland operated by the National Radiological Protection Board.

Mr. John MacKay: The National Radiological Protection Board is presently reviewing their monitoring arrangements in the light of the Chernobyl incident.

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what has been the fate of the cargoes of those vessels from Europe and the eastern bloc arriving at the British ports listed in the answer of 22 May, *Official Report*, column 306; what monitoring of radioactivity from these cargoes has been undertaken; and with what results.

Mr. John MacKay: Cargoes arriving at Scottish ports have been the subject of guidance from the Scottish Home and Health Department to environmental health officers. This specified initially that certain food items exported from the USSR and Poland on or after 26 April 1986 should be held for testing. From 13 to 31 May all foodstuffs from the Eastern bloc (excluding East Germany) were to be refused entry, in accordance with EC Regulation No. 1388/86. From 31 May until 30 September food from countries outside the European Community is to be allowed entry subject to a certificate procedure which is being applied to specified food items from all the Eastern bloc countries (including East Germany and Yugoslavia), Austria and Sweden, in accordance with EC Regulation No. 1707/86.

The fate of particular cargoes is not routinely recorded. The food cargoes amongst those listed in the reply of my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Treasury on 22 May were of products harvested before 26 April and fish, which would carry no risk to public health. Environmental health officers have indicated that only one cargo (cement received in Caithness) was tested for radioactivity with a negative result.

Environmental Pollution (Bonnybridge)

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if, in view of recent representations made to him, he will reconsider his decision not to establish an independent public inquiry into environmental pollution and associated human and animal health problems within a radius of 20 miles of Bonnybridge, Stirlingshire.

Mr. Ancram: My right hon. and learned Friend considers that the recent representations made to him contained no substantive evidence which would justify reconsidering the earlier decision.

Drumglass Farm, Croy

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to the answer of 30 October 1985, *Official Report*, column *544* if any of his officers have carried out an animal morbidity investigation at the Drumglass farm, Croy.

Mr. John MacKay: A preliminary clinical investigation was carried out by my officers in 1984. This preceded the detailed investigations by the East and West Scotland colleges of agriculture referred to in my reply of 30 October 1985.

Animal Welfare

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to the answer of 30 October 1985, *Official Report*, column *544*, if he will list the animal health matters which are dealt with by his Department.

Mr. John MacKay: Under the Transfer of Functions (Animal Health) Order 1955 my right hon. and learned Friend has specific responsibility in Scotland for matters relating to brucellosis melitensis, epizootic abortion, tuberculosis and warble fly and for animal imports. In addition he is responsible for health matters under the Artificial Insemination of Cattle (Animal Health) (Scotland) Regulations 1985 and has certain welfare powers under the Agriculture (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1968.

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what recent representations he has received about the methodology used in compiling the Lenihan report on animal morbidity in the Denny, Bonnybridge area.

Mr. MacKay: I have had no recent representations on this particular subject.

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to the answer of 30 October 1985, *Official Report*, column *542*, if he will provide the number of stock purchased from the dispersal sale at Household farm, Larbert, the numbers of those which suffered from animal health problems, and number of stock remaining, and the numbers of those which died from animal health problems; and if he will name the farms which were the recipients of the sale from Household.

Mr. John MacKay: A total of 196 cattle were purchased at the Household dispersal sale. The 37 purchasers included dealers, where the ultimate destination of the animals is unknown, as well as farmers. Information on the present whereabouts of the cattle and of their state of health is not available.

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to the answer of 25 October 1985, *Official Report*, column *285*, whether he will make available a list of the public and private organisations concerned with animal welfare and wildlife conservation throughout Scotland who co-operated with the Wildlife incident investigation at Agricultural Scientific Services, East Craigs; and if he will publish a report of their investigations into animal mortality since 1973.

Mr. John MacKay: The organisations which have co-operated with the wildlife incident investigation service during the period 1973 to 1985 are set out in the list.

Summaries of the work of the wildlife incident investigation service are published each year in the annual report "Agriculture in Scotland" prepared by the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland.

Organisations which have co-operated with the Wildlife Incident Investigation Service over the period 1973-85

Royal Society for the Protection of Birds.
Scottish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.
Glasgow and West of Scotland Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.
Nature Conservancy Council.
Royal Scottish Museum, Edinburgh.
National Trust for Scotland.
Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies, Edinburgh.
Lasswade Veterinary Laboratory, MAFF.
East of Scotland College of Agriculture, veterinary investigation laboratories.
North of Scotland College of Agriculture, veterinary investigation laboratories.
West of Scotland Agricultural College, veterinary investigation laboratories.
Northern Constabulary.
Lothians and Borders Constabulary.
Dumfries and Galloway Constabulary.
Strathclyde Constabulary.
Grampian Constabulary.
Royal Parks Constabulary.
Royal Air Force Kinloss.
Royal Air Force Lossiemouth.
Forth River Purification Board.
British Trust for Ornithology.
Scottish Ornithologists Club.
Young Ornithologists Club.
Aberdeen University.
University of Glasgow.
Forestry Commission.
Arran Nature Centre.
Highland Wildlife Park.
Royal Zoological Society of Scotland.
Commonwealth Institute of Parasitology.
The Hawk Trust.
Institute of Terrestrial Ecology.
Scottish Wildlife Trust.
Poultry Research Centre, AFRC.
Hessilhead Wildlife Rescue Centre, Ayrshire.
Grampian Regional Council.
Strathclyde Regional Council.
Fife Regional Council.
Angus District Council.
Eastwood District Council.
Edinburgh District Council.
Banff and Buchan District Council.
Kilmarnock and Loudon District Council.
Lochaber District Council.
Kirkcaldy District Council.
Strathkelvin District Council.
Dundee District Council.
Glasgow District Council.
Argyll and Bute District Council.
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth District Council.
Stirling District Council.
Monklands District Council.
Midlothian District Council.
East Lothian District Council.
Moredun Research Institute.
Freshwater Fisheries Laboratory, DAFS.
Agricultural Staff, DAFS.

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will make available the evidence supplied to the Leniham review group by the individuals and organisations detailed in appendix 2 of the report.

Mr. John MacKay: Since the evidence was supplied for the information and use of the review group, which was an independent body, and the group drew on the evidence in preparing its extensive report, which was published, it is not for the Secretary of State to take it on himself to publish that evidence.

Generating Stations (Discharges)

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to the answer of 29 October 1985, *Official Report*, column *471*, what response he has had from his inspectorate about discharges from generating stations.

Mr. Ancram: The inspectorate's investigations are not yet complete.

Waste Incineration

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to the answer of 29 October 1985, *Official Report*, column *471*, whether he will report on his Department's study of waste incineration operations in Sweden.

Mr. Ancram: The study of waste incineration operations in Sweden is not complete but the information available demonstrates that combustion efficiency of the plants surveyed was high and that the emission to the atmosphere of organic compounds such as dioxins and furans was acceptably low.

Re-Chem

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether, pursuant to the answers of 29 October 1985, *Official Report*, column *471*, and 30 October 1985, *Official Report*, column *545*, concerning obtaining information

from present and former employees of Re-Chem and the operation of the incinerator at that plant on specific days, he has obtained any further information on these matters.

Mr. Ancram: No.

Epidemiological Investigations

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to the answer of 30 October 1985, *Official Report*, column *546*, and in view of continued reports of ill health of farmers, farm workers and their families, if he will undertake systematic epidemiological investigations.

Mr. John MacKay: Work is proceeding to implement the recommendations of the Independent Review Group chaired by Professor Lenihan, which examined features of morbidity recorded in the Bonnybridge Denny area. All the further studies which were recommended are now being undertaken. I do not consider that additional epidemiological investigation is called for at this stage.

Toxic Waste

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to the answer of 29 October 1985, *Official Report*, column *472*, concerning contamination by toxic waste, whether he will seek a copy of the results of the tests for heavy metals.

Mr. Ancram: The results of the tests requested by the farmer have been published in the scientific press and are readily available to all, including the Government.

Human and Animal Health

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) pursuant to the answer of 30 October 1985, *Official Report*, column *546*, he will give an up-to-date report on the further actions he is pursuing in the furtherance of the recommendations arising out of the Lenihan report;

(2) pursuant to the answer of 24 October 1985, *Official Report*, column *230*, when he expects to receive advice on toxicology from the independent committee; and if he will publish the results of the committee's findings in a form accessible and intelligible to the non-scientific public;

(3) when the committee on eye defects commenced its work; how many meetings it has held; what progress has been made; what results it can report; and if those results will be made available to the public in a form accessible and intelligible to the non-scientific public;

(4) pursuant to the answer of 24 October 1985, *Official Report*, column *230*, concerning toxicological assessment, if he will *(a)* advise when the expert committees will be publishing their assessments and *(b)* publish the results of their assessments.

Mr. John MacKay: Work is in hand to implement those recommendations of the Lenihan report which require further action.

With regard to toxicological assessment no reports from the relevant committees are yet available. When they have finished their work, the Government will examine their advice and consider what further action is required, bearing in mind the need for well-presented information on this subject.

A working group on microphthalmos first met on 26 April 1985 and three meetings have been held. A study under the direction of the Working Group is currently being carried out by an epidemiologist from the University of Edinburgh to examine the incidence of microphthalmos in the Forth Valley health board area. This study involves careful examination of a wide variety of records such as neo-natal morbidity registers, school health records and health records and is unlikely to be completed before the end of the year. When the working group have received the results of the study they will consider how to make them available in a form understandable to the non-scientific public.

Further soil samples have been taken in the Bonnybridge area, and from a number of other locations in the central belt of Scotland. The results obtained from the analysis of these samples will in due course be considered along with the results of soil sampling being undertaken over many areas of the United Kingdom for anyalysis by techniques developed as a result of current research.

Waste disposal practices in Scotland are being examined to ascertain if any improvements need be introduced in the light of experience gained by the Hazardous Waste Inspectorate and in the light of a review being undertaken by the special waste regulations. A paper has been issued seeking views on the operation of the general nuisance provisions of the Public Health (Scotland) Act 1897.

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to the answer of 23 October 1985, *Official Report*, columns *176-77*, if he will give the details of the hours his officials have spent between 1980 and 1985, inclusive, interviewing *(a)* farmers in central Scotland who had reported suspicions that their livestock had been affected by environmental pollution and *(b)* farmers whom his officials considered to be at risk from or affected by environmental pollution.

Mr. John MacKay: Throughout the period, members of the state veterinary service have carried out a number of welfare visits. Interviews relating to environmental pullution were, however, entirely confined to the period 1982-84 covered by my previous answer.

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to the answer of 24 October 1985, *Official Report*, column 236, about unexplained animal deaths *(a)* if he will list by postal code within the Central region the areas where the 511 unexplained deaths occurred and *(b)* if he will also provide an up-to-date report by the same method.

Mr. John MacKay: The 511 sudden unexplained deaths given in my previous answer occurred in the period commencing 1 January 1982 and ending on 30 June 1985. A breakdown of these figures (updated to December 1985) on a parish basis is as set out in the table:

Parish	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*
Aberfoyle	..	..	..	3
Airth	4	..	1	2
Alloa	1	5	1	2
Alva	..	2	..	1
Balfron	5	5	4	8
Balquhidder	4	2	2	4
Bo'ness	4	2	1	3
Buchanan	2	5	5	3
Callander	6	1	6	8
Clackmannan	2	3	5	5
Comrie	..	2	2	1

Parish	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*
Denny	9	5	4	3
Dollar	4	1	2	2
Drymen	12	15	12	8
Dunblane	14	5	7	6
Dunipace	1	3	9	12
Falkirk	4	9	5	5
Fintry	1	2	2	
Gargunnock		4		4
Grangemouth	3	2	2	6
Kenmore		1		
Killearn	3	5	8	5
Killin	1	2	5	2
Kilmadock	9	7	13	6
Kincardine	7	3	3	4
Kippen	12	16	13	13
Larbert	1			1
Logie	3		2	3
Muckhart	2	2		3
Muiravonside	3	5	8	9
Port of Menteith	4	9	10	6
St. Ninians	20	13	22	31
Stirling		1		2
Slamannan	8	3	3	2
Strathbane		2	3	
Tillicoultry	3	1	2	5
Totals	152	143	162	178

Milk (Direct Sales)

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to the answer of 23 October 1985, *Official Report*, column *175*, he will list the names of the 14 farms selling milk direct to the general public as well as or instead of through the Scottish Milk Marketing Board and the relevant postal code for each farm.

Mr. John MacKay: No. This is commercial information held not by Government but by the Scottish milk marketing board with whom producer-retailers are registered.

Dairy Cattle (Disease)

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will make available the statistics for cases of fat cow syndrome and ragwort poisoning among dairy cattle from 1979 to 1986 inclusive in *(a)* the United Kingdom, *(b)* Scotland and *(c)* the Central region;

(2) if he will make available the cases of death among dairy cattle from fat cow syndrome and ragwort poisoning from 1975 to 1986 inclusive in *(a)* the United Kingdom, *(b)* Scotland and *(c)* the Central region.

Mr. John MacKay: Neither fat cow syndrome nor ragwort poisoning is a notifiable ailment. Statistics on such cases are not, therefore, available.

Organic Environmental Contaminants

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) pursuant to the answer of 24 October 1985, *Official Report*, columns *232-3*, if he will give details of the advice of the working party on organic environmental contaminants in food and the action he intends to take;

(2) if he will take steps to lay down guidelines for the maximum allowable content of polychlorinated biphenyls, polychlorinated dibenzodioxins especially 2, 3, 7, 8 tetrachlorodibenzodioxins, and polychlorinated dibenzofurans in milk for human consumption.

Mr. John MacKay: The working party on organic environmental contaminants in food was set up by the steering group on food surveillance on 11 October 1985, and its preliminary work has begun. The need for guidelines on such contaminants, in relation to food in general and milk in particular, will be considered in the light of the advice to be given by the working party and of other research in this field.

Toxic Emissions

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to the answer of 23 October 1985, *Official Report*, column *177*, concerning toxic emissions, if he will make a statement on the estimated date of completion of the report by the Warren Spring laboratory; and if he will make the information available to the public.

Mr. Ancram: I understand that individual reports on investigations into emission from a number of municipal incinerators are to be published by the Warren Spring laboratories during the course of the next few months.

Soil, Vegetation and Animal Tissue (Analysts)

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to the answer of 24 October 1985, *Official Report*, columns *232-5*, if he will state the exact date when the Strathclyde regional chemist commenced undertaking analyses for polychlorinated biphenyls, polychlorinated terphenyls, polybrominated byplenys, dioxins and furans.

Mr. Ancram: While the Strathclyde regional council's Department of the regional chemist may have undertaken analysis of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) for some time, I understand that the first samples taken for analysis of dioxins in addition to polychlorinated biphenyls was on 3 April 1984.

Nurses (Geriatric Patients)

Mr. MacKenzie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many nurses are in post in each health board area for the nursing of geriatric patients.

Mr. Rifkind: The whole-time equivalent numbers of trained nurses and nursing auxiliaries employed in geriatric hospitals and in long-stay units mainly for geriatric patients at 30 September 1985* are as follows:

Health board	*Trained nurses (whole-time equivalent)*	*Nursing auxiliaries (whole-time equivalent)*
Argyll and Clyde	165·6	278·2
Ayrshire and Arran	181·5	238·6
Borders	58·6	80·8
Dumfries and Galloway	61·1	37·4
Fife	50·6	36·5
Forth Valley	207·9	299·7
Grampian	239·5	238·6
Greater Glasgow	537·1	666·8
Highland	72·6	66·6
Lanarkshire	296·3	239·0
Lothian	302·3	290·0
Orkney	—	—
Shetland	—	—
Tayside	270·4	283·8
Western Isles	39·5	13·3
Scotland	2,483·0	2,769·3

* Provisional.

Statistics of nurses in training at these hospitals are not available. Geriatric patients are also nursed in general and geriatric beds in general and teaching hospitals, but the number of nursing staff involved cannot be separately identified.

District Nurses

Mr. MacKenzie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many district nurses are available in each health board area to visit elderly and sick people in their own homes.

Mr. Rifkind: The whole-time equivalent number of district nurses available in each health board area in Scotland at 30 September 1985* is as follows:

Number of District Nurses expressed as Whole-time equivalents

Health Board	*Number*
Argyll and Clyde	163·0
Ayrshire and Arran	97·5
Borders	13·5
Dumfries and Galloway	35·7
Fife	150·0
Forth Valley	86·4
Grampian	192·9
Greater Glasgow	488·8
Highland	62·6
Lanarkshire	211·2
Lothian	239·1
Orkney	10·5
Shetland	5·1
Tayside	117·6
Western Isles	2·5
Scotland	1,876·4

* provisional

The figures exclude community nurses (655·2 whole-time equivalents) who combine midwifery, district nurse and health visitor duties.

In 1985, 58 per cent. of visits by district nurses were to people aged 75 years and over and 81 per cent. to people aged 65 years and over.

Elderly People (Accommodation)

Mr. MacKenzie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many elderly people are presently accommodated in local authority and voluntary old people's homes in each regional council area of Scotland.

Mr. Rifkind: Information available in relation to all registered homes (voluntary and private) is as follows:

Number of residents aged over 65 years (Estimated at 31 March 1985)

Regional Council	*Local authority homes*	*Registered Homes*		*Total all homes*
		Voluntary	*Private*	
Borders	292	160	45	497
Central	359	170	74	603
Dumfries and Galloway	280	136	36	452
Fife	617	191	121	929
Grampian	934	580	72	1,586
Highland	419	193	23	635
Lothian	1,107	766	135	2,008
Strathclyde	3,385	1,387	210	4,982
Tayside	967	587	189	1,743
Orkney	69	—	—	69
Shetland	57	16	—	73
Western Isles	177	—	—	177
Scotland Total	8,663	4,186	905	13,754

Teachers (Physical Education Training)

Mr. Roy Jenkins asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what assessment has been made of the relative

financial consequences to the Scottish Education Department if the physical education training of secondary teachers in Scotland was to be *(a)* concentrated in one institution in the east of Scotland, *(b)* concentrated in one institution in the west of Scotland or *(c)* continued to be provided both in the east and west of Scotland but with male and female teachers on each site.

Mr. Rifkind: I am at present considering future arrangements for the training of physical education teachers, including relevant educational and financial factors, in the light of *(a)* the requirement under section 4 of the Further Education Act 1985 to end the separate training of men and women, and *(b)* the recommendation in the report by the Scottish Tertiary Education Advisory Council (Cmnd. 9676) for wider rationalisation of the teacher training sector. I shall make a further statement in due course.

Doctors (Geriatric Patients)

Mr. MacKenzie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many doctors with specialist qualifications are in post in each health board area for the treatment of geriatric patients.

Mr. Rifkind: The number of consultants engaged wholly in geriatric medicine in Scotland as at 30 September 1985 is set out below. (Whole-time equivalent numbers are given in brackets). Geriatric patients are also treated by consultants in many other specialties.

Health board	*Consultants in geriatric medicine*	
Argyll and Clyde	5	(5·0)
Ayrshire and Arran	3	(3·0)
Borders	2	(2·0)
Dumfries and Galloway	2	(2·0)
Fife	3	(3·0)
Forth Valley	4	(4·0)
Grampian	4	(4·0)
Greater Glasgow	19	(18·6)
Highland	2	(2·0)
Lanarkshire	5	(5·0)
Lothian	12	(10·9)
Orkney	—	—
Shetland	—	—
Tayside	8	(7·6)
Western Isles	1	(1·0)
Scotland	70	(68·2)

Day Centres for the Elderly

Mr. MacKenzie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will provide local authorities responsible for day centres for the elderly with additional resources to maintain and expand the service.

Mr. Rifkind: I refer to the reply given on 11 July 1985 at column 519.

The number of day centre places provided by local authorities has risen from 1,845 in 1984 to 2,204 in 1985. In addition, places in centres provided by voluntary agencies rose from 2,676 to 3,100. It is for local authorities to determine priorities, but the Government's planning figures for social work services will continue to take the needs of the elderly into account.

Russian Language (Examinations)

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many pupils were presented for O grade and higher Russian in each year since 1979 in Scotland.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The information requested for the years 1979 to 1985 can be found in the Scottish Examination Board's annual reports for these years, copies of which are in the House of Commons Library. Provisional figures obtained from the Board for 1986 are as follows:

Examination	*Number of presentations*
Russian O (Traditional and alternative)	165
Russian H	62

These figures may include some candidates who were not pupils at school.

Steel (Statistics)

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what was *(a)* the total output of steel, and *(b)* the output of various categories of steel from plants in Scotland in the last year for which figures are available and for each year since 1979.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I have been asked to reply.

The following is the information on *(a)* crude steel production for the years 1979 to 1985 and *(b)* output of steel by category for the years 1979 to 1984, in Scotland:

Steel Industry in Scotland (a) Crude Steel Production

	million tonnes
1979	1·7
*1980	1·3
1981	2·0
1982	1·7
1983	1·8
1984	1·9
1985	2·0

*Affected by BSC strike
Source: Iron and Steel Statistics Bureau

Steel Industry in Scotland (b) Output of Steel by Category

	million tonnes	
	**Long products*	‡*Flat products*
1979	0·1	0·8
1980	0·1	0·5
1981	0·1	0·8
1982	0·1	0·6
1983	0·1	0·6
1984	0·1	0·6

* Long products, eg bars, rods and sections.
† Flat products, eg wide coil, sheets, plates and hot rolled narrow strip.
Source: European Coal and Steel Community; Investment in the Community Coalmining and Iron and Steel Industries.

Steel Industry

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many persons work in the steel industry in Scotland at present; and what are the corresponding figures for each year since 1979.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I have been asked to reply.

The following is the information for the total labour force employed in ECSC activities in the steel industry for the years 1979 to 1986 (end March), in Scotland.

Steel industry in Scotland
*Total labour force employed in ECSC activities**
'000 (at year end)

	Scotland
1979	13·1
1980	10·4
1981	9·5
1982	7·4
1983	6·0
1984	5·9
1985	5·6
1986†	5·0

* The figures supplied relate to employment in ECSC activities, compiled by the Iron and Steel Statistics Bureau, and are published in Eurostat for the United Kingdom as a whole.
† End March.

Steel Production

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what has been the percentage change in Scottish steel production since 1979.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I have been asked to reply.

The following is the information for the percentage change in steel production between 1979 and 1985 for Scotland:

Steel industry in Scotland
Percentage change in steel production between 1979 and 1985

	Percentage
Scotland	+17·6

Source: Iron and Steel Statistics Bureau.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Housing Benefit

77. **Mr. Nellist** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what changes the Government plan to make to the system of rebates presently paid to local authorities for cash paid out in housing benefit.

Mr. Major: Changes are proposed in the arrangements for subsidising local authorities' housing benefit expenditure as part of the proposals for the reform of the housing benefits scheme. Our objectives for the revised subsidy arrangements are to provide more incentives than now for local authorities to monitor and control costs whilst providing a fair level of support for expenditure which they properly incur.

For benefit costs we originally proposed that 20 per cent. of benefit expenditure should be included in the rate support grant system with the remaining costs attracting a direct subsidy. Preliminary work on the effects of this proposal has indicated that it would not meet our objectives. We are therefore considering alternative ways of achieving the desired results and will be putting further proposals to the local authority interests.

Mr. Irving asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any plans to reduce the housing benefit claimed by those who are unemployed and living in rented accommodation.

Mr. Major: We have no plans to reduce housing benefit specifically for unemployed people living in rented accommodation, although we intend to reduce overall expenditure on the scheme in 1988 as part of the social security reforms.

Childhood Dysfunction

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what training general practitioners are given in diagnosing early childhood dysfunction.

Mr. Whitney: All medical students receive paediatric training within guidelines laid down by the General Medical Council. Paediatric experience is listed as a priority in the vocational training for doctors wishing to become general practitioners. In addition, a variety of postgraduate training courses is available to general practitioners on the clinical content of child development.

Abortions

Mr. John Mark Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to the answer of 11 March, *Official Report*, column *140*, relating to the number of abortions, to what factors he attributes the trend shown by the relevant figures.

Mr. Hayhoe: Since my earlier reply to my hon. Friend the relevant figures for the final two quarters of 1985 have been published. The completed table is as follows:

Legal abortions to resident women aged under 16, England and Wales
Number and rates per 1,000 women 1984 to 1985

Quarter	*1984*		*1985*	
	Number	*Rate per 1,000 women**	*Number*	*Rate per 1,000 women**
March	1,067	1·43	985	1·32
June	973	1·30	925	1·24
September	1,017	1·36	960	1·29
December	1,048	1·41	1,030	1·38
Total†	4,158	5·58	4,002	5·37

* The rates (per 1,000 women) for the under 16 age group are based on the population of women aged 14-15. The denominator is the mid 1984 estimated resident population figure.
† Includes late notifications, 53 in 1984 and 102 in 1985, not assigned to any quarter.

The slight fall in the rate of abortions in 1985 compared with 1984 is insufficient on its own to indicate a trend.

Mentally Ill People

Mr. Irving asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what action has been taken to improve the training of his Department's staff in the recognition and appropriate handling of mentally ill clients.

Mr. Major: The initial and subsequent developmental training of all the Department's Social Security local office staff who deal with the public, is geared to the recognition and appropriate handling of clients with particular problems, including the mentally ill.

To reinforce this message, in April this year, a specially commissioned video training package entitled "Ready, Willing and Able" was issued for use to all local offices. The aim of the material is to produce a heightened awareness of the differing needs of clients with disabilities, and to provide practical advice on improving the service

provided. It includes specific coverage of the particular needs of people with mental handicaps. The video film was produced with the valued assistance of several voluntary organisations, including MENCAP, and the film commentary was read by Sir Brian Rix.

Drugs

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the cost of drugs to the National Health Service; and what further steps he has in mind to curb the escalation of such costs.

Mr. Hayhoe: As I stated in my reply to the hon. Member for Ashfield on 21 April at columns 75-76, the cost of drugs to the National Health Service in 1984-85 was £1,473 million. My general aims are to ensure that the National Health Service receives good value for money spent on drugs, through effective and economic prescribing, and that companies in the pharmaceutical industry are fairly reimbursed for the drugs which they supply to the service.

Cervical Cancer

Mr. John Mark Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to the answer of 12 March, *Official Report*, columns 516-18, relating to the incidence of cancer of the cervix between 1965 and 1982, to what factors he attributes the trend shown by the figures; and what steps are being taken to seek to reverse it.

Mr. Hayhoe: An increase in the number of registrations of carcinoma-in-situ of cervix uteri is to be expected because more women are attending for smear tests. The number of smear tests taken increased from 765,000 to 3 million over the same period. I am advised that the overall fall in registrations of malignant neoplasm of the cervix uteri is likely to be the result of more women having smear tests and treatment while the disease process is in the early stages. This is the aim of the screening programme. The figures for women under the age of 35 are an indication that cancer of the cervix has become somewhat less uncommon in that age group during this period. All health authorities have been required to give priority to improving cervical cancer screening programmes, including implementation of computerised call and recall systems by April 1988.

Benefits (Grimsby)

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what is the number of claimants in receipt of *(a)* unemployment benefit only, *(b)* supplementary benefit only, *(c)* unemployment benefit and supplementary benefit for the latest available year at Department of Health and Social Security offices in Grimsby, excluding pensioner claimants and claimants with dependent children;

(2) what is the number of claimant couples with children in receipt of *(a)* unemployment benefit only, *(b)* supplementary benefit only, *(c)* unemployment benefit and supplementary benefit for the latest available year in Department of Health and Social Security offices in Grimsby.

Mr. Major: I regret that this information is not available. These statistics are not kept routinely so that the information requested could be obtained only by a special exercise which would be disproportionately expensive.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish a table showing the number of *(a)* single payments and *(b)* urgent needs payments, weekly and one-off, paid to claimants who (i) are under pensionable age and are not required to register for work, (ii) persons under pensionable age required to register for work, (iii) persons over pensionable age and *(x)* the average rate per 1,000 claimants in (i), (ii) and (iii), *(y)* the average payment made to claimants in (i), (ii) and (iii) and *(z)* the number of claimants in (i), (ii) and (iii) with dependent children for the latest available year at Department of Health and Social Security offices in Grimsby.

Mr. Major: The following table shows, for the categories of claimants specified, numbers of single payments and urgent needs payments made in the year up to 8 April 1986 by the Grimsby local office.

Comparable information about the number of claimants with dependent children is not available.

Grimsby local office

	Number of payments, rate and amount
1. *Single payments*	
Claimants under pensionable age not required to register for work.	
Number of payments	5,701
Average rate per 1,000 claimants	945
Average amount	£69·89
Claimants under pensionable age required to register for work.	
Number of payments	7,984
Average rate per 1,000 claimants	853
Average amount	£64·14
Claimants over pensionable age.	
Number of payments	1,186
Average rate per 1,000 claimants	171
Average amount	£56·41
2. *Urgent needs payments*	
Claimant under pensionable age not required to register.	
Number of payments	258
Average rate per 1,000 claimants	43
Claimants under pensionable age required to register for work.	
Number of payments	797
Average rate per 1,000 claimants	85
Claimants over pensionable age.	
Number of payments	17
Average rate per 1,000 claimants	2

The amounts of urgent needs payments are not recorded.

The number of awards of single payments and urgent needs payments for the year ending 8 April 1986 have been set against the count of live cases in action as at 6 May 1986 to arrive at a rate per 1,000 claimants. These are the latest available figures.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the number of claimants in receipt of *(a)* sickness benefit, *(b)* invalidity benefit pension *(c)* industrial disablement benefit and *(d)* non-contributory

invalidity benefit and higher non-contributory invalidity benefit or severe disablement allowance for the latest available year at Department of Health and Social Security offices in Grimsby.

Mr. Major: The numbers of claimants in receipt of sickness benefit, invalidity benefit-pension and severe disablement allowance on 3 June 1986, and in receipt of industrial disablement benefit on 11 February 1986 (the latest dates for which information is available) at the Department's local office in Grimsby were as follows:

	Number
Sickness and invalidity benefit pension	3,988
Severe disablement allowance	1,003
Industrial disablement benefit	1,033

Separate records are not kept of the number of claimants in receipt of sickness benefit and invalidity benefit-pension. Both housewives' non-contributory invalidity pension and non-contributory invalidity pension were replaced by severe disablement allowance from 29 November 1984.

Social Security (Computerisation)

Mr. Patrick Thompson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he is able to report the outcome of his recent exercise in inviting tenders for the supply of computer terminals for the computerisation of social security; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Fowler: A contract for computer terminals and associated equipment has been awarded to British Telecom. I made clear in the White Paper on the "Reform of Social Security" that we are committed to bringing the benefits of new technology to the service of the social security system. The Department's computerisation programme, the Operational Strategy, will help us to process claims and enquiries more efficiently than at present. The equipment contract awarded today to British Telecom is a fundamental part of that programme. The terminals will connect authorised staff in local social security offices to central computers by secure communications links. Claimant confidentiality will be fully maintained and the system will comply with the provisions of the Data Protection Act.

Occupational Pension Schemes

Mr. Stevens asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he intends to make regulations on disclosure of information by occupational pension schemes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Fowler: I have today laid regulations on disclosure of information which will come into effect on 1 November this year. The regulations introduce important new rights for members of occupational pension schemes who will be able to receive full details of how their pension fund is invested as well as statements showing the individual pension rights they have built up in a scheme.

In addition, members and their spouses will have access to a scheme's legal documentation and all new members will, on joining a scheme, receive basic information about it rules. Most schemes will have to produce an annual report which will contain its audited accounts and a statement by a qualified actuary showing whether the funding of the scheme is adequate to meet all its pension liabilities. These measures are aimed at improving protection for members of occupational pension schemes and providing them with information on which to make informed choices about future pension provision. We intend to make regulations under the current Social Security Bill which will extend the provisions on disclosure of information to members of personal pension schemes. When we do so, we shall be giving further consideration to the kinds of individual benefit statement which should be available to members of both occupational and personal pension schemes.

Mental Patients

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many patients were released into the community from mental hospitals in 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984 and 1985;

(2) how many patients released into the community from mental hospitals subsequently committed suicide in 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984 and 1985;

Mr. Whitney: I regret that I cannot give the hon. Member all the information he seeks. Information on numbers of patients discharged into the community is not collected centrally in precisely the form requested, and there is no centrally available data on the numbers of people who commit suicide after discharge from hospital.

Statistics of the total number of discharges (including transfers) from mental illness and mental handicap hospitals and units are available in the series of DHSS booklets "Mental Health Statistics for England", copies of which are in the Library. However, the statistics show that the great majority of discharges follow length of stay of less than six months, usually for short-term care and treatment or family respite. An indication of the number of people who have been settled in the community after, in effect, living in hospital, is given in the table. Some of these people may require to be readmitted for a time, for example because of changes in their condition.

Discharges from mental illness and mental handicap hospitals and units in England after durations of stay of 5 years or more.*

Year	*Mental Illness*	*Mental handicap*
1980	804	657
1981	818	764
1982	733	764
1983	821	967
1984	981	1,375
1985	†	†

* Excludes transfer to other NHS hospitals and Special Hospitals.
† Not yet available.

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received concerning the incidence of suicide amongst patients released into the community from mental hospitals.

Mr. Whitney: Apart from two enquiries about the incidence of suicide amongst patients discharged from mental hospitals, we have received no representations on this subject.

Forms, Pamphlets, Leaflets (Welsh Language)

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list those forms, pamphlets and leaflets

produced by his Department which are available in a Welsh language version or in a bilingual Welsh-English version.

Mr. Major: The current Department of Health and Social Security forms, pamphlets and leaflets available in a Welsh language version are as follows:

MAE'R TAFLENNI A'R FFURFLENNI HYN AR GAEL YN GYMRAEG:
THE FOLLOWING LEAFLETS AND FORMS ARE NOW AVAILABLE IN WELSH:

TAFLENNI
LEAFLETS

D 11	Triniaeth y Gwasanaeth Iechyd Gwladol i'r Dannedd—Faint mae'n gostio a sut i gael triniaeth am ddim. NHS Dental Treatment—What it costs and how to get free treatment.
G 11	Sbectolau'r Gwasanaeth Iechyd Gwladol—Faint mae dhw'n costio a sut i'w cael am ddim. NHS Glasses—How much they cost and how to get them free.
FB 2	Pa Fudd-dâl? Which Benefit?
FIS 1	Atodiad Incwm Teulu—Help i deuluoedd ar gyflog isel. Family Income Supplement—Help for families on a low wage.
RR 1	Pwy sy'n talu llai o rent a threthi. Who Pays Less Rent and Rates.
SB 1	Cymorth Ariannol—Gallwch wneud cais am Fudd-dâl Atodol. Cash Help—You can claim Supplementary Benefit.
FB 20	Gadael yr Ysgol—Canllaw i Nawdd Cymeithasol. Leaving School—A pocket Guide to Social Security.
SA 30	Costau Meddygol mewn Gwledydd Tramor. Medical Costs Abroad.

BUDD-DÂL ATODOL
SUPPLEMENTARY BENEFIT

A 1	Cais am Fudd-dâl Atodol. Claim for Supplementary Benefit.
SP 1	Cais am Bensiwn Atodol. Claim for Supplementary Pension.
3 1	Cais am Fudd-dâl Atodol. Claim for Supplementary Benefit.
B 1(SL)	Cais am Fudd-dâl Atodol gan bobl ifanc di-waith sydd newydd adael yr ysgol. Claim for Supplementary Benefit by Unemployed School Leavers.
B 1 (Myfyriwr) B 1 (Student)	Ffurflen Gais i Fyfyrwyr sy'n gwneud cais am Fudd-dâl Atodol pan fyddant ar Wyliau. Claim for Students claiming Supplementary Benefit while on vacation.
WSW 18	Llythyr yn hysbysu beth sy'n digwydd ar ol cyflwyno cais am Fudd-dâl atodol. Letter advising what happens after Supplementary Benefit claim submitted.
FP 95	Cais am Dystysgrif talu am brisiau presgripsiwn ymlaen llaw. Application for Certificate of prepayment of prescription charges.

BUDD-DÂL SLWCH A BUDD-DÂL ANALLUEDD
SICKNESS BENEFIT AND INVALIDITY BENEFIT

SC1 (Diw) SC1 (Rev)	Ffurflen Gais am Fudd-dâl Salwch Sickness Benefit Claim Form
SSP 1(E)	Tâl Salwch Statudol Grwpiau Eithriadol Statutory Sick Pay Excluded Groups.
SSP 1(T)	Tâl Salwch Statudol Achosion Cyfnewid Statutory Sick Pay Transfer Group.
BF 11C	Cais am ychwanegiad mewn budd-dâl ar gyfer plentyn/plant. Claims for Increase of Benefit for Child (ren)
BF 11WM	Cais am Ewy o Fudd-dal i'ch Priod Claim for Increase of Benefit for Spouse.
BF 11 (Nodiadau) BF 11 (Notes)	Nodiadau ar Fudd-dal Salwch ac ar Godiadau i Bobl Ddibynnol Notes on Sickness Benefit and on Increases for Dependants
BF 134	Datganiad am Lyfr Archebion ar Goll Missing Order Book Declaration.
BF 225	Cais am Godiad Mewn Budd-dâl ar Gyfer Priod a Phlant. Claim for increase of benefit for spouse and children.
BS 2	Llythyr i ymgeisydd yn goryn pam na wnaed cais mewn pryd Letter to claimant asking for reason for late claim.
BS 4	Gwrthod budd-dâl salwch—amod y cyfraniad cyntaf heb ei fodloni. Notice of disallowance—first contribution condition not satisfied.
BS 6	Gwrthod budd-dâl salwch—amod yr ail gyfraniad heb ei fodloni. Notice of disallowance—second contribution condition not satisfied.

BUDD-DAL MAMOLAETH
MATERNITY CLAIM

BM 4	Cais am Fudd-dâl Mamolaeth Claim for Maternity Benefit
BM 9	Hysbysiad am roi Budd-dâl Mamolaeth Notice of award of Maternity Allowance
BM 9A	Anfonir gyda'r ffurflen BM 9 pan roir Lwfans Mamolaeth ar raddfa is neu am lai o amser na chyfnod llawn. Issued with form BM 9 when Maternity Allowance awarded at reduced rate or for less than full period.
BM 12	Llythyr yn gofyn pam na wnaed cais an Lwfans Mamolaeth mewn pryd Letter requesting reason for late claim for Maternity Allowance.

PENSIWN YMDDEOL
RETIREMENT PENSION

BR 1	Ffurflen gais am Bensiwn Ymddeol ar eich yswiriant eich hun Claim form for Retirement Pension on own insurance.

BUDD-DAL SLWCH A BUDD-DAL ANALLUEDD
SICKNESS BENEFIT AND INVALIDITY BENEFIT

BR 1C	Ffurflen gais am Bensiwn Ymddeol gwraig sy'n dibynnu ar bensiynwr wrth gyrraedd 60 oed Claim form for Retirement Pension dependant wife of pensioner on reaching age 60
BR 33M	Gwahoddiad i geisio pensiwn ymddeol ar gyfer dyn sydd wedi talu yswiriant ac ar fin cyrraedd ei 65 Invitation to claim Retirement Pension to insured man approaching age 65
BR 33W	Gwahoddiad i geisio pensiwn ymddeol ar gyfer dynes sydd wedi talu yswiriant ac ar fin cyrraedd ei 65 Invitation to claim Retirement Pension to insured woman approaching age 60
BR 61	Hysbysiad am newid mewn amgylchiadau Notification of change of circumstances

CARDIAU A CHYFRANIADAU YSWIRIANT
INSURANCE CARDS AND CONTRIBUTIONS

CF 8	Ffurflen gais am Rif Yswiriant Gwladol Application for a National Insurance Number
CF 112A	Cais am besdio â thalu cyfraniadau Request for Contribution Arrears

GRANT MARWOLAETH
DEATH GRANT

BD 1	Ffurflen Gais Claim Form

AMRYWIOL
MISCELLANEOUS

MF 2	Cais am dystysgrif geni Letter to claimant requesting birth certificate.

Rent and Rates (Rebates and Allowances)

Mr. John Fraser asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people in Lambeth are now receiving rent and rate rebates and rent allowances and as to how many are certificated claims.

Mr. Major: On the basis of estimates supplied by Lambeth borough council, in connection with their latest housing benefit subsidy claim the number of people receiving rent rebates, rent allowances and rate rebates is:

	Certificated	*Standard*
Rent rebates	17,500	4,600
Rent allowance	7,784	3,860
Rate rebates	26,498	9,880

Birth Registration (Wales)

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has as to in which counties of Wales it is possible for parents to register the birth of their children through the medium of Welsh; and in which counties this is not possible because there are no registration officers who understand Welsh.

Mr. Whitney: Bilingual birth registration facilities are available in every county in Wales as there is at least one registration officer who can understand and write Welsh in each of the eight counties.

Leukaemia Patients

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will institute research into the incidence of leukaemia patients who have been recorded as dying from other causes in the years 1979 to 1985; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: Not at present. I am advised that it is technically feasible to link data already collected on leukaemia registrations and subsequent causes of death, and consideration would be given to sponsoring such research if a worthwhile proposal was made.

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether Government statistics concerning deaths from leukaemia are compiled solely from cause of death as stated on death certificates.

Mr. Whitney: No, not solely. Mortality statistics for deaths from leukaemia are compiled from the underlying cause of death as stated on the medical certificate of cause of death (or the coroner's certificate) and from any subsequent information received from the medical practitioner concerned.

Midwifery

Mr. Patrick Thompson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, what is Her Majesty's Government's policy on management structures for midwifery in the light of the report, "Neighbourhood Nursing—A Focus of Care."

Mr. Hayhoe: [*pursuant to his reply*, 23 June 1986, c. *66*]: The report does not suggest any changes to the current management arrangements for midwifery services, although it urges closer collaboration between staff working in the community. The report has been issued for consultation along with the discussion document on primary health care.

Voluntary Organisations (Grants)

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many voluntary organisations, funded by his Department, have not yet been informed of the level of their grant allocation for the financial year 1986-87; why this delay in notification has occurred; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: [*pursuant to his reply*, 23 June 1986, c. *68-9*]: Hundreds of applications by and grants to voluntary organisations are dealt with each year by the Department. Applications are received and decisions are given throughout the year for a wide variety of purposes. At any time, therefore, some applications will be in the course of being processed, and the position changes continually.

ENERGY

Publications (Welsh Language)

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list those leaflets, pamphlets and forms published by his Department for use in Wales which are printed in Welsh or in a bilingual Welsh-English format.

Mr. Peter Walker: To support its energy efficiency touring exhibitions and displays in Wales, the energy efficiency office has produced the leaflet "Croeso I'r Sioe Deithiol."

ENVIRONMENT

Litter

17. **Mr. Favell** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will detail his latest proposals for the reduction of the litter problem.

Mr. Ridley: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) on 20 June at column *651*.

19. **Mr. Skinner** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his policy in respect of the use by local authorities of private contractors for street cleansing and litter collection.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Government firmly believe that local authorities should give private contractors the opportunity of tendering for street cleansing, and will introduce legislation to require them to do so as soon as the parliamentary timetable permits.

Greenfield Sites

20. **Mr. Steen** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to call in planning applications for permission to build on greenfield sites outside cities in which there is vacant, dormant or derelict land which could be used.

Mr. Tracey: No. We consider each case referred to us on its merits but our general approach is to call in cases only if planning issues of more than local importance arise.

Canary Wharf

21. **Mr. Marlow** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what planning applications for developments at Canary wharf are currently awaiting a decision by his Department.

Sir George Young: My Department has one planning appeal before it at the moment, relating to land known as Wood wharf.

25. **Mr. Maples** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he intends to meet the chairman of the London Docklands Development Corporation to discuss the proposed development of Canary wharf.

Sir George Young: The Secretary of State has no firm plans at present for a meeting with the chairman of the LDDC specifically to discuss these proposals. They are, however, the subject of regular liaison meetings between my Department and senior officers of the corporation.

Lead-free Petrol

22. **Mr. Alex Carlile** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what further incentives he plans to introduce to encourage the use of lead-free petrol.

Mrs. Rumbold: I refer the hon. Member to the answer my hon. Friend, the Minister for the Environment, Countryside and Local Government gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Lincoln (Mr. Carlisle) on 23 June 1986 at column *3*.

Marine Nature Reserve

23. **Mr. Kenneth Carlisle** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he is yet able to announce the creation of the first marine nature reserve.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Nature Conservancy Council is currently consulting interested parties on its detailed proposals for a marine nature reserve at Lundy. I expect to receive formal proposals in about two months. All being well, I hope the first statutory reserve will be in place by October.

Local Authorities (Capital Expenditure Controls)

24. **Mr. Dubs** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many representations he has received in response to the consultation paper, "Review of Local Authority Capital Expenditure Controls in England and Wales."

Mrs. Rumbold: I have received around 370 representations.

Water Authorities (Privatisation)

26. **Mr. Lord** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what recent representations he has received about the implications of the privatisation of the water authorities for the protection of the water environment in England and Wales; and if he will make a statement.

73. **Mr. Ron Davies** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received concerning environmental safeguards relating to plans to privatise the water industry.

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what recent representations he has received concerning the environmental consequences of privatising the water industry.

Mr. John Patten: A number of representations have been received in response to our consultation paper "The Water Environment: The Next Steps". The consultation period is not yet finished and I look forward to receiving further comments which will be carefully considered.

28. **Mr. Flannery** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many responses he has received to the White Paper, "Privatisation of the Water Authorities in England and Wales."

Mr. John Patten: My Department has received 305 letters from organisations and others interested following publication of the White Paper.

44. **Mr. Andrew MacKay** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what recent representations he has

received regarding the implications of the proposed privatisation of the water authorities for the consumer and employees in the water industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer which I have today given to the hon. Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery).

The broad principles for consumer consultation were set out in section 4 of the White Paper, "Privatisation of the Water Authorities in England and Wales" (Cmnd. 9734). I propose to publish a paper setting out in more detail the arrangements we propose. Copies of this will be sent to the organisations most closely concerned and will also be available on request from my Department.

59. **Mr. Greenway** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his latest assessment of the timetable for the privatisation of the water authorities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: I would refer my hon. Friend to the answer which my right hon. Friend gave earlier today to my hon. Friends the Members for Hampstead and Highgate (Sir G. Finsburg) and for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims).

66. **Mr. Fatchett** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list all the organisations that have responded to the White Paper, "Privatisation of the Water Authorties in England and Wales."

Mr. John Patten: I refer the hon. Member to the answer which I have today given to the hon. Member for Sheffied, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery). It is for those commenting to make it known if they wish that they have done so, and to make their views public.

Domestic Rates

27. **Mr. Nicholls** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what he expects to be the effect on retired people who are ratepayers of the implementation of the Government's proposals on the reform of the domestic rating system.

Mrs. Rumbold: On average, pensioner households would gain from our proposals. The benefit would be greatest for single pensioners, where 85 per cent. would pay less under a community charge system than under domestic rates.

Local Authorities (Capital Receipts)

29. **Mr. Cohen** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his latest estimate of the total amount of money held by local authorities in capital receipts.

Mrs. Rumbold: I gave the figures for the end of 1984-85, which are the latest available, in response to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, North (Mr. Lawler) on 9 June at column *19*.

Stoke Garden Festival

30. **Mr. Knox** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the progress to date of the Stoke garden festival.

Sir George Young: The National Garden Festival 1986 is being held on the site of the former Shelton steelworks in Stoke-on-Trent. Her Majesty the Queen declared the festival open on 8 May and it closes to the public on 26 October. The site was reclaimed with derelict land grant from my Department. Organisation of the festival is in the hands of a company established for that purpose by my Department, the City of Stoke-on-Trent district council and Staffordshire county council. Capital funding of £12·5 million for the festival has been provided by these bodies, together with £5 million raised as sponsorship from industrial and commercial firms, public and voluntary agencies. Revenue costs are being met by the two local authorities, and the Manpower Services Commission's Community Programme is making a major contribution.

Since the Festival opened, nearly 500,000 visitors have been received, in spite of adverse weather during May and the first half of June. The national garden festival is a tribute to the energy and ingenuity with which north Staffordshire and the midlands generally have responded to the challenge of mounting the United Kingdom's premier visitor attraction for 1986. As the second in the series of national garden festivals which the Government has announced, NGF 86 is well worth a visit, and I commend it to my hon. Friend and all hon. Members.

Nuclear Waste

18. **Mr. Wallace** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what recent representations he has received concerning the disposal of nuclear waste.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend has received a wide range of representations from hon. Members and others recently. Most have concerned NIREX's proposals to investigate potential sites for the disposal of low-level radioactive waste.

Commonwealth Games, Edinburgh

31. **Mr. Canavan** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment, whether he will make an official visit to the Commonwealth Games in Edinburgh.

Mr. Tracey: My right hon. Friend has no plans for this at present. However, I plan to visit the Games for the opening ceremony on 24 July, and thereafter from 28 July to 2 August. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland has the primary responsibility for the Games within the Government.

Homeless Persons

32. **Mr. Raynsford** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations his Department has received in the last 12 months about the plight of homeless households living in bed-and-breakfast accommodation; what steps his Department has taken to alleviate this problem; and what action he now proposes to take to reduce the number of homeless households and to enforce reasonable standards in such accommodation.

Sir George Young: Such representations have focused mainly on the use of bed and breakfast accommodation, standards, length of stay, and provision of educational, health and social services. Action on such matters is largly for the local authorities concerned. My Department has, recently been involved in a number of ways, including improving the manner in which local homelessness is reflected in resource allocations to local authorities,

advising them on the use of their powers. Grant-aiding relevant voluntary bodies and commissioning research into authorities' operation of the legislation. The possibility of further measures to encourage fuller use of other accommodation, reduce reliance on bed and breakfast, and improve standards in houses in multiple occupation is under constant consideration.

Ancient Monuments

33. **Mr. John Mark Taylor** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to seek to alter his legal powers to deter damaging intrusions on to the sites of ancient monuments.

Mr. Tracey: Responsibility for safeguarding most public monuments rests with the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has no plans to alter his powers under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 or under the National Heritage Act 1983. I understand, however, that my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary is discussing with the police and with other interested parties whether any strengthening of the general law is required to deal with problems caused by travelling convoys which sometimes represent a threat to ancient monuments.

Housing Repairs

34. **Mr. Dykes** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will now seek resources to effect long-term repairs to the public and private housing stocks.

Sir George Young: I look forward to a greatly increased involvement by the private sector in solving the present problems of disrepair in public housing. The private sector already has the predominant role in dealing with disrepair in private housing. Levels of public expenditure for 1987-88 will be decided and announced in the usual way.

Local Authority Services

35. **Mr. Franks** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he now expects to introduce legislation based on the Green Paper, "Competition in the Provision of Local Authority Services"; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer given on 21 May 1986 at column 356, by my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, West (Mr. Waldegrave).

Local Government Finance

36. **Mr. Spencer** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received from the Leicestershire county council about his Green Paper, "Paying for Local Government".

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend has received two submissions from Leicestershire county council. I understand that copies were sent to my hon. Friend.

37. **Mr. Tom Clarke** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list all the local authorities and organisations that have responded to the Green Paper, "Paying for Local Government".

53. **Mr. Jack Thompson** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the local authorities and organisations that have responded to the Green Paper, "Paying for Local Government".

70. **Mr. Terry Lewis** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many responses have been received by his Department to the Green Paper, "Paying for Local Government".

77. **Mr. Wainwright** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what recent representations he has received about the Government's proposals for the reform of local government finance.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend and I have received over 400 written responses about our proposals for the reform of local finance from local authorities, other organisations, businesses and the general public. The consultation period continues until 31 October. We will publish a full list of respondents after that.

Housing Policy (Mortgages)

38. **Mr. Freud** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Fulham (Mr. Raynsford) of 10 June, *Official Report*, columns *129-30*, if he plans any further initiatives in housing policy in the light of the upward trend in the number of home-owners who have defaulted on mortgage repayments; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: Housing policy is kept under review in the light of relevant circumstances.

Thames Water Authority

39. **Mr. Wilkinson** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will make a statement on the progress of his plans to privatise the Thames water authority.

Mr. John Patten: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer which my right hon. Friend gave earlier today to my hon. Friends the Members for Hampstead and Highgate (Sir G. Finsberg) and for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims).

Local Authority Land

40. **Mr. Soames** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what are his latest initiatives to persuade local authorities to dispose of their surplus land.

Sir George Young: My right hon. Friend is keeping up the pressure on public bodies, including local authorities, to bring idle land back into use or to dispose of it, by means of regular batches of notices under section 99 of the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980. These give notice of his proposals to direct them under section 98 of the Act to take steps to dispose of particular sites. So far 115 such notices have been issued, and, where appropriate, these are followed by directions.

In addition, we have made it simpler for those seeking sites to consult the land register by reproducing the entries on a computer data base that may be interrogated from terminals in London, Birmingham, and Newcastle upon Tyne.

My right hon. Friend has invited the public to draw to his attention unused and underused sites which they believe are owned by public bodies and should be included

on the land register. He has also invited them to request him to use his powers to direct the disposal of land that is registered.

Since the land register was started, over 17,000 acres of land owned by local authorities have been brought back into use or sold, and altogether 38,000 acres owned by public bodies have been removed from the register.

Sports Sponsorship (Tobacco Companies)

41. **Mr. John Carlisle** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will make a statement on Government policy towards the sponsorship of sporting events by tobacco companies.

Mr. Tracey: The Government welcome and encourage commercial sponsorship of sport. It is also concerned to limit the advertising and promotion of cigarettes because of the health risks associated with smoking. The Government continue to believe that the tobacco companies' activities associated with sports sponsorship should be within the framework of a voluntary agreement with the industry.

The current agreement fell due for reconsideration at the end of last year. I am currently negotiating a new agreement with the industry. In doing so, I shall take account of the revised voluntary agreement on cigarette advertising which the sponsorship agreement supports; the advice which I have received from interested bodies; and the concerns which have been expressed to me by members of the public. The progress of negotiations, by agreement with the industry, is confidential.

Residuary Bodies

42. **Mr. Tony Banks** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions he has held with the chairmen of the residuary bodies concerning the expenditure limits and budgets for these bodies.

Mr. Tracey: Their budgets have been discussed with chairmen of the residuary bodies on various occasions, but the bodies are not subject to rate limitation.

Council Houses (Northern Region)

43. **Mr. Fallon** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many council houses are empty in the northern region; and how many have been empty for more than six months.

Sir George Young: In their housing investment programme returns, local authorities in the northern region reported that 11,456 of their dwellings within their own areas were vacant on 1 April 1985; of these 10,725 belonged to the authorities in the northern housing region and 731 to those in Cumbria. Information is not collected on the numbers vacant more than six months, but 2,248 of the dwellings, of which 38 were in Cumbria, had been vacant for more than a year. In April 1985, Washington new town owned 308 dwellings that were vacant.

Dogs

45. **Mr. Hickmet** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what research his Department has carried out into environmental and other problems caused by dogs with reference to the fouling of footpaths, parks and other open spaces; and whether he has plans to introduce legislation providing for a national dog warden scheme.

Mrs. Rumbold: Health and environmental problems associated with fouling by dogs are well known as a result of academic research and other studies; my Department has undertaken no research into the problems. It is for local authorities to decide, in the light of local circumstances, whether dog wardens should be appointed. I understand that some 200 authorities in Great Britain employ wardens. We have no plans to introduce a national dog warden schemes.

RSG Report 1986-87

46. **Mr. Wareing** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he now expects to publish details of the first supplementary rate support grant report for 1986-87.

Mrs. Rumbold: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) on 21 May at columns *354-55*. As he will know, the Rate Support Grants Bill received its Second Reading in the House on Monday. Otherwise the situation remains as I stated it then.

Council House Sales

47. **Mr. David Atkinson** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has received any representations on the sale of non-sheltered council dwellings for the elderly under the right-to-buy provisions.

Sir George Young: Since the present arrangements for excluding non-sheltered elderly persons' dwellings from the right to buy came into force in August 1984, representations have been received from 20 Members of Parliament, 23 local authorities, the Association of District Councils, the Institute of Housing and the National Housing and Town Planning Council.

Newcastle City Council

48. **Mr. Clelland** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment why he refused to grant Newcastle city council disregards for the years 1983-84, 1984-85 and 1985-86, as requested by the council in a letter to him dated 24 May 1985.

Mrs. Rumbold: In my letter of 23 May 1986 to the hon. Member, I said that the Secretary of State had considered Newcastle city council's representations for disregards before signing the latest supplementary reports for 1983-84, 1984-85 and 1985-86 and explained that the Secretary of State did not consider himself to be under any duty to give reasons for his decisions to refuse disregards.

Inner Cities (Development)

49. **Mrs. Roe** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he is satisfied with the progress of urban development corporations in stimulating development in run down inner city areas; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: Yes. The two urban development corporations have together succeeded in attracting over £1 billion in private sector investment commitments to their areas since their creation in 1981. Details of the achievements of the two corporations are set out on pages 161 and 162 of volume II of "The Government's Expenditure Plans 1986-87 to 1988-89" (Cmnd. 9702-II) and in the annual reports of the bodies themselves.

Local Authority Housing

50. **Mr. Leigh** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he is satisfied with the action of local authorities to reduce the numbers of empty dwellings in their possession.

Sir George Young: No. The number of empty local authority dwellings has increased in recent years and dwellings are empty for too long between tenancies. The Audit Commission estimates that a reduction in the average re-letting period of 2½ weeks — by better management and the streamlining of re-letting procedures — should be readily achieveable and that an additional 20,000 lettings could be made.

51. **Mr. Hardy** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what further action he is taking to assist local authorities to meet the need for new homes and for the improvement of the housing stock.

Sir George Young: My right hon. Friend will be discussing with the local authority associations shortly in the housing consultative council their views about their role in housing and the requirements for future expenditure.

61. **Mr. Sumberg** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps his Department is taking to help improve the management of large public sector housing estates.

Sir George Young: In addition to the assistance provided by the Department through its housing services advisory unit, its research programme and support for housing management education and training. The urban housing renewal unit and the priority estates project consultants are working with local authorities to introduce more effective estate-based management. The provisions in the Housing and Planning Bill will enable the Department to promote the delegation of housing management to a range of locally-based bodies, increased tenant participation and to provide further support for housing management education training and innovation.

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his Department's latest estimate of the shortfall between the demand and the supply of public rented accommodation to meet both general and special needs, which cannot be met by other means; and if he will give this information for England as a whole and for each regional area of his Department.

Sir George Young: My Department does not make any overall estimates of this kind.

Housing Repair Grant

52. **Mr. Tom Cox** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to reduce the minimum age for a property to qualify for a housing repair grant; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: We have no immediate plans to do so, but we are currently considering age limits and other aspects of the grant system in the light of consultation on the home improvement green paper.

Local Authorities (Capital Receipts)

54. **Mr. Baldry** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will now review the percentage of the proceeds from the sale of council houses that local authorities are allowed to spend each year.

Sir George Young: The prescribed proportions are reviewed each year as part of the process of arriving at decisions about public expenditure in the following year. The Government are also currently reviewing the capital control system, and decisions about the prescribed proportions for 1987-88 must await the outcome of that wider review.

Land Registers

55. **Mr. Derek Conway** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many land register directions he has issued in each of the last three years; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: Under section 98 of the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980 directions to dispose of unused and underused publicly owned land entered on the land register have been made as follows:

	Number of directions
1984	4
1985	21

My right hon. Friend has this year given the owners of 56 further sites notice under section 99 of the Act of his proposals to direct them to dispose of those sites. Since the register was established in mid-1981, 38,000 acres of land have been removed, for the most part because they have been sold or brought into use by their owners.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest

56. **Mrs. Shields** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the progress of the Nature Conservancy Council in the notification and renotification of sites of special scientific interest.

Mrs. Rumbold: I am advised by the Nature Conservancy Council that on 31 March 1986, 2,075 SSSIs notified under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 had been renotified under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. A further 844 new sites had been notified under the 1981 Act.

The NCC has substantially completed the renotification of sites in Wales. It expects to achieve substantial completion in England by March 1987 and in Scotland by July 1987.

Urban Housing Renewal Unit

60. **Mr. Michael Brown** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will make a statement on the latest progress made by his urban housing renewal unit.

Sir George Young: The unit has just completed its first year and its progress is described in its first annual report which was published this month. I have arranged for copies to be placed in the Library.

The report records successful collaboration with local authorities on schemes involving 23 rundown council

estates, and I am pleased to announce my right hon. Friend's favourable response to proposals for a further 10 schemes submitted by the local authorities as listed.

I have agreed in principle for additional resources to be made available in 1986-87. The estates which will benefit are as follows:

Authority	*Estate*	*Targeted UHRU HIP resources* £	*Targeted UHRU UP resources* £	*Description*
Hartlepool	St. Abbs walk (104 dwellings	103,000	156,000	Security measures including more effective controls over access to flats and environmental improvements.
North Tyneside	Willington square (24 dwellings)	188,000		Security measures; improvements to dwellings and environment including better heating and insulation.
North Tyneside	Perth gardens-Purley close (64 dwellings	240,000		Conversions and improvement for sale scheme for 32 dwellings; new access and car parking facilities.
Newcastle	North Kenton (72 dwellings)	615,000		Remodelling of estate to produce more conventional family housing with private gardens and defensible space which will help to counter vandalism and improve security.
Hyndburn	Huncoat (502 dwellings)	240,000	76,604	Improvements to dwellings, including heating systems and insulation; Community Refurbishment Scheme to improve estate environment and security; private sector acquisition and improvement of 24 houses.
Rochdale	Kirkholt (2,288 dwellings)	1,000,000		Repairs and improvements to 600 dwellings; including better heating and insulation; a Priority Estates Project; introduction of diversity of tenures involving up to 130 dwellings initially.
Manchester	Miles Platting (4,200)	952,000		Conversion of 318 four-storey maisonettes to two-storey houses; creation of defensible space and private gardens for residents; better heating and insulation and other repairs and improvements.
Bolton	New Bury (1,200)	912,000		External modernisation of 174 houses including some environmental and security works; improvement for sale scheme on 24 flats; disposal of vacant site for new private housing.
Hull	Newtown court (186)	451,000		Security and environmental improvements to estate; modernisation of block of 24 flats including better heating and insulation; a Priority Estates Project.
Newham	Clements avenue (152)	—	250,000	Security and anti-vandal measures; improvements to estates layout and environment.

Mr. Steen asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the annual cost of running the urban housing renewal unit; how many homes were renewed under this scheme in each of the last three years; at what cost; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: The urban housing renewal unit was set up on 19 June 1985. In the financial year 1985-86 the cost of running it — including consultancies — was £362,187. The forecast cost for 1986-87 is £481,000.

In its first 12 months, the unit has concentrated on visiting over 100 local authorities to offer advice and assistance on over 200 specific estates comprising more than 80,000 homes. Nearly 50 authorities have submitted proposals to the unit in respect of some 135 estates. We have now approved package solutions for 33 estates (including 10 which I have announced today) in 23 local authorities, covering some 21,000 homes and involving £18·7 million of expenditure in 1986-87. Many more schemes are at an advanced stage of consideration.

Mr. Gerald Howarth asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will report on the visit by the urban housing renewal unit to Cannock Chase; and if approval has been given for funding for the Rawnsley estate.

Sir George Young: Members from the urban housing renewal unit visited Cannock Chase on 6 December last. They were impressed by the work which the Council was doing, in co-operation with the National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders, to improve the environment on the Rawnsley estate and the steps which the Council were taking to introduce local housing management. The unit also discussed with the council measures to uplift the Springfield estate in Rugeley.

A decision on the council's application for additional housing investment programme resources for works to the Rawnsley estate will be made shortly.

Housing (Liverpool)

57. **Mr. Parry** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to visit Liverpool to meet city council leaders to discuss the housing programme.

Mr. Ridley: I have no immediate plans to visit Liverpool. My hon. Friend the Minister for Housing, Urban Affairs and Construction plans to visit the city on 2 July.

Business Rates

58. **Mr. Hirst** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received in relation to the Government's proposals to reform the business rating system; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend and I continue to receive many representations on this aspect of our proposals, in particular from the business community and local authorities. It is too early to draw any conclusions from the views expressed.

Water (Nitrate Pollution)

62. **Mr. Teddy Taylor** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many reports he has received of

nitrate levels in public water supplies exceeding the statutory limit of 50 mg in the most recent 12-month period for which figures are available; and if there are any indications of the general level of nitrate pollution being reduced.

Mr. John Patten: Reports have been received of 81 public water supplies where nitrate concentrations exceeded 50 mg/litre at some time during 1984. In the last few years there have been some indications of a levelling off in nitrate concentrations in surface waters.

Housing Defects

63. **Mr. Gerald Howarth** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he is satisfied with progress being made in the approval of reinstatement schemes for houses designated under the Housing Defects Act 1984; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: Yes; I am pleased with the recent progress made by the National House Building Council in approving repair methods. Its subsidiary company, PRC Homes Ltd, has just approved one for Orlit houses; this is in addition to the 14 repair systems already approved, covering the Airey, Cornish Unit, Unity and Woolaway types. PRC Homes Ltd has over 40 more repair systems in the pipeline, and I therefore look forward to further approvals, covering more house types, in the near future.

Housing Improvement Grants

64. **Mr. Latham** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he is now in a position to publish a document on the response to the Green Paper on "Housing Improvement Grants".

Sir George Young: No. We are giving further consideration to the proposals in the Green Paper, in the light of consultation and will announce our conclusions in due course.

Defective Housing

65. **Sir John Biggs-Davison** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what increase is to be made in the amount that can be spent on repairs to houses qualifying for grant under the legislation on defective houses; and whether he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: My Department is presently consulting the local authority associations and other interested groups on our proposals for revising the expenditure limit for reinstatement works attracting grant under the housing defects legislation. Our proposals are for a four-tier limit, according to likely difficulty of repair, as follows:

Group A—proposed limit £12,000
Cornish Unit with one-storey PRC elements
Tarran
Gregory

Group B—proposed limit £16,000
Cornish Unit with two-storey PRC elements
Airey
Stent
Unity and Butterley
Dorran
Myton
Newland
Stonecrete

Group C—proposed limit £20,000
Reema
Wates
Woolaway
Boot
Parkinson
Smith
Underdown
Winget

Group D—proposed limit £24,000
Orlit
Dyke
Schindler and Hawksley SGS
Waller
Wessex

Any other types not listed (local designations) would remain at £14,000.

Mr. Stern asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received on his proposals to reduce the eligible cost limit for the repair of Cornish unit 1 houses.

Sir George Young: To date we have received representations from two local authorities concerning the proposed reduction of the housing defects eligible expenditure limit (from £14,000 to £12,000) for the Cornish unit type with one storey PRC elements.

Urban Programme

67. **Mr. Pike** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many representations he has received about allocations made for the current phase of the traditional urban programme.

Sir George Young: About 200, including representations from Members of Parliament.

Housing Stock

68. **Mr. McCrindle** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the condition of the housing stock.

Sir George Young: The 1981 English house condition survey showed that out of 18·1 million dwellings 1·1 million were unfit, 0·9 million lacked basic amenities and 1 million required repairs costing more than £7,000. A more up to date picture will be provided by the 1986 survey which starts this September.

Rate Support Grant

69. **Mr. Dixon** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when the next meeting of the Consultative Council on Local Government Finance will be held to discuss the 1987-88 rate support grant settlement.

Mrs. Rumbold: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) on 19 June 1986 at column *637*.

Green Belt

71. **Mr. Chapman** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received concerning Her Majesty's Government's policy towards the established green belts; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tracey: We receive many such representations. The Government's policy on proposals for development in green belts remains as set out in the Department's circular 14/84.

European Environment Committee

72. **Mr. Colvin** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will consider the appointment of a representative of the Country Landowners Association to the committee which is to co-ordinate the United Kingdom participation in the European environment.

Mrs. Rumbold: Mr. John Norris, president of the Country Landowners' Association, has been appointed to the United Kingdom's national committee for European Year of the Environment.

North West Regional Water Board

74. **Mr. Evans** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if, when he next meets the chairman of the North-West regional water board, he will raise with him the matter of environmental safeguards in the water industry.

Mr. John Patten: My right hon. Friend met the chairman of the North West water authority on 20 June. I shall also be meeting him next week when we will be discussing a wide range of matters, which will certainly include environmental concerns.

Carsington Reservoir

75. **Mr. McLoughlin** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he can now indicate the date on which he expects the final report from Mr. Roy Coxon on the future of Carsington reservoir.

Mr. John Patten: Mr. Coxon has substantially completed his report upon the failure during construction of the reservoir embankment at Carsington. I will inform my hon. Friend as soon as the report is available.

Manor Farm, Swalcliffe

Mr. Baldry asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he anticipates being able to come to a decision on proposals for the Manor Farm outbuildings and tithe barn at Swalcliffe.

Mr. Tracey: There are at present no proposals concerning the Manor Farm outbuildings and tithe barn at Swalcliffe before my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State.

Community Refurbishment

Mr. Steen asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many community refurbishment schemes have received Government support in each of the last three years; at what cost; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: Since 1982-83, 12 community refurbishment schemes (CRS) have been launched on Merseyside and have benefited from funding under my Department's urban programme and from the Manpower Services Commission, totalling together about £16·5 million so far. Expenditure from 1982-83 to 1985-86 is set out in more detail as follows. It is not possible without disproportionate effort to provide details of the MSC's contribution by financial years. The MSC figures represent costs for the completed schemes or projections to the end of 1986.

Department of the Environment urban programme funding

	1982-83 £	*1983-84* £	*1984-85* £	*1985-86* £
1. Stanney Grange Phase I Ellesmere Port	19,794	320,508	203,892	9,677
2. Stanney Grange Phase II Ellesmere Port	—	—	179,120	395,206
3. Stewards Avenue, Halton	18,078	153,044	146,237	—
4. Castle Rise, Halton	—	—	68,006	155,139
5. Northwood, Knowsley	260,700	476,917	13,783	—
6. New Street, St. Helens	12,400	331,447	581,915	388,817
7. Four Acres, St. Helens	—	—	13,266	6,812
8. Marsh Lane, Sefton	287,788	671,387	36,354	—
9. Seaforth, Sefton	—	110,736	623,244	328,400
10. Rivers Street	239,159	661,337	1,205,207	954,016
11. Central Birkenhead				
12. Seacombe				
Total	837,919	2,725,376	3,071,024	2,238,067

Manpower Services Commission community programme funding 1982-86

	£
1. Stanney Grange Phase I Ellesmere Port	468,751
2. Stanney Grange Phase II Ellesmere Port	313,270
3. Stewards Avenue, Halton	407,703
4. Castle Rise, Halton	151,119
5. Northwood, Knowsley	658,653
6. New Street, St. Helens	1,516,330
7. Four Acres, St. Helens	266,688
8. Marsh Lane, Sefton	1,439,304
9. Seaforth, Sefton	*
10. Rivers Street	697,587
11. Central Birkenhead	1,038,500
12. Seacombe	682,646
	7,640,551

*No Manpower Services Commission input.

On 5 August 1985 my right hon. Friend announced that, following the success of CRS on Merseyside, the Government had decided to extend the initiative to provide for pilot schemes in six other conurbations:

London
The West Midlands
The North East
and areas centred on
Leeds/Bradford
Manchester
Sheffield

Since then, as one of the initiatives being pursued by the urban housing renewal unit, my right hon. Friend has given approval in principle to urban programme funding for CRS in Calderdale, Coventry, Gateshead, Bradford, Leeds, Hull, Wigan, Blackburn, and Hyndburn. In the current financial year, the level of urban programme support for these schemes from my Department is likely to be in the region at £1·69 million.

Planning Appeals

Mr. Maclean asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the total administrative cost since 1979 of planning appeals caused by referrals from the Ministry of Defence because local planning authorities have refused planning permission to the Ministry's planning applications.

Mr. Tracey: I regret that the information requested is not readily available.

Conservation (Compensation)

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to seek to amend the legislation governing the conservation of the countryside, with particular reference to compensation payments to landowners, in the light of the recent Lands Tribunal ruling awarding compensation in respect of Iffen Wood against Canterbury district council; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: We have not yet received the transcript of the Lands Tribunal's decision, but will study its implications urgently when it is available.

Furans and Dioxins

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) pursuant to the answer of 29 October 1985, *Official Report*, column *385*, if he will report on the conclusions of the Warren Spring laboratory investigations into the content of dioxins and furans in the flue gases from municipal incinerators;

(2) pursuant to the answer of 21 October 1985, *Official Report*, column *96*, concerning stack emissions, if he will give details of the date of publication of the investigations referred to in the answer.

Mrs. Rumbold: Results so far available from tests carried out by Warren Spring laboratory on flue gas emissions from municipal incinerators show that trace amounts of polychlorinated dioxins and polychlorinated dibenzofurans are produced. The levels are below air quality standards currently in use worldwide. A full report will be published later this year.

Polychlorinated Biphenyl Wastes

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to the answer of 29 October 1985, *Official Report*, column *386*, concerning guidance on polychlorinated biphenyl wastes, when he now expects to publish revised guidance.

Mrs. Rumbold: Work on an extended and updated version of Waste Mangement Paper No. 6 on polychlorinated biphenyl wastes is continuing. Much information is available and proper assessment of it is proving to be a lengthy process. Consultation with interested bodies is also necessary. For these reasons, and because of other commitments, publication of the revised guidance is not now likley before the end of this year.

Pollution

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will take steps to conduct a survey which will establish the background soil levels of polychlorinated biphenyls, polychlorinated terphenyls, PCDs and furans.

Mrs. Rumbold: My Department is currently considering extension of the present programme of analytical work in order to include PCB determinations in the soil samples which are being examined for dioxins and furans by the University of East Anglia. This information would supplement the background data already available from other sources.

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for the Environment pursuant to the answer of 21 October 1985, *Official Report*, column *96*, concerning toxic waste, on what foundation of standards the advice on incineration of polychlorinated biphenyls and other toxic wastes is based.

Mrs. Rumbold: The combustion criteria requirements for the satisfactory destruction of polychlorinated biphenyls are based on work carried out in the United States which originally appeared in "Official Standards Proposal PUB." No. CP-P1-73 and No. TR-PG-73 (section 2, page 8) of the National Electrical Manufacturers Association. They are referred to in the Department of the Environment's waste management paper No. 6 and in the United States Federal Register Vol. 44, No. 106, of 31 May 1979 (PCB Regulations 40 CFR 761.70), and include dwell time 2 secs, temperature 1200°C (±100°C), oxygen excess in stock gas 3 per cent.

As indicated in my answer to the hon. Member for Falkirk, West on 21 October 1985 at column *98* tests on behalf of Her Majesty's Industrial Air Pollution Inspectorate showed very high efficiencies of combustion of PCBs in commercially available plants.

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for the Environment pursuant to the answer of 21 October 1985, *Official Report*, column *97*, if he will list the areas where the three commercial high temperature incinerators are operating and the names of the companies involved.

Mrs. Rumbold: The three commercially available high temperature incinerators licensed for the disposal of polychlorinated biphenyls in the United Kingdom are located as follows:

Ellesmere Port, Cheshire—operated by Cleanaway Ltd for liquid PCB wastes only.

Pontypool, Gwent — ReChem International Ltd. for solid and liquid PCB wastes.

Fawley, Hampshire — ReChem International Ltd. licensed but not currently operated for combustion of PCBs.

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the estimated costs of obtaining the information sought in the hon. Member for Falkirk, West's four questions on polychlorinated biphenyls answered on 21 October, *Official Report*, columns *94-7*.

Mrs. Rumbold: The costs of obtaining the information in response to any four of the hon. Member's questions on polychlorinated biphenyls answered on 21 October 1985 are difficult to estimate with any precision. No individual answer is likely to have cost more than £200.

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to the answer of 21 October 1985, about the background levels of dioxins and furans, *Official Report*, column *96*, if he will state *(a)* the research establishments conducting work in this area and *(b)* the estimated date of its completion.

Mrs. Rumbold: A contract was let by my Department in April 1985, to the University of East Anglia, to refine the analytical procedure for the extraction, separation and subsequent quantitative determination of dioxins and furans in soil; and then to analyse a number of soil samples to establish the range of background levels of these compounds in Great Britain. The contract is due for completion in March 1987.

Publications (Welsh Language)

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those forms, leaflets and pamphlets issued by his Department for use in Wales which are available either in Welsh or in a bilingual Welsh/English format.

Mr. Ridley: I am not aware that my Department currently has any forms, leaflets or pamphlets available in Welsh or in a Welsh/English format.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales has responsibility for exercising in Wales many of the functions which I undertake in England, and for deciding in those cases on the languages in which forms, leaflets and pamphlets are provided.

Lower Leigh (Repairs)

Mr. Steen asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will now list the details of work, and their estimated costs, for repair work at Lower Leigh, Churchstow, Kingsbridge, Devon, between 1975 and 1986; and why the public has not been able to visit Lower Leigh during the period in which the work has been carried out;

(2) what work has been carried out on Lower Leigh, Churchstow, Kingsbridge, Devon since 1975; at what cost; and what is the size of the work force;

(3) what is the proposed use of Lower Leigh, Churchstow, Kingsbridge, Devon, after the repair work is completed in 1990; and on what basis £350,000 of public funds has been made available;

(4) if he will list the repair work which is to be carried out by 1990 at Lower Leigh, Churchstow, Kingsbridge, Devon; and if he will make a statement as to the programme of consolidation referred to in his answer of 17 June, *Official Report*, column *505*;

(5) why it is proposed to take 15 years to carry out the repair work at Lower Leigh, Churchstow, Kingsbridge, Devon; and from whose budget the sum involved is to be taken.

Mr. Tracey: In view of the architectural and historical importance of the buildings at Lower Leigh, my Department acquired them in 1975 and embarked on a major programme of repair and restoration. This was to include the construction of a new roof, the repair or replacement of stonework and timbers and generally to put the buildings into a safe and suitable condition for presentation to the public. The buildings cost £5,000 to acquire. The cost of the new roof was £140,000. Work on the stonework and timber will cost about £145,000, with ancillary and presentation costs amounting to £60,000.

The restoration programme is now the responsibility of the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission. Most of the major structural work is complete, but it still remains for the fine detail of the stonework and timber to be completed.

The programme has proceeded as resources have permitted from within the Commission's budget for the repair and maintenance of ancient monuments. The Commission is using its own specialist labour to carry out the work.

Although the buildings are not formally open to the public, anyone wishing to see the work in progress is allowed access during normal working hours. When the work is completed the buildings will be opened as a public monument.

Rosehill Estate, Willenhall

Mr. Winnick asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) whether he will receive a deputation from the tenants of Rosehill estate, Willenhall, regarding financing in the current financial year of the modernisation by Walsall metropolitan borough council of the estate;

(2) if he will state the percentage of council dwellings on the Rosehill estate, Willenhall, as accepted by his Department as requiring urgent modernisation by the Walsall metropolitan borough council, following the visit by senior officials of his Department to the estate in August 1985; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what has been the latest communication to his Department from Walsall metropolitan borough council regarding the modernisation of the Rosehill estate, Willenhall; and if he will make a statement;

(4) what land and properties on the Rosehill estate, Willenhall, his Department is asking the Walsall metropolitan borough council to sell as part of any scheme for the modernisation of the estate; and what has been the latest response of the authority to such proposals.

Sir George Young: The latest communication from Walsall metropolitan borough council regarding the Rosehill estate, Willenhall was its revised application, dated 23 May, for a further housing investment programme application from the urban housing renewal unit.

As I said in my answer of 9 June at columns *21-2* the Department sets no rigid pre-conditions for schemes to qualify for additional resources from UHRU, although

local authorities are encouraged to introduce improved estate-based management and to take full advantage of any opportunities which may exist for obtaining private sector contributions to their schemes.

The council's proposals involve the modernisation of all 294 dwellings on the estate. Officers from the Department were shown a number of individual dwellings when they visited the estate and they considered that those particular dwellings were in need of some modernisation.

Officials of my Department are still discussing Walsall's revised proposals with the council, and I do not see a need to receive a deputation at this time.

Milton Keynes (Winding-up)

Mr. Boyes asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has had any recent correspondence with the Milton Keynes development corporation regarding a wind-up date; when he expects the development corporation to be officially wound up; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tracey: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given on 24 June to my hon. Friend the Member for Milton Keynes (Mr. Benyon).

Block Grant (Disregards)

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list in the *Official Report* those items for which disregards have been requested for 1985-86 under section 8(4) of the Local Government Finance Act 1982.

Mr. Ridley: I shall answer this question shortly.

Mount Pleasant Airport

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the latest cost figure for Mount Pleasant airport in the Falklands; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: The latest estimated cost of Mount Pleasant airport is £307 million plus £10 million for navigational aids supplied by the MOD. The airport attained full operational status on 1 May 1986 as planned. The Laing-Mowlem-ARC joint venture has performed with tremendous vigour to achieve this target and is to be congratulated.

TRANSPORT

Bridges

Mr. Mudd asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many bridges on trunk roads have weight restrictions; and if any analysis is available for the number of restrictions according to gross vehicle weight.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: A programme of assessing older trunk road bridges to BD21/84 will be required in order to take account of the increase in heavy vehicle traffic over the years and developments in bridge design. This is likely to result in some weight restrictions until any strengthening can be completed. A 32 tonne gross weight restriction applies to the bridge carrying the A10 over the railway at Enfield in North London, but no other trunk road bridge in England has a weight restriction at present. The gross weights of vehicles using roads are limited by construction and use regulations.

British Rail

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the answer of 17 June, if he will list the sector-wide standards set for British Rail with specific reference to train punctuality; what resources his Department devotes to the monitoring of British Rail's performance against these standards; what action he takes when the level of performance falls significantly short of these standards; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: The sector standards referred to are set by the Railways Board and published in the Board's 1985 plan. It is desirable that the Board should achieve the standards and I have recently discussed with them in general terms what action they are taking. But detailed monitoring of performance against the standards and decisions on corrective actions where necessary is a matter for the Board themselves.

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the answer of 17 June, what reasons have been supplied to him by British Rail *(a)* for the standard of performance achieved in relation to the number of class 1 trains arriving on time in the London Midland region and *(b)* for the disparities in the standard of train punctuality between different regions; and what action he has taken in response.

Mr. David Mitchell: This is primarily a management matter for the Railways Board. My right hon. Friend has not sought from the Railways Board explanations or reasons for the punctuality performance referred to by my hon. Friend. But I understand that the Board have now appointed a Performance Management team for the London Midland Region who for the time being are concentrating on improving the punctuality of the West Coast Main Line services. I understand that the results so far are encouraging.

M4 (Accident)

Dr. Glyn asked the Secretary of State for Transport if, in view of the fatal accident involving a van and several cars on the M4 on 23 June he will institute a review of the law governing the hiring of vans for carriage of passengers; if he is satisfied with the strength of motorway crash barriers in these circumstances; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: It would be premature, pending completion of police investigations, to come to conclusions on the causes of the accident or on preventative action for the future. The use of vehicles, whether on hire or otherwise, is already subject to extensive regulation under the Road Traffic Acts. I am generally satisfied with the types of safety fences used on motorways but I shall consider whether the circumstances of this case point to a need for any modifications. As with other aspects of road safety, the Department has a long term programme of research and development designed to yield improvements for the future.

Learner Drivers (Wales)

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will take steps to permit those who wish to display the sign D for dysgwr in place of L for learner in Wales when learning to drive a motor vehicle.

Mr. Michael Spicer: No. The distinguishing mark of the novice driver, "L" is prescribed by the Motor Vehicles (Driving Licences) Regulations 1981.

However, provided that the basic requirements of the regulations are complied with, there is nothing to prevent a learner driver in Wales from displaying the letter "D" as well as the mark "L".

Level Crossing Grant

Mr. Adley asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will state the amount paid by his Department to British Rail under the level crossing grant for each of the last five years.

Mr. David Mitchell: The information requested is as follows:

	£ million
1981	17·4
1982	18·7
1983	18·9
*1984-85	23·0
1985-86	18·5

*15 months to 31 March 1985.

Figures for 1983 and subsequent years are subject to adjustment following audit.

Drivers' Hours and Rest Period Regulations

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Transport what representations his Department has received from the Transport and General Workers Union concerning changes in the Drivers' Hours and Rest Period Regulations; what reply has been sent; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley [*pursuant to his reply*, 24 June 1986]: Since the meeting referred to in the answer given to the right hon. Member for Barnsley, Central (Mr. Mason) on 6 May, I have received a further letter from the union reiterating its concerns about the proposed changes.

In response to a request from the hon. Member for Glasgow, Shettleston (Mr. Marshall) my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has agreed to meet a delegation from the union.

The reply given to other representations is as follows:

Most drivers of goods vehicles above 3·5 tonnes have their driving times and rest periods controlled by the EC Regulations. In addition, within Britain, duty times (total working periods) are controlled by the Transport Act 1968.

On 29 September new EC regulations on drivers' hours and tachographs (3820/85 and 3821/85) will come into force. These regulations were agreed in Brussels last November after two years of negotiations. Although they do not fully meet all our objectives, we believe they will benefit both sides of the road haulage industry. Drivers will get more weekly rest (up from 40 to 50 hours), longer breaks (up from half to three-quarters of an hour), and less driving (down from 92 to 90 hours in a fortnight). New flexibility will permit daily driving and rest periods to be varied, subject to later compensation, to suit operational requirements. This facility will help both operators and drivers, who will have a new right to specify where compensatory rest is taken.

With the introduction of new rules on driving time and rest periods, we have had to re-examine the 1968 Act rules on duty times and "spreadover". The industry already felt strongly that to have two overlapping sets of rules complicated its operational planning; under the new regime it will be largely unnecessary. For example, allowing for a normal daily rest of 11 hours and two 45 minute breaks, a driver will have 11¼ hours available for duty, which is only half an hour more than the existing 1968 Act limit of 11 hours. To retain the existing weekly duty limit of 60 hours would prevent the use of the new EC provision which allows weekly rest to be reduced in one week provided it is compensated within the next three weeks. So we are proposing to abolish all the 1968 Act limits on duty hours in so far as they apply to driving subject to the EC rules. (The limit on daily duty will be retained for driving not subject to the EC rules).

The trade unions consider that our proposals will lead to longer working hours, increased driver fatigue and hence increased accidents. It is true that the flexible work patterns allowed by the new rules may make longer working hours possible for some drivers occasionally, but those whose main work is driving will still be subject to effective limits. There is no clearly established connection between driving hours and fatigue. The House of Lords Select Committee in its thorough scrutiny of the EC regulations was unable to establish a firm link. It recommended that drivers should be given the ability to reach home and relax properly rather than being forced to take makeshift rest in their cabs. Abolition of duty limit will give drivers more freedom to do this.

We believe that our proposals are consistent with our policy of reducing unnecessary burdens on industry while having proper regard to road safety. It will be up to trade unions and employers to negotiate together new patterns of work that would allow both drivers and operators to benefit fully from the increased flexibility now available to them.

Draft statutory instruments implementing the changes have been laid and will be subject to affirmative resolution of both houses.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 26 June 1986

EMPLOYMENT

Labour Statistics

Ms. Richardson asked the Paymaster General (1) what estimate he has of the numbers of *(a)* male and *(b)* female employees in employment in Great Britain who (i) work for firms with less than 20 employees and (ii) have been working for the same employer for between six months and two years;

(2) what is the most recent estimate of the numbers of *(a)* male and *(b)* female employees in employment in Great Britain who work (i) between eight and 11 hours per week and have been working for the same employer for five years' or more, (ii) between 16 and 19 hours per week and have more than two years' service but less than five years' service with the same employer; and what estimate he has of the numbers of female employees in employment in Great Britain aged between 16 and 44 years who (1) work within the hours and service categories defined in (i) and (ii) above and (2) who work for a firm with (A) five or fewer employees and (B) between six and nine employees.

Mr. Lang: The regularly published employees in employment series does not identify (i) number of hours worked per week, (ii) length of service in employment, or (iii) size of firm.

The labour force survey (LFS) provides some relevant information on a different basis. The available information from the preliminary results of the LFS for the spring of 1985 is presented in the following tables.

Table 1
Usual Number of Hours worked per week and length of time in employment

Great Britain Thousands

	Male employees	*Female employees*	
	Aged 16 and over	*Aged 16 and over*	*Aged 16–44*
Usually work 8 but less than 12 hours per week and with same employer for 5 years or more	15	163	61
Usually work 16 but less than 20 hours per week and with same employer for at least 2 but less than 5 years	*	116	79

*Less than 10,000.

Table 2
Number of people at workplace and length of time in employment
Great Britain

Thousands

	Employees	
	Male	*Female*
Working at workplace with less than 25 employees	3,036	3,651
Working for same employer for at least 6 months but less than 2 years	1,804	1,988

The LFS does not separately identify employees of firms of different sizes; or employees at workplaces with fewer than 20, fewer than 10, or fewer than six employees.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Paymaster General if he will publish in the *Official Report* the latest unemployment figures for the Leicester, East, Leicester, South and Leicester, West parliamentary constituencies, together, in each case, with the actual and percentage change over the last 12 months; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: The following information is in the Library. The table shows the numbers of unemployed claimants in the Leicester, East, Leicester, South and Leicester, West parliamentary constituencies on 8 May 1986 and the absolute and percentage change since May 1985. Comparisons over the period and between the constituencies are affected by the change in the timing of compilation of unemployment statistics in March 1986.

	Unemployed claimants	*Decrease since May 1985*	
		Number	*per cent.*
Leicester, East	5,547	221	4
Leicester, South	7,229	328	4
Leicester, West	6,922	362	5

Closures and Redundancies (North-West)

Mr. Pike asked the Paymaster General if he will list the largest 20 closures or redundancies in the north-west region since 1979, giving in each instance *(a)* the total jobs lost, *(b)* the date and *(c)* the company name.

Mr. Lang: Information given to the Department under the redundancy handling provisions of the Employment Protection Act is given in confidence. The publication of details of individual redundancies would require the prior approval of the employer concerned, and this could be done only at disproportionate cost.

Building Workers

Mr. Pike asked the Paymaster General what is his estimate of the number of unemployed building workers in the north-west.

Mr. Lang: The results of the 1984 labour force survey indicate that in the north-west region in the spring of 1984 there about were 28,000 people without jobs and looking for work who had been employed at some time in the last three years with their last job in the construction industry.

Redundancies

Mr. Pike asked the Paymaster General what has been the rate of redundancies per thousand employees in 1979 and each subsequent year in *(a)* the United Kingdom and *(b)* the north-west region.

Mr. Lang: The available information, relating to confirmed redundancies, is given in the following table:

Redundancies confirmed as due to occur per thousand employees in employment†*

Year	Great Britain	North West Region
1979	8	15
1980	22	35
1981	25	37
1982	19	28
1983	16	22
1984	11	16
1985	11	15

* Redundancies confirmed by the Manpower Services Commission as due to occur and are based on following up employers' notifications of redundancies involving ten or more workers under the Employment Protection Act 1975. Figures for 1985 are provisional.

† Late mid-year (June) estimates of employees in employment.

Mr. Pike asked the Paymaster General how many redundancies have occurred in *(a)* manufacturing and *(b)* construction in the north-west region in each year since 1979; and what has been the percentage decline in each category.

Mr. Lang: The available information, relating to confirmed redundancies, is given in the following table:

Redundancies confirmed as due to occur in the North West Region*

Year	Manufacturing industries	Percentage change on previous year	Construction industries	Percentage change on previous year
1979	28,993	—	4,661	—
1980	73,900	+155	8,003	+72
1981	70,700	− 4	8,281	+ 3
1982	50,583	− 28	3,703	−55
1983	37,861	− 25	2,941	−21
1984†	26,067	− 31	3,498	+19
1985	23,235	− 11	2,691	−23

* Redundancies confirmed by the Manpower Services Commission as due to occur and are based on following up employers' notifications of redundancies involving 10 or more workers under the Employment Protection Act 1975. Figures for 1985 are provisional.

† Because of changes in the standard industrial classification the series from 1984 onwards differ slightly in composition from earlier years.

Experience of Unemployment

Mr. Wainwright asked the Paymaster General by what means he seeks to ensure that first-hand experience of being unemployed is promptly and continuously available within area manpower boards and the Manpower Services Commission.

Mr. Trippier: Unemployed people are the main beneficiaries of the Manpower Services Commission's programmes and services, and their views are continuously monitored and researched. The results are made available to area manpower boards and more widely, and taken into account in the design and development of the Commission's programmes and services.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Expenditure

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if, further to his answer of 13 May, *Official Report*, columns *433-4*, he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing how much of the expenditure in each case was contributed by *(a)* central and *(b)* local government.

Mr. Dunn: Such information is not readily available.

Conductive Education

Mr. Hannam asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what recent representations he has received on the possible development of conductive education in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Dunn: In July 1985 I had a meeting with Councillor Les Lawrence of Birmingham city council and Dr. Andrew Sutton concerning Dr. Sutton's proposed research project into conductive education. My right hon. Friend the Paymaster General wrote to me following his visit to the Peto institute in Budapest when he was Minister for Health. In the past 12 months, my right hon. Friend and I have answered 10 parliamentary questions and one has been answered in another place. We have received four letters from hon. Members on behalf of their constituents, and nine letters from members of the public.

Mr. Hannam asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what ministerial or other visits have been made from his Department during the past five years to the Institute for Motor Disorders in Budapest.

Mr. Dunn: No such visits have been made.

Sex Education

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information his Department collects about the type of books and other written material used for the purposes of sex education in schools; what role is played by Her Majesty's inspector in relation to such matters; if any complaint has been received by his Department as to the suitability in this context for children aged 10 years and over of the booklet—"Growing-up—A Guide for Children and Parents", published by the Royal Society of Medicine; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: Individual schools and local education authorities are responsible for ensuring that the teaching materials which they use are educationally sound. Neither this Department nor Her Majesty's inspectorate collect information about the sex education materials used by schools. My right hon. Friend has received one letter about the recently published book "Growing-up — A Guide for Children and Parents". In deciding whether they wish to make use of this or other books, I would expect teachers to bear in mind the need both for sex education to be offered in a manner which pays due regard to moral considerations and which is supportive of family life, and for any materials used to be responsible, sensitive and appropriate to the maturity of the pupils concerned. My right hon. Friend has already announced his intention shortly to publish a draft circular giving guidance on sex education at school.

Bogus Universities

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) what information has been sought from his Department by the Council of Europe about the existence of bogus universities in the United Kingdom;

(2) if he will introduce legislation to outlaw the operation of bogus universities in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Walden: The Government deplore the activities of those offering bogus qualifications for sale. Proposals for legislation to curtail such activities from my right hon. Friend the Member for Daventry (Mr. Prentice) have been studied but there are substantial practical difficulties associated with them, not least in relation to European Community law. The Government therefore see little prospect of introducing early legislation in this area.

The Council of Europe recently sought the Department's comments on its own compilation of unrecognised institutions of higher education in Europe, North America and elsewhere.

Local Authority Expenditure

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will show for each local education authority in England *(a)* the percentage of all pupils in maintained schools in England educated by that local education authority and *(b)* the percentage of expenditure on schools in England incurred by that local education authority.

Mr. Dunn: The information is as follows:

Maintained Nursery, Primary, Secondary and Special Schools*

	No. of Pupils as percentage of England total (January 1985)	*Institutional† Expenditure as percentage of England total (1984-85)*
Barking	0·34	0·37
Barnet	0·56	0·63
Bexley	0·46	0·46
Brent	0·48	0·65
Bromley	0·53	0·56
Croydon	0·61	0·67
Ealing	0·53	0·62
Enfield	0·54	0·56
Haringey	0·38	0·56
Harrow	0·37	0·39
Havering	0·52	0·56
Hillingdon	0·47	0·53
Hounslow	0·44	0·50
Kingston-upon-Thames	0·25	0·26
Merton	0·31	0·32
Newham	0·51	0·67
Redbridge	0·42	0·44
Richmond-upon-Thames	0·22	0·23
Sutton	0·31	0·31
Waltham Forest	0·45	0·59
ILEA	3·96	7·04
Birmingham	2·40	2·32
Coventry	0·71	0·79
Dudley	0·67	0·60
Sandwell	0·73	0·76
Solihull	0·49	0·46
Walsall	0·70	0·70
Wolverhampton	0·62	0·68
Knowsley	0·41	0·46
Liverpool	1·15	‡—
St. Helens	0·46	0·44
Sefton	0·66	0·61
Wirral	0·75	0·71
Bolton	0·64	0·58
Bury	0·38	0·37
Manchester	1·00	1·20
Oldham	0·54	0·51
Rochdale	0·51	0·54
Salford	0·55	0·57
Stockport	0·63	0·66
Tameside	0·51	0·50
Trafford	0·42	0·40
Wigan	0·77	0·78
Barnsley	0·53	0·54
Doncaster	0·71	0·71
Rotherham	0·63	0·60
Sheffield	1·12	1·25
Bradford	1·15	1·15
Calderdale	0·46	0·43
Kirklees	0·92	0·84
Leeds	1·56	1·47
Wakefield	0·73	0·69
Gateshead	0·45	0·46
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	0·56	0·67
North Tyneside	0·44	0·48
South Tyneside	0·36	0·37
Sunderland	0·74	0·70
Avon	1·89	1·90
Bedfordshire	1·18	1·19
Berkshire	1·50	1·47
Buckinghamshire	1·33	1·26
Cambridgeshire	1·33	1·21
Cheshire	2·13	2·02
Cleveland	1·45	1·42
Cornwall	0·94	0·81
Cumbria	1·07	1·02
Derbyshire	2·03	1·95
Devon	1·83	1·64
Dorset	1·11	1·01
Durham	1·38	1·27
East Sussex	1·13	1·05
Essex	3·21	2·97
Gloucestershire	1·06	1·00
Hampshire	3·03	2·77
Hereford and Worcester	1·35	1·25
Hertfordshire	2·17	2·13
Humberside	2·01	2·04
Isle of Wight	0·24	0·23
Kent	3·13	2·76
Lancashire	3·03	2·83
Leicestershire	1·94	1·94
Lincolnshire	1·18	1·07
Norfolk	1·45	1·34
North Yorkshire	1·40	1·34
Northamptonshire	1·30	1·25
Northumberland	0·68	0·66
Nottinghamshire	2·23	2·28
Oxfordshire	1·05	1·07
Salop	0·88	0·85
Somerset	0·88	0·78
Staffordshire	2·32	2·32
Suffolk	1·27	1·20
Surrey	1·77	1·67
Warwickshire	1·05	0·98
West Sussex	1·27	1·12
Wiltshire	1·11	1·02
England	100·00	100.00

* including sixth form colleges.

† Institutional expenditure includes the direct and indirect costs of providing tuition (ie salaries and wages, premises costs and certain supplies and services costs). It does not include the costs of school meals, central administration and inspection costs or debt charges and revenue contributions to capital outlay.

‡ The 1984-85 expenditure by Liverpool is not available.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list for each shire education authority the increase in education spending in percentage terms budgeted for 1986-87 over that budgeted for 1985-86.

Mr. Chris Patten: The information requested is as follows:

Increase percentage in budgeted expenditure between 1985-86 and 1986-87

	Percentage change
Avon	6·8
Bedfordshire	4·9
Berkshire	4·2
Buckinghamshire	8·7
Cambridgeshire	7·4
Cheshire	8·0
Cleveland	6·5
Cornwall	7·6
Cumbria	6·5
Derbyshire	7·1
Devon	7·8
Dorset	10·5
Durham	3·4
East Sussex	7·5
Essex	6·6
Gloucestershire	8·0
Hampshire	8·7
Hereford and Worcester	6·6
Hertfordshire	8·1
Humberside	6·0
Isle of Wight	7·1
Kent	4·7
Lancashire	7·2
Leicestershire	5·9
Lincolnshire	6·6
Norfolk	5·9
Northamptonshire	5·3
Northumberland	8·1
North Yorkshire	8·3
Nottinghamshire	−0·1
Oxfordshire	9·6
Shropshire	8·4
Somerset	11·4
Staffordshire	4·4
Suffolk	4·8
Surrey	8·9
Warwickshire	6·6
West Sussex	6·0
Wiltshire	10·5
Shire Counties England	6·7

These percentages represent the budgeted changes in cash expenditure from last year to this, on the basis of the outturn prices expected for each of the two years.

Grammar Schools

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many grammar schools are provided by education authorities in England and Wales; and where they are located.

Mr. Dunn: I will reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

O and A-level Results

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will initiate an inquiry into the reasons why secondary schoolchildren in England secure, on average, significantly less success in O and A-level examinations by comparison with children in Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what percentage of secondary schoolchildren in England and Wales left school without any O or A-level passes in the most recent year for which figures are available; and what were the comparable totals in each of the previous five years.

Mr. Dunn: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

GCSE

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if it is his policy that all schoolchildren sitting the new GCSE exam will receive a certificate irrespective of performance; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: The GCSE will be open, in principle, to any pupil or student but not all pupils will be successful. Grades will be awarded, and recorded on certificates, only if the candidate's performance meets the standard required for the grade. Candidates who fail to reach the minimum standard required for grade G will be ungraded. The standards required of successful candidates will be no less exacting, grade for grade, than those required in existing O-level and CSE examinations.

Schools (Security)

Mr. Soames asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what plans he has for providing new guidance to local education authorities on the security of school buildings against vandalism, burglary and arson; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: The security of school buildings and their contents is important. My Department has commissioned a research study on this subject. I expect it to lead to the publicaton of practical guidance before the end of 1987. Meanwhile, a discussion document on crime prevention in schools has been issued today by the Department. It describes crime prevention measures now being adopted. It is also designed to stimulate discussion about the cost-effectiveness of current practice. Copies are being sent to local education authorities and interested national bodies in England.

I am arranging for a copy to be placed in the Library.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

EC (Internal Market)

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement concerning the meeting of Ministers of the Council of the European Economic Community held on Monday 23 June relating to the establishment of the internal market.

Mr. Alan Clark: The Council, which I attended, took note of the new Presidency programme, details of which I gave in my reply to the hon. Member for Newham, South on 25 June, *Official Report*, column *178*. Among individual measures discussed, the Council agreed in principle, subject to a United Kingdom parliamentary scrutiny reserve, a proposal for a Council directive on

direct satellite television broadcasting. The Council agreed a resolution on a better seasonal and geographical distribution of tourism, and made progress on directives on spcific training in general medical practice and on the legal protection of topographies of semi-conductor products. It discussed proposals for directives co-ordinating member states' laws relating to commercial agents, on pharmaceutical products and high technology medicinal products, on technical standards for a number of industrial products including self-propelled industrial trucks and household appliances, on rights of residence and on the first stage of the gradual abolition of controls and formalities applicable to member states' nationals when crossing intra-Community borders. The Council also discussed a communication on Community patents and a Council recommendation on fire safety in hotels, and had an initial exchange of views on a Commission proposal relating to public contracts.

EC (Research Council)

Mr. Portillo asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what progress was made at the meeting of the Research Council of European Community Ministers on 10 June; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Pattie: The EC Research Council met in Luxembourg on 10 June. I represented the United Kingdom. Discussion followed on from the 8 April Research Council (Written Answer, column *527*, 18 April) concentrating on the Commission's informal proposal for the Framework for European Community research and development 1987-91. There continued to be general agreement on the need for priority to be given to programmes aimed at promoting European industrial competitiveness. Some member states including the United Kingdom, expressed concern at the high level of finance proposed (10·35 billion ecu (£6·6 billion) over the five-year period) and suggested that the framwork programme should be at most half this size. The same states also stressed the need for more focussed proposals in areas with a genuine Community added value. The Commission's formal proposals will be submitted to Council in mid-July.

The environment and materials programmes were adopted as 'A' points following the closure of the conciliation process with the Europan Parliament.

Steel Workers (Schemes)

Mr. Barron asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what the cost has been for each of the iron and steel European readaptation benefits scheme/employment and income security agreement schemes for each year since their inception in real terms and in comparative terms using 1985 as a base year.

Mr. Peter Morrison [*pursuant to his reply*, 19 June 1986, c. *612*]: The cash costs of the iron and steel readaptation benefits scheme from its inception are as follows:

	Benefits paid to individuals £ thousands	*Administration costs* £ thousands*
1974-75	2,103	57
1975-76	1,689	84
1976-77	2,000	169
1977-78	2,693	157
1978-79	4,969	97
1979-80	18,807	422
1980-81	34,236	2,550
1981-82	105,374	3,447
1982-83	102,569	3,224
1983-84	45,758	1,491
1984-85	30,495	782
1985-86	21,330	n.a.

* Not including DTI costs which are not available.
n.a. = Not available.

ISERBS is funded jointly by the United Kingdom Government and the European Coal and Steel Community. The employment and income security agreement scheme is financed and operated by the British Steel Corporation. It is unable to provide details in the form requested by the hon. Member. I shall write to him with the information which the corporation is able to provide.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

South Africa

Mr. David Young asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his most recent estimate of how many people resident in South Africa have British passports with the right of residence in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Eggar: Precise details are not available. We estimate that there are approximately 300,000 holders of British passports resident in South Africa with right of abode in the United Kingdom. It is estimated that a further 500,000 could be eligible to a British passport and right of abode.

Council of Ministers

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will state the nature of the documents and the part he expects Ministers of Her Majesty's Government to play in their drafting which will convey the future common position of the Council of Ministers of the European Economic Community when conveying their opinions on proposed legislation to the European Assembly.

Mrs. Chalker: The Council's common position will be determined by the member states in accordance with the relevant treaty article as amended by the Single European Act. The common position will be drafted following discussion in the Council. We shall, as now, play our full part in these discussions and in establishing the common position, which will be conveyed to the European Parliament by means of a Presidency communication containing the text of the common position.

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the expected dates, and nature of each meeting he expects to arrange in London, or elsewhere in the United Kingdom, in respect of political co-operation or gymnich meetings, in his capacity as President of the Council of Ministers of the European Economic Community between July and December.

Mrs. Chalker: The President of the Council of Ministers of the EC is not responsible for political co-operation. As Foreign Minister of the country holding the Presidency, my right hon. and learned Friend will hold an informal 'Gymnich' meeting of EC Foreign Ministers on 6-7 September at which political co-operation subjects will be discussed, as well as a European political co-operation ministeral meeting on 10 November. The European Council on 5-6 December is also likely to discuss political co-operation subjects.

Single European Act

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will set out in the *Official Report* the functions, constitutions and responsibilities of each of the bodies listed in title III, paragraph 10, of the Single European Act.

Mrs. Chalker: The bodies listed in paragraph 10 of title III of the Single European Act have the following functions:

The Presidency in European political co-operation is held by the country which holds the Presidency of the Council in the framework of the European Communities. Member States hold the Presidency for a period of six months in alphabetical rotation. The Presidency has overall responsibility for the management of political co-operation: this includes scheduling, convening, organising and chairing meetings. It is also responsible for initiating action, and for co-ordinating and representing the positions of the Twelve.

The Political Committee is composed of the political directors (senior foreign ministry officials) of the Twelve; a representative of the Commission also attends. It was originally set up in 1970 as a result of the "Luxembourg report". Its functions are to give the necessary impetus to political co-operation activities, to maintain continuity, to prepare Ministers' discussions and to oversee the work of specialist working groups. It meets monthly and may meet more frequently if necessary.

The European correspondants are foreign ministry officials who assist the political directors. The correspondants were first appointed as a result of the 1973 Copenhagen report. They provide a contact point through which the Presidency and other member states channel communication between the individual foreign ministries. They meet as a group before and after meetings of the Political Committee; a Commission official also attends. The European correspondants group is responsible, under the direction of the Political Committee, for monitoring the implementation of political co-operation and for studying general organisational problems.

The working groups consists of experts from the Twelve foreign ministries; the Commission also attend. The existence of the groups dates from the 1970 Luxembourg report. They meet at the direction of the Political Committee. They prepare reports and recommendations for that Committee. Over the last 16 years, their work has covered most parts of the world as well as particular subjects such as consular affairs, CSCE or the United Nations.

The participation of Commission officials in these bodies is on the basis that the Commission is "fully associated with the proceedings of political co-operation" (Single European Act, article 30, paragraph 3*(b)*).

The establishment of the European political co-operation secretariat is subject to ratification by all member states of the Single European Act (Cmnd. 9758). Its role will be to assist the Presidency in the ways described in the decision of Foreign Ministers adopted on the occasion of the Single European Act, a text of which was deposited in the Library of the House on 25 April.

WALES

Appointments

Mr. Gwilym Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish in the *Official Report* the names of organisations, bodies and committees, and of the individuals who have been appointed to them by him or jointly with other Ministers.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: I will write to my hon. Friend and place a copy of my letter in the Library.

NHS (Treatment Costs)

Mr. Gwilym Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales what was the average cost for treatment per patient in the National Health Service in Wales in 1984-85 and in each of the health authorities.

Mr. Mark Robinson: To average patient costs in the form requested does not allow for meaningful comparisons to be made. I would however refer my hon. Friend to the publications "Welsh Costings Returns" and "Key Statistical Indicators for NHS Management in Wales", copies of which are available in the Library.

Arts

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales how much money has been allocated to the arts in Wales since 1979-80, in real terms and cash terms at 1985-86 levels.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Government support for the arts in Wales comes from our vote, principally in support of the National Library and the National Museum, and from the Arts Council, which is the primary channel for the support of the performing arts. Resources made available from these sources since 1979-80 have been as follows:

£ million

	Cash terms	*Real terms**
1979-80	11·334	18·264
1980-81	12·687	17·215
1981-82	14·027	17·305
1982-83	15·456	17·821
1983-84	15·892	17·541
1984-85	16·997	18·017
1985-86	18·257	18·257
1986-87†	19·207	18·513

* At 1985-86 prices using the GDP deflator.
† provisional.

Council House Sales

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales what is the total amount of money accrued from council house sales in each Welsh authority from 1979-80 to 1985-86 and for Wales as a whole since 1980-81.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The individual authority data requested is given in the following table. The amount of money accrued for Wales as a whole since 1980-81 is £202·2 million.

Amount of money accrued from council house sales from 1979-80 to 1985-86

	(£,000)
Alyn and Deeside	2,509
Colwyn	3,670
Delyn	3,427
Glyndwr	2,846
Rhuddlan	1,565
Wrexham Maelor	4,992
Carmarthen	6,022
Ceredigion	6,716
Dinefwr	2,104
Llanelli	6,702
Preseli	7,150
South Pembrokeshire	3,866
Blaenau Gwent	4,406
Islwyn	15,633
Monmouth	6,842
Newport	8,853
Torfaen	11,450
Aberconwy	3,973
Arfon	2,983
Dwyfor	1,590
Meirionnydd	2,855
Ynys Mon	3,542
Cynon Valley	2,877
Merthyr Tydfil	5,844
Ogwr	8,888
Rhondda	1,101
Rhymney Valley	8,518
Taff-Ely	6,521
Brecknock	5,150
Montgomeryshire	4,642
Radnor	2,523
Cardiff	14,754
Vale of Glamorgan	8,904
Port Talbot	6,587
Lliw Valley	3,723
Neath	4,060
Swansea	6,872

Rate Support Grant

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales what has been the rate support grant allocation to Wales in each of the last seven years in cash terms and real terms; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The aggregate amount of rate support grants for Wales has been as follows:

£ million

	Cash terms	*1986-87 prices*
1980-81	693·4	976·0
1981-82	745·3	953·9
1982-83	797·8	954·3
1983-84	812·0	929·9
1984-85	811·3	892·2
1985-86	831·2	862·4
1986-87	875·8	875·8

While providing substantial grant in support of rate-borne expenditure, the Government remain determined to bring local authority spending within planned levels, to secure better value for money and to enhance local government accountability.

Refuse Disposal

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales what information he has as to how many people in Wales have been employed in refuse disposal for each of the last seven years.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Information on refuse disposal staff alone is not collected centrally. However, numbers of staff employed by Welsh local authorities on refuse collection and disposal are given in the following table.

Local Authority Staff Employed on Refuse Collection and Disposal (Wales)

	March 1980	*March 1981*	*March 1982*	*March 1983*	*March 1984*	*March 1985*	*March 1986**
Full-time	2,257	2,149	2,060	2,029	1,920	1,896	1,827
Part-time	3	2	5	8	10	11	7
Total number (full-time and part-time)	2,260	2,151	2,065	2,037	1,930	1,907	1,834
Full-time equivalents	2,258	2,150	2,062	2,032	1,924	1,901	1,830

* Provisional.

Beaches

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales what action he will take to ensure that Welsh holiday beaches in *(a)* Gwent, *(b)* South Glamorgan, *(c)* Mid Glamorgan, *(d)* West Glamorgan and *(e)* Clwyd are brought up to internationally recognised levels of cleanliness and safety; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mark Robinson: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the "Government Response to the Committee on Welsh Affairs' Report on Coastal Sewage Pollution in Wales". A copy of which is in the Library, and in particular to paragraphs 2.2, 2.3 and 5.2 to 5.5 of that publication.

Housing Subsidy

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales, what is the amount of housing subsidy under the Housing Act 1980 that each Welsh housing authority is entitled to in 1986-87; and what is the all Wales total.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Based on returns made to the Welsh Office, the amount of main housing subsidy claimed by each housing authority in Wales during the current financial year is as follows:

	£
Aberconwy BC	—
Alyn and Deeside DC	—

	£
Arfon BC	—
Blaenau Gwent BC	1,582,230
Brecknock BC	—
Cardiff CC	—
Carmarthen DC	845,000
Ceredigion DC	690,000
Colwyn BC	—
Cynon Valley BC	—
Delyn BC	—
Dinefwr BC	—
Dwyfor DC	—
Glyndwr DC	—
Islwyn BC	192,930
Llanelli BC	—
Lliw Valley BC	786,870
Meirionnydd DC	—
Merthyr Tydfil BC	269,440
Monmouth DC	400,000
Montgomery DC	—
Neath BC	—
Newport BC	2,400,000
Ogwr BC	—
Port Talbot BC	—
Preseli DC	—
Radnor DC	207,000
Rhondda BC	423,000
Rhuddlan BC	—
Rhymney Valley DC	796,960
South Pembrokeshire DC	—
Swansea CC	—
Taff Ely BC	—
Torfaen BC	1,730,000
Vale of Glamorgan BC	—
Wrexham Maelor BC	—
Ynys Mon BC	—
Development board for rural Wales	1,930,926
Total	12,254,356

Housing Revenue

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the Welsh housing authorities making non-statutory rate fund contributions to their housing revenue account in 1986-87, giving the amounts in each case.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Those local authorities which have budgeted to make non-statutory rate fund contributions to their housing revenue account in 1986-87 are shown in the following table, together with the amounts involved, valued at outturn prices.

	£'000
Alyn and Deeside	54
Wrexham Maelor	81
Carmarthen	150
Dinefwr	3
Islwyn	225
Monmouth	18
Torfaen	160
Arfon	31
Ynys Mon	215
Merthyr Tydfil	220
Rhondda	949
Taff Ely	255
Brecknock	137
Swansea	274

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list all the Welsh housing authorities transferring money from their housing revenue accounts to the general rate fund in 1986-87, giving the amount in each case.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Those local authorities which have budgeted to transfer money from their housing revenue account to the general rate fund in 1986-87 are shown in the following table, together with the amounts involved, valued at outturn prices.

	£'000
Meirionnydd	12
Cynon Valley	37
Ogwr	650

Housing Costs

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales what was the annual maintenance, general management and special management costs per council dwelling in each of the Welsh housing authorities in the latest year for which figures are available; and what were the amounts for Wales as a whole.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Based on returns made by local authorities to the Welsh Office, the information estimated to be as follows:

Average expenditure per council dwelling: 1985-86

£

Authority	*Repair and Maintenance*	*Supervision and management* *General*	*Special*
Aberconwy	381·10	167·56	32·79
Alyn and Deeside	219·62	80·14	52·64
Arfon	341·49	105·36	28·50
Blaenau Gwent	333·64	137·68	20·68
Brecknock	229·29	127·84	0·00
Cardiff	372·15	131·92	63·51
Carmarthen	336·38	88·18	76·25
Ceredigion	300·62	88·55	76·88
Colwyn	245·29	77·57	72·48
Cynon Valley	326·29	73·91	54·68
Delyn	262·61	64·35	201·09
Dinefwr	292·02	99·34	10·66
Dwyfor	273·50	85·62	10·64
Glyndwr	225·55	78·45	41·20
Islwyn	370·26	120·43	70·08
Llanelli	401·50	92·76	46·07
Lliw Valley	280·51	86·47	61·82
Meirionnydd	247·69	148·70	68·63
Merthyr Tydfil	303·68	90·65	44·01
Monmouth	411·38	82·77	133·51
Montgomeryshire	453·98	58·74	17·50
Neath	355·96	52·04	65·71
Newport	261·01	97·48	104·56
Ogwr	324·93	104·04	12·84
Port Talbot	460·06	62·58	31·55
Preseli	315·43	87·57	62·45
Radnor	211·16	185·52	0·00
Rhondda	381·10	129·28	61·27
Rhuddlan	233·49	75·79	71·74
Rhymney Valley	286·30	106·48	41·78
South Pembroke	295·67	77·25	36·25
Swansea	330·75	53·62	52·88
Taff Ely	332·76	84·70	62·33
Torfaen	239·04	84·54	134·88
Vale of Glamorgan	470·47	155·34	37·46
Wrexham Maelor	247·21	59·27	33·55
Ynys Môn	224·04	54·26	40·07
Total Wales	320·17	93·86	57·23

Council Rents

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the average council dwelling rent charged by each Welsh housing authority in 1986-87 and the average for Wales as a whole.

Mr. Mark Robinson: This information is not available centrally.

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the average rent increases by each Welsh housing authority in each year since 1979-80.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Based on returns made by local authorities to the Welsh Office, the information is estimated to be as follows:—

Average Local Authority Housing rent Increase over previous year

	1980--81	*1981--82*	*1982--83*	*1983--84*	*1984--85*	*1985--86*
	£	£	£	£	£	£
Aberconwy	2·07	3·36	2·21	0·68	0·55	2·01
Alyn and Deeside	0·41	3·02	1·91	1·19	0·23	1·29
Arfon	1·36	3·93	1·49	0·33	0·97	1·62
Blaenau Gwent	2·47	4·31	3·76	−0·04	0·86	1·14
Brecknock	0·91	2·42	2·12	1·80	1·35	0·77
Cardiff	1·72	4·04	2·82	0·19	1·94	0·96
Carmarthen	1·71	3·07	2·32	0·85	0·58	0·87
Ceredigion	1·57	3·86	2·07	0·33	0·84	0·57
Colwyn	1·19	3·37	2·13	1·62	−0·16	1·52
Cynon Valley	1·74	2·86	2·37	1·34	1·59	0·81
Delyn	2·25	3·33	2·25	0·84	0·50	−0·03
Dinefwr	1·37	2·45	2·71	0·63	0·81	1·01
Dwyfor	1·15	3·59	1·70	0·88	0·32	0·08
Glyndwr	1·94	3·01	2·42	0·74	0·64	0·79
Islwyn	1·82	2·85	2·18	−0·23	0·90	0·95
Llanelli	1·55	2·88	2·55	1·11	0·20	0·68
Lliw Valley	1·53	3·78	2·50	0·82	1·02	1·06
Meirionnydd	1·69	3·39	2·04	1·47	·83	1·40
Merthyr Tydfil	1·85	3·32	2·91	0·89	1·34	1·25
Monmouth	1·62	2·34	1·24	1·69	−0·17	3·15
Montgomeryshire	1·85	3·98	2·03	0·31	·75	0·90
Neath	1·44	3·23	2·48	0·78	0·66	1·32
Newport	1·15	3·23	2·96	0·68	0·49	1·89
Ogwr	2·19	3·51	3·00	0·26	3·85	0·70
Port Talbot (Afan)	1·64	2·96	2·45	0·22	0·46	2·08
Preseli	1·77	3·26	1·79	0·56	0·14	0·93
Radnor	1·20	2·69	4·40	1·47	1·23	−0·09
Rhondda	3·38	2·07	2·42	1·20	1·35	1·19
Rhuddlan	0·94	3·35	1·48	0·04	0·27	0·50
Rhymney Valley	2·10	3·31	2·82	1·71	0·95	0·64
South Pembroke	2·12	3·23	2·68	0·91	0·22	1·00
Swansea	1·59	3·24	2·51	0·06	1·11	1·27
Taff Ely	1·85	3·11	2·62	0·81	1·10	1·65
Torfaen	2·38	3·20	2·57	1·87	1·45	−0·18
Vale of Glamorgan	1·75	3·50	2·80	−0·55	2·07	−0·28
Wrexham Maelor	1·07	2·97	0·33	−0·02	0·54	1·05
Ynys Mon	1·91	3·30	2·03	0·56	0·75	0·55

The net figure used in the calculation are those of estimated average weekly gross unrebated rents (excluding rates) during each of the relevant financial years.

Radiation

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales whether he is satisfied with the monitoring of radiation undertaken on behalf of his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mark Robinson: There is a well-established programme of monitoring of radiation carried out on behalf of the Welsh Office. Nuclear site operators carry out both discharge and environmental monitoring as part of their authorisation. Her Majesty's radiochemical inspectorate carries out check monitoring of the discharges from these sites and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food undertakes a comprehensive programme of monitoring for radioactivity in the marine and terrestrial environments around nuclear installations. There are also sites in Wales monitored by AERE Harwell and the National Radiological Protection Board under their environmental programmes. All of these programmes are constantly being kept under review.

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales what agencies have conducted radioactive monitoring on behalf of his Department in each year since it assumed responsibility for this function.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Her Majesty's radiochemical inspectorate, the DOE, fisheries radiological inspectorate and the food sciences division, both of MAFF, AERE Harwell, the National Radiological Protection Board, the two CEGB nuclear power stations at Trawsfynydd and Wylfa, and Amersham International, Cardiff, have carried out radioactive monitoring on behalf of the Welsh Office.

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish details of all measurements of

radiation taken on behalf of his Department since 2 May giving details of the materials sampled, the location and timing of each sample, and the results of each monitoring.

Mr. Mark Robinson: All the data that were collected following the Chernobyl accident and up to 16 May have already been made available to the public. Arrangements are being made for a compilation to be published by HMSO and a copy will be placed in the Library of the House.

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales what is the incidence of radiation found in Welsh lamb since the Chernobyl incident; and how frequent and extensive have been monitoring schedules.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The purpose of the intensive testing programme now being undertaken in north Wales is to test the radioactivity levels of lamb still on farms and not yet in the food chain. Altogether, 119 tests were carried out on or before 21 June. A list of the latest results is available in the Library of the House of Commons. Further lists will be published covering the current testing programme.

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he intends to introduce more regular and more rigorous monitoring of radiation levels in Welsh livestock; if he will give further details of compensatory provision for specific Welsh farmers for problems caused by unacceptable radiation levels in Welsh sheep; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: More intensive monitoring of radiation levels in Welsh lamb had already been instituted within the area designated in the Statutory Instrument 1986 No. 1027 laid before Parliament on 20 June. This will continue until I am satisfied that it is safe to stop. The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and I announced on 20 June that if it should prove to be necessary the Government will be prepared to discuss cases of compensation for severe loss in particular circumstances to specific farmers.

Fat Lambs

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many fat lambs were sold at grading centres in mid and north Wales in May and early June of the current year.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: In the period 28 April to 20 June 1986 inclusive, 95,311 fat lambs were certified and sold at liveweight grading centres in Gwynedd, Clwyd and Montgomery.

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish details of the number of fat lambs which qualified for the standard of the European Community sheepmeat regime at each grading centre in Wales in each week of each year from 1982 to 1985.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: This information is not readily available and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Mental Handicap

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales whether his Department uses the term mental health to include mental handicap; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The terms mental illness and mental handicap are applied to separate and distinctive mental conditions. It is not the Department's usual practice to use the term mental health to cover mental handicap.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of Wales if he will publish the definition of mental handicap which is used for the purpose of the all-Wales strategy for mentally handicapped persons; and on the basis of such definition if he will state how many mentally handicapped people live *(a)* in institutional care and *(b)* in the community in Wales.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The all-Wales strategy aims to ensure that the needs of people with a mental handicap are met on an individual basis. Consequently there is no all-embracing definition of mental handicap, but the report of the all-Wales working party on services for mentally handicapped people, upon which the strategy was founded, estimated incidence by reference to the numbers of school children reported to be educationally subnormal. On this basis there were thought to be some 40,000 mildly mentally handicapped people and 10,000 severely handicapped people, with needs for special services concentrated on the latter group. At 31 December 1985, there were about 3,000 people in institutional care. Precise figures are not available for the numbers living in the community but county joint planning teams are currently collating information as part of the process of implementing the strategy in their areas.

Local Enterprise Agencies

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Wales whether he has concluded his review of the central funding arrangements for local enterprise agencies in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: From 1 April 1987, new arrangements will be introduced in Wales for central funding of the core administrative costs of local enterprise agencies. The arrangements will provide for up to £25,000 a year to be made available to individual local enterprise agencies. The level of support for individual LEA's, which will gradually decline over a maximum period of five years, will be dependent on a pound for pound matching contribution from the private sector, and on the submission of an acceptable three year business plan and five-year financial strategy.

The new arrangements will be administered by the Welsh Development Agency and the Development Board of Rural Wales (Mid-Wales Development) which will be acting as the agent of the WDA within its own area. To benefit from these arrangements, an agency will have to be approved by the Welsh Office under the terms of section 48 of the Finance Act 1982. In considering funding, the present level of central support and the presence of other agencies in the locality will also be taken into account.

These new arrangements provide a simpler, clearer and more comprehensible system for channelling support to local enterprise agencies in Wales. This scheme is a key part of the development of a network of local advice and support through partnership between the central agencies, local governmental and the private sector which is essential to the development of a thriving small business sector in Wales. The success of this strategy and the success

of LEA's depends crucially on the commitment of the private sector. I sincerly hope that the private sector will find these new arrangements an improvement on what was there before and will be encouraged to step up their support of local enterprise agencies in Wales.

TRANSPORT

British Rail

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the answer of 17 June, if he will now specify the nature of the information requested from British Rail on a purely ad hoc basis as available.

Mr. David Mitchell: The information has been sought in a wide range of contexts; for example, for briefing and to pursue points raised in ministerial correspondence. Details could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Badgers (Railway Deaths)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he has information regarding the number of badgers electrocuted on railway lines; and what measures are being taken to reduce the number of such deaths.

Mr. David Mitchell: I do not have information for the BR network as a whole. I understand that badgers have been killed on the newly electrified Tonbridge-Hastings line where their runs cross the railway. I am pleased to say that, after consultation with the RSPCA, British Rail have cut gaps in the conductor rail to allow badgers to cross safely. I understand the board will consider similar measures elsewhere where lines are to be electrified if the need arises.

PRIME MINISTER

Westlands plc

Q9. **Mr. Dalyell** asked the Prime Minister if any special arrangements were made by her office for the treatment of correspondence from the Law Officers in relation to the Westlands affair; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Biffen: I have been asked to reply.

I have nothing to add to my right hon. Friend's statement on 23 January and her speech in the debate on 27 January.

Bristol

Q46. **Mr. Hayward** asked the Prime Minister if she intends to pay an official visit to Bristol.

Mr. Biffen: I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend has at present no plans to do so.

Baginton

Q47. **Mr. Pawsey** asked the Prime Minister if she has any plans to pay an official visit to Baginton, near Kenilworth.

Mr. Biffen: I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend has at present no plans to do so.

EC (Agricultural Expenditure)

Q76. **Mr. Teddy Taylor** asked the Prime Minister what reply she has received from the European Economic Community Commission in respect to her representations regarding its failure to submit monthly reports to the Council on trends in agricultural spending; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Biffen: I have been asked to reply.

The Commission has recently forwarded a report on 1986 expenditure to the Council in pursuance of its undertaking in the budget discipline conclusions. We shall seek to ensure that they continue to make reports in accordance with this undertaking.

Scunthorpe

Q113. **Mr. Hickmet** asked the Prime Minister if she will pay an official visit to Scunthorpe.

Mr. Biffen: I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend has at present no plans to do so.

Fish Products (Import Ban)

Q149. **Dr. Godman** asked the Prime Minister if she will make it her policy to ban the imports of fish products from those countries which fail to comply with international conventions on whaling; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Biffen: I have been asked to reply.

No. I do not consider that a ban on the importation of fish and fish products would be an appropriate or effective action in these circumstances. I believe our purpose is better served by continuing to use our influence on the whaling nations through active participation in the International Whaling Commission.

NHS and NCB

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Prime Minister what were the terms of employment of *(a)* Mr. Victor Paige, when chairman of the National Health Service Board of Management and *(b)* Sir Ian MacGregor, chairman of the National Coal Board; and what was the total number of employees (i) of the National Health Service and (ii) the National Coal Board and the total annual turnover in each of these organisations at the time of appointment of each of these chairmen.

The Prime Minister: Mr. Paige was appointed chairman of the National Health Service Management Board with the rank of second permanent secretary on a three-year contract beginning 2 January 1985. The total of whole-time equivalent staff employed in the hospital and community health service in England, including agency, locum, and family practitioner committee staff at March 1985, the nearest date for which figures are available, was 812,500. Annual turnover for the hospital and community health service was £9·3 billion in 1984-85.

Information regarding the emoluments of Sir Ian MacGregor, chairman of the National Coal Board, is set out in the National Coal Board report and accounts 1984-85. 246,835 people were employed by the National Coal Board and their wholly owned subsidiaries at the end of September 1983. Annual turnover for the National Coal Board and its subsidiaries for 1983-84 was £4,660 million.

Housing Benefit and Mortgage Interest Relief

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Prime Minister if she will state the total number of people who are in receipt of

housing benefit or mortgage interest relief; if she will break down the total into *(a)* rent rebate, *(b)* rate rebate, *(c)* rent allowance and *(d)* mortgage interest relief; and if she will also show the total as a percentage of the population this represents in 1979 and 1985.

The Prime Minister: The information is not readily available in the precise form requested. However, separate figures are available for housing benefit and mortgage interest relief as follows:

	*1979-80**		*1985-86**	
	Numbers (millions)	*Percentage of households*	*Numbers (millions)*	*Percentage of households*
Great Britain				
Rent rebate†	2·6	13	3·9	19
Rate rebate	5·4	27	7·3	35
Rent allowance†	0·7	3	1·2	6
United Kingdom				
Mortgage interest relief†	‡5·9	29	8·0	38

* Housing benefit information relating to 1979-80 comprises those receiving help under the former DOE rebate schemes and those receiving similar help through supplementary benefit. Housing benefit figures for 1985-86 are provisional.

† Recipients of rent rebates/allowances and recipients of mortgage interest relief may also receive rate rebates.

‡ Mortgage interest relief figures for 1979-80 exclude those for option mortgages which are not available.

Engagements

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 26 June.

Mr. Greenway asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 26 June.

Mr. Pike asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 26 June.

Mr. Biffen: I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend is attending the European Council in The Hague.

South Africa

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Prime Minister if she will make representations to the Government of South Africa to seek to have the Union flag removed from the flag of South Africa; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: This is a matter for the South African Government.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Prime Minister what representations have been made by Her Majesty's Government to the South African authorities about the number of persons detained under the current emergency powers; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: Acting on behalf of the Twelve, the Netherlands Presidency made representations to the South African Government on 13 June about the imposition of the State of Emergency. The Presidency protested at the indiscriminate arrests of church, community and trades union leaders. We have subsequently made bilateral representations to the South African Government about detentions under the provisions of the state of emergency.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

PCW Syndicate and Alexander Howden

Mr. Arnold asked the Attorney-General what have been the identifiable costs to date of the investigations into the affairs of the Peter Cameron Webb syndicate and Alexander Howden referred to in his answer of 25 November, *Official Report*, column *362*.

The Attorney-General: The members of the fraud investigation group formed for the purpose of this investigation are, with the exception of counsel and the accountants, full-time salaried officers of the police service or the Department of the Director of Public Prosecutions. It is not possible to apportion their salaries between the work devoted to this investigation and their other responsibilities. So far as other costs are concerned, I can only inform the House as to the position of the Director of Public Prosecutions for whom I have ministerial responsibility. The costs incidental to this enquiry borne by his Department are, with the exception of costs incurred by counsel and his staff on travel abroad, absorbed within the overheads of the Department. The costs incurred on travel abroad amount to £6,000. It is the policy of the Director not to divulge the fees paid to counsel or other experts such as accountants in respect of individual cases.

Crown Courts (Welsh Language)

Mr. Wigley asked the Attorney-General what is the number of higher executive officers in administration of Crown courts in south Wales; how many can speak Welsh; and how many have learnt Welsh through opportunities provided by the Lord Chancellor's Department to attend intensive courses learning the Welsh language.

The Attorney-General: There are 13 higher executive officers currently serving in the Crown court centres in south Wales. Of these two speak Welsh. Neither of these learned to do so through opportunities provided by the Lord Chancellor's Department, but several members of Crown court staff did use such opportunities, and have since moved on to other work.

Mr. John Stalker

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Attorney-General what has been the involvement of the Director of Public Prosecutions in events relating to the suspension of the deputy chief constable of Greater Manchester; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: I take the question to refer to the decision by the Greater Manchester police authority to

request the deputy chief constable to take leave of absence. This was a decision for the authority alone and not for the Director. Neither the Director of Public Prosecutions for England and Wales nor the Director of Public Prosecutions for Northern Ireland had any involvement in events leading up to that decision. For completeness, I should add that subsequently the Director of Public Prosecutions (England and Wales) has received a preliminary report concerning Kevin Taylor (whose name has been associated with the Deputy Chief Constable) with a view to him advising as to appropriate lines of inquiry. However, that is a separate matter.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Grammar Schools

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what percentage of secondary schools in Northern Ireland are grammar schools; and what are the comparable figures for 1979, 1970 and 1960, respectively.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information is as follows:

January	*Per cent.*
1985	30
1979	30
1970	30
1960	40

Technology Board

Mr. Spencer asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what progress has been made in establishing a board to advise on technological issues in Northern Ireland.

Dr. Boyson: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has recently appointed Dr. Daniel V. McCaughan to be the first chairman of the newly established Technology Board for Northern Ireland. Appointment of members will proceed during the summer with the intention of holding an introductory meeting of the board in September. Dr. McCaughan is the technical director of Marconi Electronic Devices Ltd. He is a native of Northern Ireland and has excellent experience of high technology industry both in the United Kingdom and United States of America. He has also had previous experience of service on a number of Government advisory bodies.

The Technology Board will report to the Secretary of State on an annual basis and will advise Government Departments in Northern Ireland on the application of science and technology to economic needs and particularly on the contribution technology can make to the growth and development of the manufacturing and service sectors of industry. It will also act as a co-ordinating body on technological issues involving more than one Government Department and will bring together and represent a Northern Ireland view at national level.

Fat Lambs

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish details of the number of fat lambs which qualified for the standards of the European Community sheepmeat regime at each grading centre in Northern Ireland in each week of each year from 1982 to 1985.

Dr. Boyson: The information requested could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Radiation (Monitoring)

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he is satisfied with the monitoring of radiation undertaken on behalf of his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: I am content that monitoring arrangements are satisfactory and enabled us to advise the public of relevant levels of radiation in Northern Ireland after the Chernobyl accident. However, we are reviewing the arrangements to see whether any improvement is necessary.

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what agencies have conducted radioactive monitoring on behalf of his Department in each year since it assumed responsibility for this function.

Mr. Needham: None. However, since October 1985, the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority has included Northern Ireland in a United Kingdom-wide research programme which will provide information on the levels of radioactivity along the Northern Ireland coastline.

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish details of all measurements of radiation taken on behalf of his Department since 2 May giving details of the materials sampled, the location and timing of each sample, and the results of each monitoring.

Mr. Needham: Details of radiation monitoring in Northern Ireland since the Chernobyl incident have been published in departmental press releases. The latest release was issued by the Department of Agriculture on 24 June, copies of which have been laid in the Library. The results of the continued monitoring of agricultural products will be published as they become available. Environmental radiation levels have reduced to normal.

ENERGY

Coal Industry

Mr. Iain Mills asked the Secretary of State for Energy what assessment he has made of the effect the reduced price for coal sold to the Central Electricity Generating Board will have on the volume and rate of investment proposals for new coal mines by the National Coal Board; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: The NCB's new supply deal with the CEGB emphasises the need for the NCB to be able to produce coal more cheaply; new low-cost mines contribute to meeting this aim. Particular projects are in the first instance a matter for the NCB.

Mr. Barron asked the Secretary of State for Energy what discussions he is having with the National Coal Board about introducing legislation to affect trade unions within the industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: I have regular discussions with the chairman on a wide range of issues affecting the coal

industry. As I said in Buxton on 17 June, it is the Government's hope that proper representation for the Union of Democratic Mineworkers in the various coal industry bodies in which it has a legitimate interest can be obtained through negotiation. But, if legislation proves necessary to achieve this, the Government intend to introduce such legislation at an early opportunity.

Saudi Arabia (Oil)

Mr. Rowlands asked the Secretary of State for Energy what his Department's estimate is of the number of barrels of oil delivered to date to Shell and BP as agents of the Government under the arrangements agreed with the Saudi Arabian Government for the sale of aircraft to Saudi Arabia by British Aerospace; what is the estimated value of the oil delivered; and what is the estimated amount of oil and the value to be delivered under those arrangements.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: I refer the hon. Member to the answers given by the Minister of State for Defence Procurement on 17 February 1986 to the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara).

Thermal Energy

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will update to 31 March 1986 the information on thermal energy generated and spent fuel discharged by each of the Central Electricity Generating Board Magnox reactors in 1985-86 given in reply to the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy on 4 July 1985, *Official Report*, column 198.

Mr. Goodlad: The information is as follows:

Station	*Thermal output (Gwh)*	*Fuel discharged (tonnes u)*
Bradwell	7,113	62
Berkeley	4,861	19
Hinkley Point A	14,584	123
Trawsfynydd	11,850	101
Dungeness A	11,093	101
Sizewell	9,138	65
Oldbury	12,036	90
Wylfa	25,012	205

Plutonium

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Energy (1) if he will update to 31 March 1986 the information on the allocation of plutonium produced in the Central Electricity Generating Board and South of Scotland Electricity Board Magnox reactors given in reply to the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy on 23 July 1985, *Official Report*, column *475*;

(2) in what ways the plutonium with plutonium-240 content less than 15 per cent. produced by Hinkley Point A, Sizewell and Oldbury since 1 April 1969 has been disposed of.

Mr. Goodlad: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

CEGB (Net Capability)

Mr. Bruce asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list the declared net capability of the Central Electricity Generating Board which is located within the area of each of the 12 area boards.

Mr. Goodlad: The CEGB advises that the figures are as follows:

Area Board (area)	*Declared net capability (31 May 1986) MWSO*
LEB	345
SEEB	6,023
SEB	4,340
SWEB	2,263
EEC	3,707
EMEB	9,856
MEB	3,354
SWALEB	4,078
MANWEB	6,073
YEB	9,843
NEEB	2,140
NWEB	704
Total	52,726

These figures are the latest available. The total is larger than that given in my answer to the hon. Member on 18 June principally due to additional coal-fired capacity at Drax and AGR capacity at Dungeness coming on stream since 31 March 1985.

Nuclear Power

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Energy what was his Department's expenditure on publicity and promotion of nuclear power for each of the last five years.

Mr. Goodlad: The Government wish to ensure that full and reliable information on the nature and uses of civil nuclear power is readily available to the public.

In this context, the Government make funds available for the UKAEA to prepare and publish a range of information material. Expenditure in the current year, which is the first in which payments are made to the UKAEA as a trading fund, is estimated to be £3·09 million. Figures on a comparable trading fund basis for previous years are not readily available. The UKAEA advises me that the current year's expenditure is broadly consistent with the resources available in the previous five years.

Conservation

Mr. Bruce asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will give the total of spending for the last financial year available funded by his Department or Government agencies on *(a)* domestic energy conservation and *(b)* industrial conservation and energy efficiency.

Mr. David Hunt: Expenditure by Government Departments is not broken down in the way in which the hon. Member suggests, and it would cost a disproportionate amount to do so. However, I estimate that, in the financial year 1984-85, the latest period for which comparable figures are available, total Government expenditure on energy efficiency in the domestic and non-domestic sectors was respectively £50 million and £55 million.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Bail Act 1976

12. **Mr. Galley** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to review the operation of the Bail Act 1976; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: The use of bail is regularly reviewed, and information is published each year in the "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales". If my hon. Friend has any proposals to put forward, I shall be glad to consider them.

Metropolitan Police

13. **Mr. Garrett** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to bring the Metropolitan police under the scrutiny of Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary.

Mr. Hurd: No. There is increasingly close liaison between the inspectorate and the Metropolitan Police force inspectorate, and I am keen that this should develop further. The necessarily direct relationship between me as police authority for the Metropolis and the Commissioner would be weakened if the force were inspected by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary in the same manner as provincial forces.

Birmingham Pub Bombings

14. **Mr. Flannery** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent representations he has received alleging that the men convicted of the Birmingham pub bombings are innocent; and what action he proposes to take on these.

15. **Mr. Skinner** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department why he initiated an inquiry into the cases of the six men convicted of the Birmingham pub bombings.

17. **Mr. Ernie Roberts** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects the inquiry which he ordered into the case of the Birmingham pub bombings to reach a conclusion.

19. **Mr. Madden** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the progress of the inquiry he ordered into the case of the six men convicted of the Birmingham pub bombings.

55. **Mr. Clay** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he as taken, in the light of the current review of the cases of those convicted of the Birmingham pub bombings, regarding the evidence contained in the book "Error of Judgment" by Chris Mullin, a copy of which has been sent to him, alleging that the men who planted the Birmingham pub bombs are in Ireland.

68. **Mr. Parry** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department why the inquiry which he ordered into the case of the six men convicted of the Birmingham pub bombings has so far taken eight months.

69. **Miss Maynard** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what specific areas, besides the forensic evidence, are being examined by the inquiry which he ordered into the case of the six men convicted of the Birmingham pub bombings.

70. **Ms. Clare Short** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he has taken to review the case of the Birmingham pub bombings.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if any progress has been made in determining who inflicted the serious injuries found on the six men convicted of the Birmingham pub bombings, following the acquittal of 14 prison officers in 1976 on charges of inflicting those injuries.

Mr. Hurd: I have been carefully examining the case in the light of material submitted to me following the *World in Action* programme last year. This includes material relating to the forensic evidence and allegations that the six men were assaulted in police custody. In addition, I have recently received a copy of Mr. Mullin's book, in which he claims to have identified four men who took part in the bombings. I have asked the police for a report on this aspect. When I have received and considered that report I shall reach a decision as quickly as possible on whether any of the material provides new evidence of a kind which would justify my referring the case to the Court of Appeal.

Prison Population

16. **Mr. Kilroy-Silk** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what further steps he is taking to reduce the prison population.

Mr. Hurd: We shall press ahead with our programme aimed at reducing crime and encouraging all suitable means of dealing with offenders without resort to custody. Our planned Criminal Justice Bill — discussed in the White Paper and consultative documents we published in March — will carry this programme forward.

Radiation

18. **Mr. Hunter** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to simplify the terms used to describe radiation doses in his Department's publications and circulars relating to civil defence matters; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: There are a number of internationally agreed units in which radiation quantities are expressed which have recently replaced units used in the past. Absorbed dose is now expressed in Grays which have replaced rads. Recent Home Office publications refer to the new system. Older publications will be amended in due course.

More generally I agree that there is a need to simplify information of this kind and I understand that the National Radiological Protection Board is looking at ways in which the presentation of information on radiation might be clarified.

Civil Defence

20. **Mr. Leigh** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he is taking to co-ordinate and harmonise the amount of resources devoted to civil protection in different parts of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Giles Shaw: We are preparing a planned programme for full implementation of the 1983 civil defence regulations, which will set priorities and a

timetable for the achievement of specific objectives. This will provide a framework for the allocation of civil defence resources to encourage a more balanced level of preparedness consistent with our all hazards approach to emergency planning.

59. **Mr. Neil Thorne** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to advise local authorities to revise their emergency plans to extend the area of local evacuation arrangemens in the event of nuclear fallout; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Emergency plans and procedures are being reviewed in the light of the Chernobyl incident.

58. **Mr. Patrick Thompson** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he is yet in a position to issue a report on the civil protection lessons of the impact of the Chernobyl disaster in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Giles Shaw: No, but the Government are considering the implications carefully.

72. **Mr. Gerald Bowden** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent representations he has received regarding the implications of the response to the Chernobyl disaster for the level of civil protection in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Terlezki) on 19 June at column 640.

Police Duties

21. **Mr. Chris Smith** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he proposes to discuss with the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis and chief constables methods of increasing the amount of police time spent *(a)* on foot patrol and *(b)* in the direct investigation of crime.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The Commissioner's strategy report for 1986, which my right hon. Friend has discussed with him, made clear his determination to increase the number of officers on street duty and the amount of police time spent on the investigation of crime, and set out the initiatives which he is pursuing to this end. As to provincial forces, Her Majesty's inspectors of constabulary regularly discuss these matters with chief officers. I expect that the manpower increases which my right hon. Friend announced on 20 May will lead to a steady increase in the number of officers on foot patrol.

Immigration

22. **Mr. Fallon** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the current annual rate of immigration from the Indian sub-continent.

Mr. Waddington: The number of nationals of Bangladesh, India and Pakistan accepted for settlement in the 12 months ending 31 March 1986 was 17,600.

30. **Mr. Bellingham** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will review the operation of the Immigration Act 1971 and the British Nationality Act 1981.

34. **Mr. Colvin** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he is satisfied with the operation of the Immigration Act 1971 and the British Nationality Act 1981.

Mr. Waddington: The operation of the Immigration Act 1971 and the British Nationality Act 1981 is kept under regular review.

The Immigration Act provides the necessary framework for the firm control over immigration which is essential. The Government are, however, committed to legislation making overstaying a continuous offence, and ending the sexually discriminatory features of section 1(5). The British Nationality Act provides a sound and equitable basis for establishing nationality according to a person's links with this country or its Dependent Territories.

The Government believe that to repeal either or both Acts would be irresponsible and very damaging to community relations.

37. **Mr. Marlow** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the effect of the recent changes in parliamentary arrangements on the numbers of stops placed by hon. Members.

Mr. Waddington: The new guidelines which have been in operation for less than two months appear to be working satisfactorily but it is too early to form a final judgment.

43. **Mr. Greg Knight** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received seeking the repeal of the Immigration Acts 1971 and 1981 and the British Nationality Act.

Mr. Waddington: From time to time some people call for the outright repeal of these Acts. No central record is kept of such representations. The Government believe that repeal of the Acts would be irresponsible and very damaging to community relations.

44. **Mr. Evennett** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many persons entered the United Kingdom for permanent settlement from the Indian sub-continent in each of the last five years.

Mr. Waddington: Information on the numbers of nationals of Indian sub-continent countries accepted for settlement in the United Kingdom, is published annually in the Command Paper "Control of Immigration: Statistics: United Kingdom" (Table 18 of the Issue for 1984, Cmnd. 9544). Corresponding figures for 1985 will be published next month and will show a total of 17,510 Indian sub-continent nationals accepted for settlement in the United Kingdom in 1985.

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what change there has been in *(a)* the proportion of visitors from the Indian sub-continent refused leave to enter the United Kingdom and *(b)* the proportion of those refused leave to enter who have been detained and refused temporary admission over the past six months.

Mr. Waddington: Information is not available in the precise form requested as the counts of passengers refused leave to enter or detained do not separately identify those seeking entry to the United Kingdom as visitors. However, the latest information which is available covering a six-month period is given below and relates to citizens of countries of the Indian sub-continent (Bangladesh, India and Pakistan). Those removed in a given month may have sought admission and/or been detained in a previous month.

Citizens of countries of the Indian sub-continent

Number

	1985			1986		
	October	*November*	*December*	*January*	*February*	*March*
Admitted for a limited stay or for settlement	30,400	23,500	25,900	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Detained in overnight accommodation*	679	382	441	274	233	326
Removed after having been refused entry	566	572	550	716	657	642

n.a. = Not yet available.
* including those detained and not subsequently refused.

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what guidance has been given to the immigration service in the past six months in granting leave to enter and allowing temporary admission to the United Kingdom;

(2) what change has been made in the past six months in his policy on granting leave to enter the United Kingdom and allowing temporary admission to visitors from the Indian sub-continent.

Mr. Waddington: There has been no change in the criteria governing the grant of leave to enter or allowing temporary admission, and therefore no new guidance.

Mr. David Young asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his policy not to give any concessions regarding residence in the United Kingdom to people resident in South Africa who do not already have a right of residence; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: Those without the right of abode in the United Kingdom are subject to immigration control in accordance with the Immigration Act 1971. The Government have no plans to change that position in relation to people resident in South Africa.

Magistrates Court, Basildon

23. **Mr. Amess** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent representations he has received for a new magistrates courthouse in Basildon.

Mr. Giles Shaw: None. Essex county council is responsible for providing the new magistrates courthouse, in consultation with the magistrates' courts committee, and we are expecting to hear from it shortly.

Naturalisation

24. **Mr. Terlezki** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how long it now takes to process applications for naturalisation.

Mr. Waddington: Applications for naturalisation completed in March this year had taken an average 15 months to process and for adult registration five months.

Burglaries

25. **Mr. Norman Atkinson** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will state the number of burglaries in 1985 in the Metropolitan police district which were not cleared up.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The estimated number of offences of burglary recorded by the Metropolitan Police in 1985 but not cleared up was 139,000. As an offence may be recorded and cleared up in different years it is not possible to give an exact figure.

Crime Statistics

26. **Mr. Deakins** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the average police expenditure required to clear up each crime in England and Wales *(a)* in 1978 and *(b)* in 1985, expressed in each case in 1985 prices.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The information requested is not available.

28. **Mr. Boyes** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish in the *Official Report* a statement of the number of crimes in 1985 in each police force area in England and Wales expressed as a rate per 100,000 population.

Mr. Mellor: The information requested is given in the following table. It will be published in "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales, 1985" in the autumn.

Notifiable offences recorded by the police per 100,000 population: by police force area, 1985

England and Wales

	Numbers
Avon and Somerset	5,882
Bedfordshire	6,887
Cambridgeshire	5,404
Cheshire	4,822
Cleveland	9,099
Cumbria	5,679
Derbyshire	5,247
Devon and Cornwall	4,794
Dorset	5,573
Durham	7,174
Essex	4,763
Gloucestershire	5,582
Greater Manchester	11,202
Hampshire	5,690
Hertfordshire	4,848
Humberside	8,755
Kent	4,972
Lancashire	5,794
Leicestershire	5,516
Lincolnshire	5,527
Merseyside	10,443
Metropolitan Police*	10,257
Norfolk	5,229
Northamptonshire	6,633
Northumbria	11,186
North Yorkshire	5,126
Nottinghamshire	9,125
South Yorkshire	6,547
Staffordshire	5,156
Suffolk	4,400
Surrey	3,865
Sussex	4,962
Thames Valley	5,847
Warwickshire	4,564
West Mercia	4,902
West Midlands	9,207
West Yorkshire	8,261

England and Wales	Numbers
Wiltshire	5,178
Dyfed-Powys	3,734
Gwent	6,371
North Wales	5,331
South Wales	7,587
England and Wales	7,258

* Including City of London.

31. **Mr. John Fraser** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the increase since 1978 in the number of offences of violence against the person in the Metropolitan police district.

Mr. Mellor: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to a Question by the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore) on 24 April at column 183.

33. **Mr. Allan Roberts** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will state the percentage increase in crimes of violence against the person since 1978 in *(a)* England and Wales, and *(b)* each of the three police force areas in England and Wales which recorded the highest percentage increase.

Mr. Mellor: Numbers of offences of violence against the person recorded in each police force area are published each year in chapter 2 of the command paper "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales", and more recently for 1985 in a Home Office statistical bulletin (Table 6 of Issue number 4/86). Comparisons over time may be affected by variations in the comprehensiveness of recording of offences and changes in police recording practices; and where numbers of recorded offences are small they are more liable to be affected by irregular variation.

54. **Mr. Patchett** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list for each year since 1977 the clear-up rate for all crimes in the Metropolitan police district.

Mr. Mellor: The information requested is published annually in the "Report of the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis" (Table D of Appendix 4i of the report for 1985, Cmnd. 9790).

67. **Mrs. Currie** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the latest detection rates for *(a)* serious crime and *(b)* all reported crime in (i) Derbyshire and, (ii) the United Kingdom as a whole; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: Clear-up rates for England and Wales in 1985 were published by type of offence in table 5 of Home Office Statistical Bulletin 4/86 on 13 March 1986. A comparison with the figures for Derbyshire police force is given in the following table.

Notifiable offences recorded by the police in 1985; clear-up rates Percentages*

Offence group	Derbyshire police force area	England and Wales
Violence against the person	88	73
Sexual offences	91	72
Burglary	39	29
Robbery	54	22
Theft and handling stolen goods	56	35
Fraud and forgery	92	68
Criminal damage†	37	23
Other offences	95	93
All notifiable offences†	55	35

* Offences cleared up in 1985 as a percentage of the total number of offences recoreded in 1985.

† Excluding offences of criminal damage of value £20 or under.

Crime Prevention

27. **Mr. Andrew MacKay** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent representations he has received about the Government's crime prevention policy in the light of the recently published crime figures for Thames Valley relating to the first three months of 1986.

Mr. Giles Shaw: None.

Concessionery Televison Licenses

29. **Mr. Barron** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will consider introducing concessionary television licences for people of retirement age; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Concessionary licences are already available for the occupants of accommodation provided specially for retired persons of pensionable age which satisfies the requirements of the Wireless Telegraphy (Broadcasting Licence Charges and Exemption) Regulations 1984. We have no immediate proposals for further changes to the scheme, but it is clearly bound up with the larger question of the arrangements for financing the BBC through the television licence fee which have been examined by the Peacock committee.

Racially Motivated Incidents

32. **Mr. Fatchett** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects his Department's research and planning unit to conclude its study of the nature and incidence of racially motivated incidents.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The scheduled completion date for a study of the nature and incidence of racially motivated incidents is March 1987. Results will be published as soon as practicable thereafter.

52. **Mr. Sedgemore** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will discuss with the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis the incidence of racial attacks in the Metropolitan police area.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The Commissioner shares our deep concern about the problem of racial attacks; my right hon. Friend has discussed this with him on past occasions and will certainly do so again in the future.

Stop and Search (Crime Pevention)

35. **Mr. Wareing** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether his Department has any system for recording and monitoring the effectiveness of police stops and searches without warrant in the prevention or detection of crime.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Section 5 of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984, which came into effect on 1 January 1986, requires Chief Officers of police to publish annually information on the number of searches for stolen or prohibited articles and on the number of arrests which result. It is also planned to publish information in Home Office statistical bulletins, the first of which will be issued later this year.

Dr. Frank Skuse

36. **Mr. Nellist** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the circumstances of the early retirement from his job at the Home Office laboratories at Chorley of Dr. Frank Skuse, the forensic scientist who gave evidence against the six men convicted of the Birmingham pub bombings.

Mr. Hurd: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to a Question from the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Miss Maynard) on 20 February 1986 at column *307*.

60. **Mr. Cohen** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether any investigation of Dr. Frank Skuse's handling of specific cases preceded his retirement on 31 October 1985; if any has been initiated subsequently; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: A number of Dr. Skuse's cases were reviewed internally at various times before his retirement. Nothing emerged from these reviews which cast doubt on the safety of the convictions in the cases concerned. I am considering the forensic evidence given by Dr. Skuse at the trial of the Birmingham bombers in the context of representations about that case.

Heroin Addiction

38. **Mr. Hickmet** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has made any assessment of how much it costs per day for an average heroin addict to finance his addiction; what estimate he has of the number of such addicts, whether registered or not; and what estimate he has made of the effects of drug addiction upon the incidence of crimes of dishonesty and violence.

Mr. Mellor: The cost of heroin to an addict will vary with the circumstances in each case, but some recent research in the Wirral found that of a sample of heroin users referred in 1984-85 to a particular detoxification unit, the majority were at the time of referral using amounts of heroin daily worth £20-£35. Information on the number of drug addicts notified by medical practitioners to the chief medical officer at the Home Office in 1984 is given in Home Office statistical bulletin 23/85. Some research carried out in two urban areas in England in 1981 suggested that the number of notified addicts was about one fifth the number of opioid addicts in the local population at that time; it is likely, however, that the number of opioid misusers varies greatly according to locality and over time. Home Office statistical bulletin 19/85 gave the results of a study of the convictions for "standard list" offences of persons first notified to the Home Office as narcotic drug addicts in England and Wales in 1979-81. It was estimated that no more than 4 per cent. of notifiable offences recorded by the police were likely to have been committed by regular opioid users.

Police Committees

39. **Mr. Greenway** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received about local authorities establishing police committees; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: We have recently received representations from one hon. Member about the police unit of the London strategic policy unit, and from another hon. Member and several members of the public about the monitoring unit set up by Manchester city council. We have in the past received other representations from a number of hon. Members and the public on this subject.

I deplore the activities of these committees and the so-called monitoring groups. They appear to be more interested in trying to drive a wedge between the community and the police than in improving understanding and co-operation. They have no statutory locus in policing matters either within the Metropolitan police district or in the provinces.

Personal Information (Police Records)

40. **Mr. Andrew F. Bennett** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many individuals in England and Wales not charged with or convicted of any criminal offence are the subject of information in the possession of the police.

Mr. Giles Shaw: This information is not available and could not be compiled except at disproportionate cost.

51. **Mr. Austin Mitchell** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether his Department has made any study of the value in the detection and prevention of crime of random intelligence collected by the police about individuals not charged with or convicted of any criminal offence.

Mr. Giles Shaw: No study in these terms has been made but the Home Office and the Thames Valley police have conducted a joint project to determine whether improved methods of storing and processing criminal intelligence material would increase its contribution to the detection of crime. A report summarising the evaluation of the project was placed in the Library in June 1983.

Drug Misuse and Abuse

41. **Mr. Chapman** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the latest progress of his Department's programme to tackle drug misuse and abuse.

Mr. Mellor: We continue to give a very high priority to our comprehensive strategy for tackling drug misuse, which is co-ordinated by the interdepartmental ministerial group on the misuse of drugs which I chair. Recent developments include the Indian Government's agreement in principle to the posting to that country of two United Kingdom drugs liaison officers; further enforcement successes by Customs and the police; the continued progress of our Drug Trafficking Offences Bill; the launch on 11 June of three new preventive radio advertisements and a new advice and information leaflet for parents; the release on the same day of a further round of independent evaluation results confirming the impact of our anti-heroin advertising campaign; and the further increase to

nearly 180 in the number of local treatment and rehabilitation projects assisted under the DHSS central funding initiative.

Homicide

42. **Mr. McNamara** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will state the proportion of homicide victims for the latest year for which information is available who were *(a)* children under the age of one, *(b)* children aged one to five and *(c)* children aged five to 15 years; and how many in each of the above categories were victims of a homicide by a member of their own family.

Mr. Mellor: The information requested is given in the table below. Statistics on the ages of victims of homicide offences are published annually in "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales" (in Table 4.6 of the volume for 1984 Cmnd. 9621).

Offences currently recorded as homicide by age of victim and relationship of victim to principal suspect*
England and Wales

Number and percentages

Age of Victim	*Percentage of total offence*	*Number of offences*	*of which family relationship*
Less than 1 year	4	20	15
1-4 years	6	34	32
5-15 years	6	32	18
16 and over	85	477	152
All ages	100	563	217

* As at 1st June 1985.

Community Radio

45. **Sir John Farr** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he has taken to ensure fair competition between the proposed new community radio stations and the existing independent radio stations, in so far as the respective levels of franchise fees and degrees of programme control are concerned.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The licensing and regulatory framework envisaged for the two-year experiment in community radio reflects the fact that the coverage areas will in general be much smaller than those of independent local radio stations, and that there are important differences in the nature of the service to be provided and the transmission arrangements. The future financial and regulatory framework for all radio services will be addressed in the Green Paper on radio, referred to in my reply to a Question from my hon. Friend the Member for Leominster (Mr. Temple-Morris) on 8 May at column *206*.

Young Offenders (Weapons)

46. **Mr. Favell** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give the number of offenders under the age of 18 years convicted of offences involving the use of weapons during the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Mellor: The information requested is available only for homicide offences. Twenty persons under 18 were convicted of offences of homicide involving the use of a weapon in England and Wales in 1984. Some additional information on offences involving the use of firearms in 1984, relating to suspects aged under 18, is given in the table; however, these figures relate only to offences cleared up and are known to be incomplete.

Notifiable offences recorded by the police in which a firearm was reported to have been used and for which there was a suspect
England and Wales 1984

Numbers

Age of principal suspect	*Violence not endangering life*	*Violence endangering life*	*Offence Burglary*	*Robbery*	*Criminal damage*	*Sex offences*	*Other*	*Total*
Under 18	36	888	5	55	167	3	—	1,154
18 and over	204	319	29	364	162	9	66	1,153
Total	240	1,207	34	419	329	12	66	2,307

Overseas Visitors

47. **Mr. Janner** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the latest information he has about the percentage of unmarried men and women aged less than 30 years who apply to enter the United Kingdom as visitors and are refused leave to enter.

Mr. Waddington: The information requested is not available.

Obscene Publications Act 1959

48. **Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has any plans to seek to amend the Obscene Publications Act 1959.

Mr. Mellor: We have no present plans to do so.

Sentencing Policy

50. **Mr. Baldry** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent representations he has received from the Parole Board concerning sentencing policy.

Mr. Mellor: In its annual report for 1985, published recently, the Parole Board noted that concern had been expressed by the judiciary about the operation of section 33 of the Criminal Justice Act 1982 which extended eligibility for parole to prisoners serving shorter sentences. We are looking at this aspect of the parole scheme to see whether improvements can be made.

Firemen

53. **Mr. Wainwright** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many firemen, including retained

firemen and senior ranks, are currently employed by local authorities in England; and if he will give corresponding figures for the last five years.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The information is set out in the following table:

Strength at	*Whole-time firemen including senior ranks*	*Retained firemen in 24 hour units*
31 December 1985	33,054	11,772
31 December 1984	32,884	11,821
31 December 1983	32,837	11,845
31 December 1982	32,525	11,699
31 December 1981	32,427	11,553
31 December 1980	32,502	11,443

Identity Cards

56. **Sir John Biggs-Davison** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will reconsider the introduction of identity cards for the population in the light of his discussions with Ministers with similar responsibilities in other countries where identity cards have been found useful to law and order.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The Government have no plans to introduce identity cards.

Police Manpower

57. **Mr. Dixon** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish in the *Official Report* a statement of the number of police officers per 100,000 population in each police force area in England and Wales in 1985.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to a Question from my hon. Friend the Member for Swindon (Mr. Coombs) on 27 February 1986, at columns *655-58*, which set out the ratio of population to police officer for each police force in England and Wales on 31 December 1985.

EC Broadcasting Directive

59. **Mr. Teddy Taylor** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what discussions he has had with the BBC and the IBA about the proposed EEC broadcasting directive; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The Department has had many discussions with the BBC and the IBA on the European Commission's proposals on broadcasting since the Green Paper was published in 1984 and we are in close touch with them on the proposed directive. Both broadcasting organisations share the Government's view that a case for Community legislation in this field has not been made out.

Broadcasting (Peacock Report)

61. **Mr. Willie W. Hamilton** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has yet received the Peacock report on the future financing of broadcasting; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: My right hon. Friend received the report on 3 June and he intends to publish it before the summer recess, at which time he will give the Government's initial response to it.

Griess Test

62. **Mr. Redmond** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if his Department has conducted any experiments relating to the reliability of the Griess test.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The Home Office forensic science service has recently conducted tests to assess the reliability of the Griess test for the detection of nitroglycerine. We are still studying the results.

Women and Children (Crime Victims)

63. **Mr. Clwyd** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will discuss with the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis the police response to women and children who are victims of violent crime.

Mr. Giles Shaw: We are considering with the Metropolitan police the recommendations made in the report by the women's national commission on violence against women, and also the field trials which are being carried out by the Metropolitan police and the London borough of Bexley on the treatment of child victims of sexual assault.

The Metropolitan police are also to issue a booklet, "Positive Steps", containing advice for women on how to avoid attack.

64. **Dr. McDonald** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information is available to his Department on the incidence of crime against children aged under 18 years in England and Wales.

Mr. Mellor: Information is collected on a regular basis from all police forces in England and Wales on the ages of victims of homicide and on the numbers of certain offences recorded which can only be committed against children, such as "gross indecency with a child". Statistics of these are published annually in chapters 2 and 4 of the Command Paper "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales" (Cmnd. 9621 for 1984). Estimates of the incidence in 1984 of recorded offences of personal violence against children under 16, based on a special collection of data from a sample of police forces, were published in Home Office Research Study No. 89. "Personal Violence" (Tables 6, 12 and 15).

Prison Kitchens

65. **Mr. Ashley** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will invite environmental health officers to inspect prison kitchens.

Mr. Mellor: I refer the right hon. Member to the reply given to his Question of 28 April at column *301*.

Trespass

66. **Mr. Heathcoat-Amory** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent discussions he has had with chief constables about problems caused by the mass occupation of private land; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: My right hon. Friend discussed these problems with chief constables when he visited the summer conference of the Association of Chief Police Officers at Torquay on 9-10 June. As he said on 3 June in reply to a

private notice question by my hon. Friend the Member for New Forest (Mr. McNair-Wilson) at columns 733-34, we are discussing with the police and others whether some further strengthening of the law is required and, if so, what form that change should take. We shall announce the outcome of these consultations as soon as possible.

Sussex Police

71. **Mr. Soames** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he next proposes to visit the headquarters of the Sussex police.

Mr. Giles Shaw: My right hon. Friend has no present plans to do so.

Terrorism

73. **Mr. Bill Walker** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment Her Majesty's Government have made of the current level of threats by international terrorist organisations to use nuclear or chemical weapons or materials.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The various forms of attack which international terrorist organisations might employ are kept constantly under review. It would not be in the interests of security to disclose the nature of the assessments made.

Holloway Prison

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the new mother and baby unit built at Holloway prison will come into use.

Mr. Mellor: It is intended to bring the new mother and baby unit at Holloway into use when the wider re-organisation of the establishment which is planned takes effect. The re-organisation will follow the consultations now taking place on the recent staffing review recommendations.

Babies Born in Custody

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many babies have been born to women serving custodial sentences or on remand and how many such babies have died in each of the past 10 years.

Mr. Mellor: The only readily available information relates to cumulative totals at Askham grange, Holloway and Styal since 1 January 1975. This is as follows:

Establishment	*Total live births*	*Total stillbirths*	*Total infant deaths*
Askham Grange	75	2	1*
Holloway	205	0	0
Styal	389	4	0
TOTAL	669	6	1

* Aged 25 days.
Note: Births normally take place in outside hospitals.

Nicholas Webb

Mr. John Fraser asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department why Nicholas Webb was kept in custody for three weeks in May and June at Camberwell magistrates' court when he had been recommended for hopital treatment.

Mr. Mellor: Nicholas Webb appeared at Camberwell green magistrates court on 27 May where he was remanded in custody. A report on his state of mind was requested by the court. He spent one night, 27-28 May, in police custody then was transferred to Brixton where a report was prepared and a further examination by a psychiatrist was recommended. He was further remanded in custody on 3 June. He spent two weeks (2-17 June) in police cells at Camberwell green magistrates court because there were no places available at Brixton prison. He returned to Britxon on 17 June and the psychiatric examination has taken place. Demand for places at Brixton is currently very high because of the repercussions of recent losses of accommodation at Northeye prison.

Crack

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has concerning the use of the cocaine derivative colloquially known as crack; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: The smoking of cocaine in its alkaloid form is thought to be a particularly dangerous means of taking the drug, the effects of which can include more rapidly induced psychological dependence. It is not a common means of cocaine misuse in the United Kingdom, but a close watch is being kept on the situation. Our overall strategy against drug misuse includes a number of measures particularly relevant to cocaine, including the allocation of £1 million in support of programmes aimed at reducing cocaine production and trafficking in South America; deployment by Her Majesty's Customs and Excise of additional investigation staff against cocaine smuggling; and the posting of drugs liaison officers to South America and the Caribbean to improve liaison and intelligence.

Community Service

Mr. Stephen Ross asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what support he is giving to the probation service in its efforts to devise a national scheme whereby, with the assistance of Manpower Services Commission funding, the long-term unemployed can be invited to assist in the supervision and instruction of those undergoing community service under court orders.

Mr. Mellor: I am not aware of any proposals for a national scheme. I understand that the Hampshire probation service has put forward proposals for a scheme on the Isle of Wight, and is consulting the county council about them.

Convictions (Police Disclosure)

Mr. Harris asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department on what grounds he is opposing the request by the Association of District Councils that the police should disclose records of convictions of persons who apply to district councils for licences to drive taxis and private hire cars.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Police records of criminal convictions are treated as confidential and access to them is given only on the grounds of national security, the protection of particularly vulnerable members of society, and the need to ensure complete probity in the administration of the law.

Drug Trafficking Offences Bill

Mr. Stern asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent representations he has received about the proposed time scale for the implementation after enactment of the Drug Trafficking Offences Bill.

Mr. Mellor: None.

Sexual Assaults

Sir Eldon Griffiths asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what advice the Metropolitan police offers to women on how to avoid sexual assaults and how to cope with such offences if they happen; and if he will place in the Library a copy of the Scotland Yard booklet "Positive Steps."

Mr. Giles Shaw: The advice offered is, as my hon. Friend suggests, to be found in the booklet "Positive Steps" published by the Metropolitan Police on 24 June. Copies will be placed in the Library.

Data Protection Act

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer to the hon Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy, *Official Report*, 19 June, if he will specify the practical issues still to be considered in relation to the handling of forms in the Welsh language regarding the Data Protection Act.

Mr. Waddington: I understand from the Data Protection Registrar that the main issues concern the amount of supporting material to the registration forms that needs to be translated into Welsh; and the adaptation of the computer system for recording details of registration applications to enable it to handle standard descriptions and free text entries made in Welsh.

Radioactive Fallout

Mr. Corbett asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the role and duties of fire and civil defence authorities in making provision to monitor the effect of radioactive fallout from nuclear power stations; and what specific responsibilities they have for making information on fallout available to the public.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I would refer the hon. Member to the reply given today to my hon. Friend the member for Harrogate (Mr. Banks).

Mr. Corbett asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will detail the actions taken by each fire and civil defence authority over rises in radioactive fallout following the Chernobyl nuclear disaster; and what steps were taken in each case to inform local authorities and the public in their areas of such actions.

Mr. Giles Shaw: There is no central record of actions taken by individual fire and civil defence authorities following the accident at Chernobyl, but their emergency planning units will have been a natural focus for local inquiries. The Government's review of emergency arrangements in the light of Chernobyl will include the role of local authorities.

Industrial Disputes (Police Horses)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has regarding injuries to police horses sustained in connection with policing industrial disputes.

Mr. Giles Shaw: This information is not collected centrally.

Mr. John Stalker

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Greater Manchester on the circumstances leading to the suspension of the deputy chief constable of Greater Manchester; and if he will make a statement on the substance of the report.

Mr. Giles Shaw: No. This is being dealt with in accordance with the statutory procedures on police complaints and discipline.

Public Order

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proportion of total Metropolitan police expenditure is spent on public order equipment and training for public order duties.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I shall reply as soon as possible.

Laura Evans (Member's Correspondence)

Mr. Douglas Hogg asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he intends to reply to the latest letter from the hon. Member for Grantham regarding Laura Evans.

Mr. Waddington: My hon. Friend wrote to me about this case on 20 May and again on 11 June. I expect to reply shortly.

Prisoners (Recall)

Mrs. Shields asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners released on licence from life sentences have been recalled to prison in each of the last five years; and what were the grounds of recall in each case.

Mr. Mellor: During the period 1981-85, 111 life licensees had their life licences revoked. Of these, 48 had committed a further offence and 21 were in breach of the conditions of their licence. The remaining 42 were recalled because they were regarded as a possible danger to the public. Further details are given in the following table.

Life licences revoked 1981-85
(England and Wales)

Reason for Revocation	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*Total*
Further offence	*7	9	6	*17	9	48
Breach of licence conditions	4	1	4	5	7	21
Possible danger to the public	12	3	3	9	15	42
Total	22	13	13	30	31	*111

* Includes one case where the life licence was revoked by a Court on conviction of a further offence.

Sports Grounds (Safety)

Mr. Watts asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the outcome of the review on the Fire Precautions Act 1971 and the proposals for implementing the recommendations of the final report of the Popplewell inquiry into crowd safety and control at sports grounds will be published.

Mr. Hurd: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland and I have today published a consultative document "Fire Safety and Safety at Sports Venues." This contains proposals for changes both to the Fire Precautions Act 1971, as a result of an earlier consultative document, and to the provisions for safety in sports venues. The latter proposals give effect to the objectives of the recommendations on crowd safety at sport venues made in the Popplewell inquiry's final report published in January this year, which will supplement the measures taken immediately and those which are to be taken under existing legislation.

The Government attach great importance to maintaining adequate safety standards. We intend to bring forward legislative proposals on the lines set out in this document at the earliest opportunity. The consultative document is being sent to local and fire authorities and to other interested organisations and individuals, and copies have also been placed in the Library.

Further copies can be obtained on request by writing to the Home Office Fire and Emergency Planning Department, room 916, Home Office, 50 Queen Anne's Gate, London SW1H 9AT.

Drug Offences

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will give a breakdown of the number of people arrested for drug related offences in the London borough of Newham for each of the past five years, by age and sex;

(2) if he will list the number of people arrested for drug related offences in the London borough of Newham, by type of drug, for each of the last five years;

(3) if he will state the total number of people arrested for drug related offences in the London borough of Newham in each of the past five years, with the number of convictions obtained.

Mr. Mellor [*pursuant to the reply*, 19 June 1986, c. *511*]: The information which is available and which can be provided without incurring disproportionate cost is given in the table:

LONDON BOROUGH OF NEWHAM

Arrests(*) for drugs offences(†)

Sex and year	Number and age of person arrested						
	10-16	*17-20*	*21-24*	*25-29*	*30 and over*	*Unknown*	*Total*
Males							
1983	11	108	96	47	57	6	325
1984	20	65	61	43	40	5	234
1985	21	55	45	26	37	2	186
Females							
1983	—	8	3	6	1	—	18
1984	1	4	3	6	4	—	18
1985	—	4	1	2	5	—	12
Total							
1983	11	116	99	53	58	6	343
1984	21	69	64	49	44	5	252
1985	21	59	46	28	42	2	198

* Persons arrested and proceeded against by means of a charge, caution or some other way. Arrests followed by no further action are excluded.
† The majority of these offences are of possession but trafficking offences are also included.

LONDON BOROUGH OF NEWHAM

Arrests (*) for drugs offences (†)

Type of drug	Number of persons		
	1983	*1984*	*1985*
Cannabis	324	231	179
Amphetamines	9	12	16
Heroin	4	3	1
Methadone	1	—	—
Cocaine	1	2	1
LSD	—	2	—
Other controlled drugs	3	—	—
More than one controlled drug	1	2	1
Total	343	252	198

* Persons arrested and proceeded against by means of a charge, caution or some other way. Arrests followed by no further action are excluded.
† The majority of these offences are of possession but trafficking offences are also included.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Exceptional Hardship Exemption

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if, pursuant to his answer on 28 January, *Official Report*, column *783*, he will now place a copy of the guidance document on the exceptional hardship exemption in the Library.

Mr. Newton: Guidance to local office staff about references to headquarters under this provision is contained in circular S13/85, a copy of which is in the Library. For the reasons explained in my reply to the hon. Member on 12 February at columns *488-89*, written guidance is not appropriate to the exercise of the power itself.

Mentally Ill People

Mr. Irving asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many mentally ill patients have been in hospital for more than one, three and five years within each regional health authority.

Mr. Whitney: Information is not collected centrally in the precise form requested. Estimated numbers for 1984 of resident patients by duration of stay are contained in table A6 of booklet 3, "Mental illness hospitals and units in England: Resident patients", in the DHSS series "Mental Health Statistics for England 1984", a copy of which is in the Library.

Mr. Irving asked the Secretary of State for Social Services which regional health authorities have provided bridging funds to assist the build-up of services for the mentally ill outside hospital; and how much has been allocated by each authority for this purpose in each year since 1978.

Mr. Whitney: This is a matter for regional health authorities, and comprehensive information is not held centrally.

Mr. Irving asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what were the results of his consideration of a revision of DHSS circular 19/74 to local authorities clarifying their responsibilities regarding mental illness.

Mr. Whitney: Our consideration of the need to clarify the guidance given to local authorities on their responsibilities in this area is not yet complete.

Mr. Irving asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what were the results of the discussions with interested parties regarding the initiation of a public information campaign on community care for the mentally ill.

Mr. Whitney: Our discussions have centred on the needs of mentally handicapped people. A grant has been made towards the campaign for mentally hadicapped people's programme of work to promote the acceptance of more mentally handicapped people in the community. We are also considering what additional help we can give the Royal Society for Mentally Handicapped Children and Adults (MENCAP) towards its work in this field.

In addition, some health authorities have produced their own video-tapes and other audio-visual material to promote understanding of care in the community of mentally ill and mentally handicapped people. Some of this is being used by other authorities. The Mental Health Film Council, which is grant-aided by this Department, provides information on such material.

Mr. Irving asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects that his Department's guidance on hospital accommodation for mentally ill people will be issued.

Mr. Whitney: The preparation of the guidance contained in Health building note, No. 35 — "Accommodation for people with mental illness" is well in-hand and it is intended that it will be published early next year following the final stage of consultation with the National Health Service.

Mr. Irving asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps he is taking to ensure that mentally ill patients will not be discharged from hospital unless appropriate services are available to them in the outside community.

Mr. Whitney: Our policies recognise the continuing importance of long-stay in-patient facilities for certain mental illness patients, so discharge into the community is considered only when it is in the best interests of the individual patient. It is primarily for those responsible for clinical care to determine when such a patient is ready to leave hospital, but we expect clinicians to satisfy themselves beforehand that there are appropriate support facilities for the patient outside the hospital.

Mortgage Interest

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has on assistance with mortgage interest payments provided for persons on supplementary benefit, or the equivalent, in EEC and Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries.

Mr. Major: We have no detailed comprehensive information about the assistance with mortgage interest payments given to persons receiving social assistance in all European Community and Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries. From the information we do have we understand the following countries provide some direct cash assistance with housing costs to home buyers (and tenants) subject to specified conditions:

Australia
France
Germany
Ireland
New Zealand

and the following countries provide help for tenants only:

Denmark
Netherlands
Sweden.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Hargreaves asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the total amount of resources committed by his Department to Hyndburn in the form of a housing benefit for the years 1984-85 and 1985-86.

Mr. Major: Subsidy payments to Hyndburn borough council for benefits granted under the housing benefits scheme amounted to about £3,890,000 in 1984-85 and £4,360,000 in 1985-86. The figures for 1985-86 is based on the council's estimated expenditure and is subject to revision.

Aspirin (Children)

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many papers were sent to the Committee on Safety of Medicines by the Aspirin Foundation and the Proprietary Association of Great Britain in relation to Reye's syndrome; what comments were made on the possible causal link between aspirin and Reye's syndrome; what evidence was provided relating to the alleged causal link; what specific proposals for stopping the use of aspirin by children were made, if any age was recommended below which aspirin should not be given; and if he will place a copy of the papers in the Library.

Mr. Hayhoe: The material given to the Committee on Safety of Medicines by the Aspirin Foundation and the Proprietary Association of Great Britain was provided in confidence. The recommendations of the CSM and the basis on which it reached its view were described in my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Salisbury (Mr. Key) on 10 June at columns *145-46*.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will place in the Library the preliminary communication sent to the Committee on Safety of Medicines by the authors of the report of the British Reye's syndrome surveillance scheme; and when he expects to receive the final report.

Mr. Hayhoe: The provisional findings of the British Reye's syndrome surveillance scheme risk factor study were sent to the Committee on Safety of Medicines in confidence. I understand that the report with the substantive findings will be available later this year and I will arrange for a copy to be put in the Library. Summary reports of the surveillance scheme have been published in the *British Medical Journal* of 18 February 1984 and 3 August 1985.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to the reply to the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South, *Official Report*, 13 June, columns *366-7*, in what ways the Committee on Safety of Medicines kept under review the possibility of a link between Reye's syndrome and aspirin between 1982 and 1985; how the responsibility was shared between officials and members; if any initiatives were taken by the committee to seek further evidence or to examine that already available or becoming available; and if the issue was discussed at meetings of the Committee other than those in 1982, April 1985 and March 1986.

Mr. Hayhoe: The Committee on Safety of Medicines, supported by its professional and administrative secretariat, maintained a continuous surveillance of world scientific literature for any new evidence relevant to the question of whether there is a causal link between aspirin and Reye's syndrome. The CSM also kept in touch with other regulatory authorities including the United States Food and Drugs Administration.

In the United Kingdom, the CSM has studied the work of the national childhood encephalopathy study, and has carefully followed the results flowing from the surveillance scheme set up jointly by the British Paediatric Association and the Communicable Disease Surveillance Centres. It has kept in close touch with professional opinion and in particular has sought the views of the British Paediatric Association. A careful watch has been kept on yellow card reports sent to the CSM by medical practitioners.

In addition to the meetings in 1982, April 1985 and March 1986, the CSM discussed the issue in April and May this year.

Birth Registration (Welsh Language)

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many children there are in Wales whose birth has not been registered because their parents have not been allowed to register the birth through the Welsh language, and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: The state does not refuse to allow registration to be made through the Welsh language. Regulations made under the Welsh Language Act provide for a birth in Wales to be registered in Welsh as well as English where the required particulars are given to the registration officer in both languages and the registration officer can understand and write Welsh.

Single Payments

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for Social Services *(a)* how many single payments have been made under regulation 28 of the Supplementary Benefit (Single Payments) Regulations for each year since November 1981 to the following categories of claimants: (i) pensioners, (ii) unemployed, (iii) sick and disabled, (iv) single parents and (v) others, *(b)* the cost by year and on average for each category, *(c)* how many of these payments have been made to the long-term unemployed, *(d)* how much the Government expect to save by their abolitions and *(e)* what is the margin of error which should be taken into account in the figures.

Mr. Nellist asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will state *(a)* how many single payments have been made under regulation 28 of the Supplementary Benefit (Single Payments) Regulations for each year since November 1981 to the following categories of claimants: (i) pensioners, (ii) unemployed, (iii) sick and disabled, (iv) single parents and (v) others, *(b)* what was the cost, by year and on average for each category, *(c)* how many of these payments have been made to the long-term unemployed, *(d)* how much Her Majesty's Government expect to save by the abolition and *(e)* what is the margin of error in the figures.

Mr. Major: I shall let the hon. Members have a reply as soon as possible.

Local Offices (Staffing)

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the present level of staffing of his Department's offices in Liverpool; and what was the comparable figure for May 1979.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the precise form requested. The approved complement for May 1979 and the proposed staff allocation for 1 July 1986 in respect of Liverpool offices are set out in the table. Over the period significant changes have occurred in the composition of the offices, the areas served have in some cases changed and there have also been significant changes in social security work loads. Most importantly the statutory sick pay scheme and the introduction of housing benefit has reduced manpower requirements.

	Complement May 1979	*Staff allocation 1 July 1986*
Belle Vale ILO	134	118
Bootle ILO	*204	†155
Brookfield ILO	147	164
City ILO	159	‡116
Crosby ILO	105	111
Edgehill ILO	123	98
Garston ILO	127	*98
Huyton ILO	161	168
Kirkby ILO	135	†182
Norris Green AO	57	68
Toxteth ILO	*124	*166
West Derby AO	66	79
West Derby NIO	81	47

* In 1979 the Area Office and National Insurance Office had not been integrated. The combined complement of both offices is given.

† In January 1983 30 posts were transferred to Kirkby ILO because of a boundary change. In 1983-84 two posts were transferred to Kirkby ILO following re-location of work in respect of Walton prison.

‡ In 1984-85 nine posts were removed from the office following transfer of social security appeal tribunal work to the office of the President of the Tribunal.

In January 1982 18 posts, and in April 1983 two posts, were transferred to Toxteth ILO following boundary changes.

* In April 1983 12 posts were transferred to Toxteth ILO following boundary changes.

Abbreviations: ILO—Integrated Local Office; AO—Area Office (dealing with supplementary benefit only); NIO—National Insurance Office.

Salford Health Authority (Funds)

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what guidance he has given to the North-West regional health authority as to the proportion of additional funds made available which should be given to the Salford health authority in view of its local and regional responsibilities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: None. Regional health authorities are expected to follow the national policy of improving equity of access to services in allocating resources to their districts, but are free within this to recognise local needs and circumstances. Regions' funding strategies are considered during the Department's assessment and approval of their strategic plans, and progress is monitored through their annual short term programmes.

The recent addition to health authority cash limits following the pay awards to review body staff groups is intended to ensure that, taking account also of the benefits from lower general inflation, health authorities are able to meet the costs of these awards without adverse effects on services to patients. It is for the North-Western regional health authority to decide how its £4·4 million additional funding should be distributed among its districts.

Hospitals (Infections)

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what the cross-infection rate in hospitals is at the latest date for which the information is available; and what it was in each of the previous 10 years.

Mr. Whitney: This information is not available. The 1981 Public Health Laboratory Service prevalence study of hospital acquired infection indicated that some 19·1 per cent. of patients surveyed in hospital were infected. About half of these infections had been acquired before entry to hospital.

NHS (Private Contractors)

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many health authorities have so far *(a)* given a warning to, or *(b)* dismissed private contractors in the Health Service, on grounds of unacceptable performance in the handling of (i) cleaning services, (ii) laundry services, and (iii) catering services.

Mr. Whitney: I regret the information requested at *(a)* is not held centrally.

We are aware of one contractor which has been dismissed on the grounds of unacceptable performance in the provision of cleaning services. We are not aware of any cases of dismissal of contractors engaged in laundry or catering services.

Hospital Beds

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many beds have been withdrawn from the National Health Service in each year since 1979; and what is the total as a proportion of the number of beds in the National Health Service in 1979.

Mr. Whitney: The available information is given in the table. Over the period the number of in-patient cases treated increased by 14·4 per cent. from 5·4 million to 6·2 million. Figures for 1985 are not yet available.

Average daily number of available beds, NHS hospitals England
Thousands of beds

Year	All specialties	Change from previous year	
		Number	Percentage
1979	361·7	—	—
1980	356·0	5·7	1·6
1981	351·7	4·3	1·2
1982	348·1	3·6	1·0
1983	343·1	5·0	1·4
1984	334·5	8·6	2·5

Year	Percentage
*1979	100·0
1980	98·4
1981	97·2
1982	96·2
1983	94·9
1984	92·5

* Index: 1979 = 100.

NHS (General Managers)

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what proportion of general managers in the National Health Service at regional, district and unit levels were, at their appointment, doctors, administrators from within the National Health Service, administrators from outside the National Health Service, nurses, businessmen, retired military personnel, or from other occupations; and if he will break down the latter group.

Mr. Hayhoe: I understand health authorities have made the following appointments:

	Number
Regional General Managers	
Doctors	1
Nurses	1
Administrators	9
Treasurers	1
Private Sector	*1
Self-employed	*1
District General Managers	
Doctors	15
Nurses	5
National Health Service Administrators	113
National Health Service Treasurers	17
Private Sector	*18
Public Sector	*4
Armed Forces	*12
Self-employed	*3
Overseas	*1
Unit General Managers	
Doctors	97
Nurses	63
National Health Service Administrators	322
National Health Service Treasurers	6
Ambulance Officer	2
Physicist/Scientist	2
Works Officers	2
Professions Allied to Medicine	4
Private Sector	*21
Public Sector	*12
Armed Forces	*9
Self-employed	*1
Overseas	*1

* Non National Health Service.

Mobility Allowance

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many persons, on the latest available information, are in receipt of mobility allowance; and if he will estimate how many of these persons suffer from a mental handicap.

Mr. Newton: Four hundred and thirty thousand people are currently receiving mobility allowance. As the hon. Member will see from my reply to the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South on 16 May at column 589 it is not possible to identify the number suffering from a mental handicap.

Social Workers (Attacks)

Ms. Harriet Harman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what evidence he has about the incidence of attacks of violence against social workers by their clients.

Mr. Whitney [*pursuant to his reply*, 29 April 1986, c. *769*]: Recognising the hon. Lady's concern with these matters, I should inform the House and her that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has decided that it would be right to hold a further and wider inquiry into the death of Miss Isabel Schwarz at the hands of a former mental patient in July 1984, in consultation with Bexley health authority, and Bexley and Lewisham social services departments. The inquiry will be into the management of arrangements for the care and aftercare of Miss Sharon Campbell, an ex-Bexley patient who has since her appearance in court in January 1985 been a patient in Broadmoor hospital. My noble Friend has written to the chairmen of the three authorities. Officials will discuss urgently the precise form of the inquiry, and a further

announcement will be made as soon as possible. The intention is to investigate services and not to attribute blame to individuals.

ENVIRONMENT

Homelessness

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish any estimates prepared by his Department of the potential implications for local authorities in their efforts to reduce the number of homeless households placed in bed and breakfast accommodation of the introduction by his Department of a scheme providing local authority tenants eligible for the right to buy with a transferable discount for the purchase of a private property on the open market.

Sir George Young: The idea of giving financial incentives to selected council tenants in areas of high housing stress to move out so as to create vacancies for new tenants deserves serious consideration, and several authorities are operating such schemes. Because of the uncertainties over its effectiveness, both in terms of costs and the extent to which the number of homeless households in bed and breakfast accommodation would be reduced as a direct result, it has not so far proved possible to produce any authoritative estimates of the benefits of such a scheme. For this reason, we will initially be evaluating the operation and effectiveness of the schemes currently being run by the London boroughs of Brent and Bromley, to see to what extent there would be any value in introducing a scheme of this nature more widely.

Urban Programme

Mr. Steen asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will provide a breakdown of expenditure under the urban programme in each of the last three years *(a)* on capital account and *(b)* on revenue account by each of the following: (i) the public sector, (ii) the private sector and (iii) voluntary organisations; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: This information is not available in the form requested. Urban programme expenditure is expenditure by local and health authorities, supported by central government grant. Some of this expenditure takes the form of local authority grants to private firms or voluntary bodies. Additional expenditure by such bodies in support of urban programme projects is not centrally recorded.

For 1985-86, however, it is estimated that urban programme expenditure was as follows:

(£ million)

	Capital	*Revenue*
Local authorities/health authorities	207	112
of which:		
Grants to voluntary bodies	32	43
Projects involving* private sector participation	58	6

* This includes UDG, other grants and direct support to firms; business advice services; local enterprise agencies; business promotion. Certain works benefiting specific firms in Industrial Improvements Areas (IIA's) are included, but not the majority of infrastructure works designed to assist local businesses.

Mr. Steen asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how much has been spent in each area in each of the last three years under the partner authorities scheme *(a)* on capital account and *(b)* on revenue account; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: The amount spent under the urban programme in each of the partnership authorities over the last three years is set out in the following tables:

1983-84

£ million

Partnerships	*Capital account*	*Revenue account*	*DHA*	*Total*
Birmingham	15,674	7,456	1,150	24,280
Hackney	7,577	4,162	850	12,589
Islington	5,369	3,279	830	9,478
Lambeth	4,426	5,560	947	10,933
Liverpool	14,484	9,884	795	25,163
Manchester/Salford	15,885	6,615	1,373	23,873
Newcastle/Gateshead	15,227	5,023	879	21,129
Total	78,642	41,979	6,824	127,445
Docklands*	3,048	1,311	1,500	5,859
Total	81,690	43,290	8,324	133,304

1984-85

£ million

Partnerships	*Capital account*	*Revenue account*	*DHA*	*Total*
Birmingham	15,720	8,282	1,470	25,472
Hackney	7,610	4,520	850	12,980
Islington	6,559	3,624	912	11,095
Lambeth	5,805	5,620	947	12,372
Liverpool	13,300	9,000	890	23,190
Manchester/Salford	16,367	5,959	1,340	23,666
Newcastle/Gateshead	13,827	4,948	510	19,276
Total	79,188	41,953	6,910	128,051
Docklands*	2,100	700	500	3,300
Total	81,288	42,653	7,410	131,351

1985-86 (provisional)

£ million

Partnerships	*Capital account*	*Revenue account*	*DHA*	*Total*
Birmingham	13,847	8,700	1,600	24,147
Hackney	6,300	4,153	1,080	11,533
Islington	5,546	4,059	424	10,029
Lambeth	6,607	4,711	682	12,000
Liverpool	12,053	9,013	934	22,000
Manchester/Salford	15,471	6,440	1,300	23,211
Newcastle/Gateshead	11,201	4,717	557	16,475
Total	71,025	41,793	6,577	119,395
Docklands*	928	535	536	1,999
Total	71,953	42,328	7,113	121,394

* The docklands partnership was wound up in 1981 and committed expenditure was finally completed in 1985-86.

Mr. Steen asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how much has been spent by each authority in the programme authorities scheme in each of the last three years; on capital account and *(b)* on revenue account; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: The amount spent under the urban programme in each of the programme authorities over the last three years is set out in the tables below:

1983-84

Programmes	*Capital account £ million*	*Revenue account £ million*	*DHA £ million*	*Total £ million*
Blackburn	1·456	0·097	0·000	1·553
Bolton	3·532	0·814	0·000	4·346
Bradford	3·191	2·260	0·362	5·813
Brent	0·786	0·284	0·000	1·070
Coventry	1·295	0·191	0·000	1·486
Ham. and Fulham	2·822	2·626	0·300	5·748
Hull	4·585	0·810	0·900	6·295
Knowsley	—	—	—	—
Leeds	3·070	1·434	0·236	4·740
Leicester	3·989	2·343	0·248	6·580
Middlesbrough	4·313	1·115	0·214	5·642
Nottingham	3·361	1·747	0·447	5·555
Oldham	3·840	0·606	0·015	4·461
Rochdale	1·486	0·071	—	1·557
Sandwell	2·799	0·183	—	2·982
Sheffield	2·621	1·850	0·050	4·521
Sunderland	2·889	0·629	—	3·518
Tower Hamlets	0·855	0·144	—	0·999
North Tyneside	2·735	0·685	0·030	3·450
South Tyneside	3·536	0·798	0·175	4·509
Wandsworth	0·960	0·540	—	1·500
Wirral	2·750	0·625	0·150	3·525
Wolverhampton	4·452	1·230	0·186	5·868
	61·323	21·082	3·313	85·718
	1984-85			
Blackburn	3·163	0·354	0·150	3·667
Bolton	2·528	0·570	0·148	3·246
Bradford	3·657	1·740	0·102	5·499
Brent	2·422	1·718	0·097	4·237
Coventry	2·730	1·340	0·292	4·362
Ham. and Fulham	2·607	2·312	0·278	5·197
Hull	3·751	0·840	0·020	4·611
Knowsley	1·662	1·461	0·069	3·192
Leeds	2·640	1·245	0·220	4·105
Leicester	3·936	1·770	0·043	5·749
Middlesbrough	3·486	1·349	0·250	5·085
Nottingham	2·849	1·677	0·447	4·973
Oldham	2·672	0·706	0·040	3·418
Rochdale	2·220	1·082	0·061	3·363
Sandwell	3·086	1·430	0·133	4·649
Sheffield	2·559	1·650	0·028	4·237
Sunderland	2·537	0·649	0·000	3·186
Tower Hamlets	2·083	1·914	0·337	4·334
North Tyneside	2·153	0·911	0·023	3·087
South Tyneside	3·400	0·781	0·060	4·241
Wandsworth	2·499	1·635	0·474	4·608
Wirral	2·793	0·430	0·080	3·303
Wolverhampton	3·562	1·250	0·220	5·032
	64·995	28·814	3·572	97·381
	1985-86 (provisional)			
Blackburn	3·081	0·442	0·286	3·809
Bolton	3·231	0·620	0·161	4·012
Bradford	2·500	1·800	0·040	4·340
Brent	2·673	1·730	0·097	4·500
Coventry	3·149	1·435	0·108	4·692
Ham. and Fulham	2·966	1·930	0·380	5·276
Hull	3·744	0·860	0·040	4·644
Knowsley	1·841	1·546	0·073	3·460
Leeds	2·735	1·380	0·220	4·335
Leicester	3·235	2·044	0·010	5·289
Middlesbrough	3·192	1·103	0·324	4·619
Nottingham	2·466	1·808	0·445	4·719
Oldham	3·000	0·740	0·058	3·798
Rochdale	2·263	1·147	0·038	3·448
Sandwell	2·929	1·561	0·129	4·619
Sheffield	3·476	1·360	0·028	4·864
Sunderland	2·848	0·569	0·142	3·559
Tower Hamlets	2·307	1·739	0·337	4·383
North Tyneside	2·217	0·960	0·039	3·216
South Tyneside	3·464	0·872	—	4·336
Wandsworth	2·548	1·797	0·524	4·869
Wirral	2·594	0·416	0·070	3·080
Wolverhampton	3·965	0·750	0·250	4·965
	66·424	28·609	3·799	98·832

Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (Compensation Payments)

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he proposes to take in the light of the report commissioned for his Department by Lawrence Gould Consultants Ltd. on the system of compensation payments under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: We have been examining the complex issues raised in this report in great detail. When this examination is completed, we intend to consult on both the report and our preliminary conclusions. The hon. Member will no doubt be glad to note that, contrary to the impression given by ill-informed comment, the consultants found that some 68 per cent. of claims for payment involve less than £500 per annum, and that the average cost for all agreements was £26·8 per annum per hectare.

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will now withdraw circular 4/83 following the Gould report on compensation payments under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

Mr. Waldegrave: The question whether any amendment to circular 4/83 is necessary, will be considered in the light of the consultations indicated in the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Slough (Mr. Watts) on 17 June *Official Report*, column 502.

Enforcement Orders

Mr. Colin Shepherd asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will introduce legislation to require planning authorities to execute within a specified period any enforcement order confirmed by one of his Department's inspectors in relation to the demolition of a building or extension erected without planning permission; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tracey: When an enforcement notice is upheld on appeal, the period for compliance specified in the notice begins to run immediately. If any step required by the notice has not been taken by the end of that period, the person responsible for taking it can be prosecuted under section 89(1) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1971; and, in addition, section 91(1) of the 1971 Act enables the local planning authority to take the required steps, and to recover from the landowner any expenses the authority have reasonably incurred. The local planning authority is well placed to decide how and when to use these powers.

County Hall, South Bank

Mr. Alexander asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many people are currently employed at the old County Hall premises on the South Bank; and what is the purpose of their employment.

Mr. Tracey: Besides the LRB, a number of other organisations currently occupy County Hall, including the Inner London education authority, the London fire and civil defence authority and the London waste regulation authority. We do not have details of their total employment in County Hall.

GLC (Mortgages)

Mr. Heddle asked the Secretary of State for the Environment, further to the answer of 23 January, *Official Report*, column *424*, to the hon. Member for Mid-Staffordshire, in respect of the total sum now outstanding and owed to the Greater London council under mortgage arrangements, if he will indicate what steps have been made to dispose of the former Greater London council mortgage book in whole or in part.

Mr. Tracey: This is a matter for the London residuary body. I understand, however, that it has begun informal discussions with financial institutions. As required by section 7 of the Local Government Act 1986, no mortgage will be disposed of without the consent of the mortgagor.

Commission for the New Towns

Mr. Murphy asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will introduce legislation at an early date to extend the powers of the Parliamentary and Local Government Commissioner to investigate matters relating to the Commission for the New Towns.

Mr. Tracey: The Government have made the commitment to extend the jurisdiction of the parliamentary and local ombudsmen to new town bodies, including the Commission for New Towns (Cmnd. 9563, July 1985). This proposal will be implemented when a suitable legislative opportunity arises.

Southampton Structure Plan

Mr. Colvin asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he intends to publish the revised Southampton structure plan.

Mr. Tracey: The submitted alteration to the south Hampshire structure plan includes proposals for development in Southampton up to 1996. My right hon. Friend intends to publish his proposed modifications to the alteration shortly, together with the report of the panel which conducted the examination in public. There will be an opportunity for objections and representations to be made.

Croxteth Hall and Country Park

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what reports he has received from the Merseyside residuary body concerning the future of Croxteth hall and country park, Liverpool; if he will extend the period of the Merseyside residuary body's responsibility for Croxteth hall and country park; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tracey: My right hon. Friend will be receiving a report from the Merseyside residuary body soon, and will then make a statement about the future of Croxteth park. In the meantime the property remains the responsibility of the residuary body.

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will pay a visit to Croxteth hall and country park, Liverpool, at an early date to examine options for their future.

Mr. Tracey: My right hon. Friend has no plans to do so, but my noble Friend the Minister for Planning and Regional Affairs hopes to be able to make a visit shortly.

Beaches

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the beaches which are designated as bathing beaches for the purposes of European Community regulations on pollution.

Mr. Waldegrave: The United Kingdom makes returns to the European Commission in respect of Directive 76/160/EEC concerning the quality of bathing waters for the following bathing waters:

Bournemouth

Bridlington
- North Beach
- South Beach

Christchurch

Margate

Newquay
- Fistral Beach
- Town Beach

Paignton
- Broadsands
- Goodrington
- Paignton

Penzance
- Sennen

Poole
- Sandbanks

Ryde

St. Ives
- Porthmear
- Porthminster

Sandown
- Esplanade
- Shanklin Beach

Scarborough
- North Bay
- South Bay

Southend
- Thorpe Bay
- Westcliffe Bay

Swanage

Torquay
- Meadfoot
- Oddicombe
- Torre Abbey

Weston Super Mare

Weymouth

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any information on the level of pollution affecting beaches not designated as bathing beaches.

Mr. Waldegrave: In order to obtain adequate information, the Government initiated the monitoring of over 350 bathing waters as described in the answer I gave to my hon. Friend, the Member for Leeds, North-West (Dr. Hampson) on 18 December last at columns *223-228*. The results will be available in late 1987 and will be published.

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what practical steps are being taken to improve the safety and quality of beaches with respect to pollution.

Mr. Waldegrave: Water authorities in the United Kingdom have taken and are taking steps to improve the bacteriological quality of bathing waters. Often this requires the resisting of outfalls or of storm overflows, or the provision of additional treatment of sewage. Normally water authorities construct new or substantially altered outfalls so that the discharges do not bring adjacent bathing waters below the EEC directive's bacteriological standards. Over the last four years some 40 major schemes have been completed at a cost of £150 million and over the next five years some 80 schemes costing over £300 million will be under way or completed.

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to designate Blackpool as a bathing beach under the 1976 EEC directive.

Mr. Waldegrave: The question whether to make returns to the European Commission on the qualities of more bathing waters (including Blackpool) is under consideration.

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received from the EEC Commission about the number of British beaches being designated as such under the 1976 EEC directive.

Mr. Waldegrave: I have received no correspondence from the EEC Commission about the number of bathing waters identified by the Government under directive 76/160/EEC. There have been requests from the Commission for information in respect of individual bathing waters which have been the subject of representations to the Commission.

Radiation

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he is satisfied with the monitoring of radiation undertaken on behalf of his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: There is a well-established programme of monitoring carried out on behalf of my Department. Nuclear site operators, as part of their authorisations, carry out discharge and environmental monitoring. Her Majesty's radiochemical inspectorate carries out check monitoring of these sites as well as an extensive monitoring programme for raw drinking water supplies. The AERE and the National Radiological Protection Board maintain a network of monitoring stations under their environmental programmes. These programmes are being kept under review.

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what agencies have conducted radioactive monitoring on behalf of his Department in each year since it assumed responsibility for this function.

Mr. Waldegrave: Her Majesty's radiochemical inspectorate, AERE Harwell, the National Radiological Protection Board, the CEGB power stations and Amersham International have carried out environmental radioactive monitoring on behalf of my Department. MAFF are also responsible for a separate monitoring programme of foodstuffs such as milk, vegetables, meat and fish.

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish details of all measurements of radiation taken on behalf of his Department since 2 May, giving details of the materials sampled, the location and timing of each sample, and the results of each monitoring.

Mr. Waldegrave: Arrangements to publish all the monitoring information provided to the National Radiological Protection Board following the Chernobyl accident and up to the end of May are being made. Copies will be placed in the Library of the House.

Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will list the names of the bodies or persons he expects to be sponsoring private functions at the Queen Elizabeth II conference centre at Westminster in 1986 and the estimated income derived therefrom;

(2) if he will state the estimated outturn cost of the Queen Elizabeth II conference centre together with the expected gross cost and net cost of its operations during the remainder of 1986;

(3) if he will state the dates, occasions and nature of each event due to take place at pubic expense at the Queen Elizabeth II conference centre from its opening until 31 December;

(4) if he will publish the tariff for private use of each main facility at the new Queen Elizabeth II conference centre and the criteria he applies when considering its use by non-public organisations.

Sir George Young: I will answer these questions shortly.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Radioactivity

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the instances known to his Department where food has been found to be contaminated to a level of 1,000 becquerels/kilo or more since the Chernobyl disaster, giving the type of food, the location and the level of contamination.

Mr. Jopling: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if he will list the actions taken in

response to the risk of radioactive contamination of food during May and June by his Department and by his counterparts in France, West Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Belgium, Austria, Switzerland, Finland, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Poland and Czechoslovakia; and what arrangements were made for international co-ordination of precautions during the Chernobyl emergency;

(2) if he will publish a table showing, in comparable terms, the levels of radioactive contamination of food which are officialy recognised in the United Kingdom as being normal, requiring precautions and dangerous, respectively, together with such comparable information as is available relating to France, West Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Belgium, Austria, Switzerland, Finland, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Poland and Czechoslovakia.

Mrs. Fenner: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) whether he is satisfied with the monitoring of radiation undertaken on behalf of his Department; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what agencies have conducted radioactive monitoring on behalf of his Department in each year since it assumed responsibility for this function;

(3) if he will publish details of all measurements of radiation taken on behalf of his Department since 2 May, giving details of the materials sampled, the location and timing of each sample, and the results of each monitoring.

Mrs. Fenner: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Sheepmeat (Caesium Levels)

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what factors determined the timing of his decision relating to lamb movements announced on 20 June.

Mr. Jopling: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Mr. John asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) when he expects to be in a position to provide criteria for establishing severe loss in particular circumstances for purposes of paying compensation to farmers suffering losses as a result of restrictions on the movement, sale and slaughter of sheep;

(2) what plans he has to compensate farmers who incur losses as a result of the ban imposed on the movement, sale and slaughter of sheep in north Wales and Cumbria; and whether these include *(a)* compensation for the fact that the guide price will be lower when the animals are finally marketed and *(b)* compensation for those farmers whose lambs become over-fat as a result of the delay and who therefore lose entitlement to the variable premium;

(3) if he will list the dates on which lambs tested for radioactivity were found to have had doses in excess of 600 becquerels per kilo, the number of animals involved on each date, and the exact reading in each instance;

(4) what information he has as to the likely long-term effects upon ewes in north Wales and Cumbria of exposure to radiation, and in particular how long such ewes are likely to give contaminated milk; whether movement to uncontaminated pasture would have a beneficial effect; and whether there is any risk of genetic mutations in sheep.

Mrs. Fenner: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Lambs

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Minister of Agriculture Fisheries and Food (1) how many fat lambs were sold at grading centres in Cumbria in May and early June of the current year;

(2) if he will publish details of the number of fat lambs which qualified for the standards of the European Community sheepmeat regime at each grading centre in England in each week of each year from 1982 to 1985.

Mr. Gummer: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Plastic Waste

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what measures are being adopted by Her Majesty's Government to reduce the amount of plastic waste being dumped in British territorial waters.

Mr. Gummer: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

River Esk

Mr. Soames asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he will be publishing the report of the Yorkshire River Esk inquiry; and for what reason it has been delayed.

Mr. Gummer: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

EC Council

Mr. Robert Atkins asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the outcome of the Council of Agriculture Ministers and the Council of Fisheries Ministers meetings held on 24 and 25 June; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jopling: I attended these meetings together with my right hon. Friend the Minister of State. The main item at the Agriculture Council concerned the partial suspension of negative monetary compensatory amounts in the pig and poultry sectors which had been agreed as a temporary measure and was due to expire on 30 June. For pigmeat, the Council decided to adjust the arrangements so as to incorporate the effect of the suspension in the regulations for calculating MCAs. Thus the benefit to the United Kingdom is maintained. For eggs and poultry, the suspension has been continued for a further three months and the Council will return to the matter at a later meeting.

The Council also considered certain measures designed to harmonise law and practice throughout the Community. It adopted a directive concerning the maximum level of aflatoxin in the raw materials for animal feed, and made progress towards agreeing a directive harmonising national systems for the testing of meat for residues. The Fisheries Council took delivery of the Commission's very important report on the enforcement of the common fisheries policy in the light of the findings of its inspectorate of inspectorates. We welcomed this report, for which we had been pressing since December 1984, as did all the main fishing countries of the

Community, despite the various criticisms which it contained of deficiencies in national control measures. The Commission made it clear that it would be following up the outstanding problems identified by its inspectors, including taking infractions proceedings where appropriate. The Commission also undertook to submit early proposals for tightening up the definition of member states' duties and the powers of the inspectors, which was necessary for improving the functioning of the control arrangements.

The Council held a preliminary debate on the Community's future structural policy in the fisheries sector in the light of the Commission's communication on this matter, and the Commission will take account of this in formulating its proposals for the arrangements to follow the current structural measures which expire this year. After an exchange of views on the Commission's proposals for the revision of the regulation on technical conservation measures and for a new regulation defining certain technical characteristics of fishing vessels for the application of Community legislation the Council decided to remit these matters for further technical discussion at official level in preparation for discussions at the next Council meeting in September.

SCOTLAND

Leukaemia (Hunterston)

Mr. Corrie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when the up-to-date figures between 1981 to 1985 of the number of leukaemia cases in the postal code area around Hunterston in those aged 0-24 years will be published; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: The study produced by the information services division of the Common Services Agency into the incidence of leukaemia in Scotland in the nought to 24 age group, a copy of which is in the Library, included statistics for 1981 to 1983 for the area around Hunterston. Data for 1984 are expected to be available in the autumn; 1985 figures will not be available this year.

Electricity Costs (Nuclear Generation)

Mr. Campbell asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what assessment he has made of the effects of the use of nuclear generation on electricity costs in the South of Scotland Electricity Board *(a)* at present and *(b)* when Torness becomes fully on stream.

Mr. Allan Stewart: I am advised by the South of Scotland Electricity Board that its assessment of the system fuel costs savings in 1985-86 arising from the operation of Hunterston nuclear power stations was £120 million. The board estimates that system fuel costs savings in 1992-93, when it is expected that full output from Torness will first be available, will be £330 million.

Housing Development (Rural Villages)

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he has any plans to encourage housing developments in small rural villages.

Mr. Ancram: It is for the district and islands councils, as the statutory housing authorities, to assess local housing needs and plan developments wherever they consider appropriate, within the resources allocated to them. Similarly it is for the Housing Corporation to decide how its resources are to be distributed geographically, after consultations with all interested parties. I have, however, encouraged the Housing Corporation to pay particular attention to the contribution which the housing association movement can make to meeting the housing needs of rural areas.

Geriatric Patients

Mr. MacKenzie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what increase there has been in the number of places available to geriatric patients in hospital day centres in Scotland over the course of the last 12 months to the latest convenient date.

Mr. Rifkind: This information is not centrally available.

Mr. MacKenzie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what increase there has been in the provision of beds for geriatric patients in each regional area in Scotland in the last 12 months to the latest convenient date;

(2) how many hospital beds are available in each health board area for elderly people in need of specialist care and attention.

Mr. Rifkind: The staffed hospital beds available for elderly patients at 30 September 1984 and September 1985 (the latest available date) were as set out in the table:

	30 September 1984	*30 September 1985**
Argyll and Clyde	984	995
Ayrshire and Arran	704	708
Borders	240	241
Dumfries and Galloway	326	326
Fife	647	657
Forth Valley	601	610
Grampian	1,026	1,008
Greater Glasgow	2,206	2,193
Highland	414	421
Lanarkshire	971	981
Lothian	1,450	1,445
Orkney	52	62
Shetland	87	84
Tayside	886	900
Western Isles	105	90
Scotland	10,699	10,721

* provisional

Mr. MacKenzie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many elderly men and women are on the waiting list for treatment as geriatric patients in each area health board area.

Mr. Rifkind: The latest information which is centrally available relates to 30 September 1985 and is provisional:

	Number on waiting lists
Argyll and Clyde	107
Ayrshire and Arran	94
Borders	41
Dumfries and Galloway	7
Fife	94
Forth Valley	132
Grampian	208
Greater Glasgow	*
Highland	59

	Number on waiting lists
Lanarkshire	199
Lothian	240
Orkney	58
Shetland	24
Tayside	70
Western Isles	19
SCOTLAND	1,352

• Not available centrally.

Note: Lists tend to overstate numbers of patients waiting for treatment. It is not possible to provide separate figures for men and women.

Elderly Persons

Mr. MacKenzie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will cause to published in the *Official Report* a table listing the number of men and women over 65 years of age, over 75 years of age and over 80 years of age at 1965, 1975 and the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Rifkind: The Registrar General's estimates of the populations requested are given in the table.

Elderly population, Scotland

Thousands

	Age		
	65 and over	*75 and over*	*80 and over*
Men			
1965	220	69	31
1975	262	73	31
1985	280	98	40
Women			
1965	359	130	61
1975	428	163	79
1985	457	208	108

Young Offenders (Glenochil)

Mr. O'Neill asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement detailing the nature of the disturbances which have taken place since 15 June, the number of prisoners involved in each one and how many of them were charged and for what offences, how many were injured, the number of prison officers injured and estimates of the cost of the damage at the Glenochil young offenders institution and detention centre.

Mr. John MacKay: The disturbances which have taken place at the Glenochil complex since 15 June have been confined to the young offenders institution. No underlying cause has emerged for what has been a series of outbreaks of vandalism which started from a fight between two inmates in a dining hall on 15 June which developed into a brief fracas involving staff, and in succeeding days escalated into concerted efforts by a number of inmates to damage their cells and other institution property. The most serious incident occurred on the night of 18-19 June when damage estimated at £16,000 was caused to 70 cells.

On 20 June a member of staff was assaulted by two inmates, and a number of the inmates who had been involved in the disturbance of 18-19 June damaged the cells into which they had been moved. Some further disturbance occurred on 21 and 22 June. At 23 June the total number of cells which had suffered damage was 76.

Behaviour of the kind indulged in by some of the inmates of Glenochil, which finds expression in acts of defiance against authority, is not uncommon in penal establishments, particularly those holding volatile, aggresive young offenders. By 23 June, the situation had settled and the normal regime was in operation in the institution.

The further details requested are as follows:

Incident of 15 June 1986

Thirty two inmates appeared before the governor charged with disobedience and six inmates were charged by the police, two with assault and four with breach of the peace. No inmates were injured but five officers suffered injuries, one of whom received treatment in hospital for lacerations to his head and back. Damage is estimated at £62.

Incident of 18-19 June 1986

Fifty two inmates were charged with internal disciplinary offences ranging from assault, possession of weapons and damage to property. Six inmates received minor injuries, mainly abrasions. No staff were injured.

Incident of 20 June 1986

An assault by two inmates on a member of staff is currently under investigation by the police.

Incident of 21 June 1986

Eleven inmates were charged with damage to property. There were no injuries to inmates or staff. Six cells were damaged.

Radiation

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish in the *Official Report* the most recent data on the contamination of farm and horticultural produce following the Chernobyl disaster.

Mr. John MacKay: My right hon. and learned Friend is arranging for the information to be placed in the Library.

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he is satisfied with the monitoring of radiation undertaken on behalf of his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram: A well established programme of monitoring of radiation is carried out on my right hon. and learned Friend's behalf. Nuclear site operators as part of their authorisations carry out discharge and environmental monitoring. Her Majesty's industrial pollution inspectorate carries out check monitoring of the discharges from the sites and their effect on the terrestrial environment. Monitoring of the aquatic environment is carried out by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food's directorate of fisheries research on my right hon. and learned Friend's behalf. There are sites in Scotland monitored by AERW, Harwell and the National Radiological Protection Board under their environmental programmes. All these programmes are kept under review.

Following the Chernobyl accident, these ongoing monitoring arrangements were expanded substantially to include a wider range of food products and additional samples over a wider geographical area than normal.

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what agencies have conducted radioactive monitoring on behalf of his Department in each year since it assumed responsibility for this function.

Mr. Ancram: The directorate of fisheries research laboratory at Lowestoft of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, the Atomic Energy Research Establishment at Harwell, the National Radiological Protection Board, the South of Scotland Electricity Board nuclear power station at Hunterston, the British Nuclear Fuels plc works at Chapelcross and the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority nuclear power development establishment at Dounreay have carried out radioactive monitoring on behalf of my right hon. and learned Friend.

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish details of all measurements of radiation taken on behalf of his Department since 2 May giving details of the materials sampled, the location and timing of each sample, and the result of each monitoring.

Mr. Ancram: The Scottish Develoment Department has continuously made available to the public the monitoring data it has received since the Chernobyl accident and will continue to do so. Arrangements to publish this data in composite form are being made by the Departments responsible. These publications will be placed in the Library in due course.

Fat Lambs

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish details of the number of fat lambs which qualified for the standards of the European Community sheepmeat régime at each grading centre in Scotland in each week of each year from 1982 to 1985.

Mr. John MacKay: I regret that the information requested is not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Chapelcross Nuclear Power Station

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list all radiological incidents reported to him in relation to Chapelcross nuclear power station reported for each year since 1979.

Mr. Allan Stewart: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Fife, Central (Mr. Hamilton) on 11 June. This contained details of incidents at individual Scottish nuclear installations reported to Ministers through Her Majesty's nuclear installations inspectorate under arrangements laid down by the Government of the day in February 1977 and revised in July 1982. Details of incidents are provided in published quarterly reports of the inspectorate which are available in the Library. Two minor incidents involving small amounts of radioactive contamination on roads within Chapelcross were reported to my right hon. and learned Friend in June. The nuclear installations inspectorate is investigating these incidents and will report in due course.

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will list all directives issued in respect of Chapelcross nuclear power station since 1979;

(2) what has been the annual production of tritium and plutonium at Chapelcross in each year since 1979; and what has been the destination of this production in each case;

(3) what reports he has received since 1979 from the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate in respect of Chapelcross nuclear power station; which of these have been published; and what action has been taken to implement recommendations in these reports;

(4) by what means radioactive products are transported to and from Chapelcross nuclear power station; what directives or authorisations have been issued by his Department on this matter; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Allan Stewart: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Housing

Mr. Norman Hogg asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) how many houses for special needs have been built in each of the Scottish new towns in each year since 1979;

(2) how many public sector houses, other than special needs houses, were built in each of the Scottish new towns in each year since 1974.

Mr. Allan Stewart: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Nature Conservation Afforestation (Report)

Sir Hector Monro asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what consideration he has given to the report by the Nature Conservancy Council on nature conservation and afforestation in Great Britain; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: I am at present studying this report, which was published on Tuesday 24 June 1986, together with my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for the Environment and for Wales and the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. I welcome the effort which the Nature Conservancy Council has put into the important debate which is taking place at present on forestry and the environment generally, and in particular how the need for increased forestry planting can be met alongside the need to preserve and develop important wildlife habitats as part of our objective of striking a reasonable balance between forestry, other land use interests and nature conservation. The achievement and maintenance of such a balance will require close and continuing co-operation among the various interests.

My right hon. Friends and I are grateful for the comprehensive way in which the NCC has addressed itself to the subject. We shall, of course, consider its contribution, together with papers and reports from other interests concerned, most carefully.

School Meals

Mr. Henderson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the results of the annual census of school meals in Scotland held in January; what were the corresponding results in 1985; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: The information is as follows:

Education authority schools (including nursery and special schools)

	1986 Number	1986 As percentage of pupils present	1985 Number	1985 As percentage of pupils present
Pupils present on Census day	735,543	—	752,073	—
Pupils taking school meals				
on payment	179,868	24·4	182,255	24·2
free	136,627	18·6	136,669	18·2
total	316,495	43·0	318,924	42·4
Pupils bringing own food on school premises	82,996	11·1	75,951	10·1

Note: A detailed statement of the returns from education authorities from which these national figures are derived is being placed in the Library.

The following table shows, as percentages of pupils attending their respective sectors, those primary secondary pupils taking meals or bringing their own food.

	Primary 1986 Per cent.	Primary 1985 Per cent.	Secondary 1986 Per cent.	Secondary 1985 Per cent.
Pupils taking school meals	47·9	47·5	39·0	38·2
Pupils bringing own food	17·4	15·5	4·5	4·5

All authorities provide two course meals and cafeteria style meals. The take-up of each is as follows:

	Pupils taking fixed meals	Pupils taking cafeteria meals
1986		
Paid	102,684	77,184
Free	107,459	29,168
Total	210,143	106,352
Percentage of pupils present	28·6	14·5
1985		
Paid	112,849	69,406
Free	111,715	24,954
Total	224,564	94,360
Percentage of pupils present	29·9	12·5

Scottish Development Agency

Mr. McKelvey asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will list the financial investment by the Scottish Development Agency from 1979 to 1985 in the following areas: *(a)* Dundee, *(b)* Inverclyde, *(c)* Motherwell, *(d)* East Kilbride, *(e)* Glengarnock, *(f)* Kilmarnock, *(g)* Fife and *(h)* Cumnock and Doon Valley;

(2) what were the annual budgets of the Scottish Development Agency for the years 1979 to 1985 inclusive; and if he will list as a percentage of those budgets investment in the following areas: *(a)* Dundee, *(b)* Inverclyde, *(c)* Motherwell, *(d)* East Kilbride, *(e)* Glengarnock, *(f)* Kilmarnock, *(g)* Fife and *(h)* Cumnock and Doon Valley.

Mr. Allan Stewart [*pursuant to his reply*, 9 June 1986, c. *30*]: The information, which is only readily available from the financial year 1981-82, is as follows:

	(a) Dundee		(b) Inverclyde		(c) Motherwell		(d) East Kilbride		(e) Glengarnock		(f) Kilmarnock		(g) Fife		(h) Cumnock and Doon Valley		(i) Total Spend	(j) Total Budget Spend
	£'000	per cent.	£'000	per cent.	£'000	per cent.	£'000	per cent.	£'000	per cent.	£'000	per cent.	£'000	per cent.	£'000	per cent.	£'000	£'000
1981-82	3,569	4·24	970	1·15	6,133	7·29	196	0·23	3,162	3·76	807	0·96	2,970	3·53	689	0·82	84,136	97,800
1982-83	5,230	5·06	1,802	1·74	7,144	6·90	109	0·11	4,370	4·22	2,482	2·40	4,811	4·65	661	0·64	103,462	122,700
1983-84	6,212	6·64	905	0·97	6,492	6·94	143	0·15	4,218	4·51	1,681	1·80	2,783	2·98	581	0·62	93,389	115,900
1984-85	4,138	4·66	1,337	1·51	5,197	5·86	213	0·24	2,262	2·55	1,362	1·54	1,597	1·80	780	0·88	88,722	117,800
1985-86	5,674	5·60	3,339	3·29	5,254	5·18	87	0·09	984	0·97	869	0·86	4,093	4·04	399	0·39	101,312	*131,000

* Estimate.

Notes:

1. The figures in cols *(a)*-*(f)* exclude expenditure on running costs and certain other expenditure under the following headings which the Agency does not allocate to districts and regions.
Maintenance—Dilapidations, estate land maintenance, security, land marketing signs, fire and engineering insurance.
Land and Buildings—Plant and equipment, notice boards, owner controlled insurance, gas, water and electricity supplies, feasibility studies and surveys.
Development Grants—Programme for Rural Initiatives and Development, Development of Rural Area Workshops, Better Business Services, Training and Employment Grants Scheme and Craft Grants.
2. Column *(j)* includes all Agency expenditure.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how much money has been spent by the Scottish Development Agency in *(a)* Fife and *(b)* Dunfermline district in each year since it was established ; and if he will show these figures as a proportion of total expenditure by the Scottish Development Agency.

Mr. Allan Stewart [*pursuant to his reply*, 9 June 1986, c. *30*]. The information, which is only readily available from the financial year 1981-82, is as follows:

	Fife		Dunfermline		Total Expenditure
	£'000	per cent.	£'000	per cent.	£'000
1981-82	2,970	3·53	1,397	1·66	84,136
1982-83	4,811	4·65	3,068	2·97	103,462
1983-84	2,783	2·98	1,306	1·40	93,389
1984-85	1,597	1·80	690	0·78	88,722
1985-86	4,093	4·04	2,132	2·10	101,312

Note

The figures exclude expenditure on running costs and certain other expenditure under the following headings which the agency does not allocate to district and regions.

Maintenance—Dilapidations, estate land maintenance, security, land marketing signs, fire and engineering insurance.

Land and Buildings—Plant and equipment, notice boards, owner controlled insurance, gas, water and electricity supplies, feasibility studies and surveys.

Development Grants—Programme for rural initiatives and development, development of rural area workshops, better business services, training and employment grants scheme and craft grants.

NATIONAL FINANCE

EC (Expenditure)

Mr. Deakins asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if any change is to be made in the definitions of obligatory and non-obligatory expenditure in the European Economic Community as a result of the Single European Act; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: No change is to be made in the definitions of obligatory and non-obligatory expenditure in the EEC as a result of the Single European Act.

Customs and Excise

Mr. Terry Fields asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many Customs and Excise officers were in post *(a)* nationally and *(b)* in the port of Liverpool each year since 1979; how many Customs and Excise officers were in post (i) nationally and (ii) in the port of Liverpool employed solely on the detection of drugs importation; if he has plans to increase numbers of officers employed by Her Majesty's Customs and Excise; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Asset Sales (Revenue Loss)

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the latest estimate of the annual loss of revenue to the Exchequer for the years 1986 to 1987 and 1987-88 as a result of the sale of assets since 1979.

Mr. Norman Lamont [*pursuant to his reply*, 25 June 1986, c. *195*]: I refer the hon. Member to the reply my right hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, Central (Mr. Moore) gave on 28 November 1985, at column *661*.

Tax Evasion

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will state the number of staff in the Treasury assigned to uncover tax evasion and related fraud, in each of the years 1979-80 to 1985-86.

Mr. Norman Lamont [*pursuant to his reply*, 19 June 1986, c. *633*]: The number of Inland Revenue staff, measured in staff unit equivalents, assigned to investigation work in each of the years 1979-80 to 1985-86 is:

	Number
31 October	
1980	1,659
1981	1,966
1982	2,166
1983	2,495
31 March	
1984	2,843
1985	3,161
1986	3,237

The figures for 1983 and later years are not directly comparable with earlier years. Roughly one third of the apparent increase between 1982 and 1983 reflects a refinement of the calculations of staff effort devoted to investigative work in tax districts made possible by improved management information.

In Customs and Excise at 1 April 1986, the number of full-time specialist investigators and support staff engaged on tax and related fraud investigations was 454. Corresponding figures for preceding years could not be produced without disproportionate effort and cost.

There are, in addition, some 6,675 VAT control and Excise visiting staff whose work may from time to time include an element of fraud investigation.

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what was the estimated cost to the Exchequer of tax evasion and related fraud, in the years 1979-80 to 1985-86, in each tax bracket;

(2) if he will publish his assesment of the incidence of tax evasion as a proportion of total numbers of tax payers in the years 1979-81 to 1985-86.

Mr. Norman Lamont [*pursuant to his reply*, 19 June 1986, c. *633*]: In relation to the direct taxes it is not possible to estimate the tax lost through undetected tax evasion and related fraud or to assess it as a proportion of the total number of taxpayers.

In respect of VAT I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my hon. Friend the Member for City of London and Westminster, South (Mr. Brooke) to the hon. Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Wareing) on 11 April 1986, at columns *205-6*.

The following table shows the number of VAT cases completed by prosecution or compounding in the years 1979-80 to 1985-86 and the number of VAT registered persons in each of those years:

31 March	Cases	Persons (millions)
1980	474	1·33
1981	645	1·34
1982	601	1·38
1983	520	1·40
1984	568	1·43
1985	610	1·46
1986	630	1·48

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the average sum involved in tax evasion cases in 1984-85; and in those cases investigated what was the average amount of money recovered.

Mr. Norman Lamont [*pursuant to his reply*, 19 June 1986, c. *633*]: The average sums involved in tax evasion cases investigated by the Inland Revenue in 1984-85 were:

	£
Tax offices	3,550
Inquiry branch	124,100
Special office	161,200
PAYE audit	3,100

It is not possible, except at disproportionate cost, to state how much of the amounts involved in those cases was ultimately recovered.

Proceedings in 610 value added tax offence cases were completed in the year ended 31 March 1985, with 165 cases having been prosecuted and 445 cases having been settled by compounding. Arrears of VAT totalled £23,349,124 for the 610 cases giving an average of £38,277 per case.

Statistics are not kept in such a way that figures can be given for the amount of these arrears that are collected, but it is estimated that, owing to the compounding of many of these proceedings, a substantial proportion will be recovered.

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many Inland Revenue staff are based in Leeds; and how many of these are assigned to detecting and investigating tax evasion and related fraud.

Mr. Norman Lamont [*pursuant to his reply*, 19 June 1986, c. *633*]: There are 735 Inland Revenue staff in the Leeds area. Investigation of tax evasion is part of the normal duties of many of them, and is measured in staff unit equivalents. In the Leeds area it is 47 staff units.

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many cases of tax evasion in Leeds have been prosecuted over the past five years; and what was the average amount of money involved.

Mr. Norman Lamont [*pursuant to his reply*, 19 June 1986, c. *633*]: In the past five years nine persons have been prosecuted in Leeds by the Inland Revenue. The average amount of tax involved was £10,829.

Leeds collection for Customs and Excise now covers a substantial part of the old East and West Riding. Records cover only the four years ended 31 March 1986, but during that period 60 VAT cases in that area were prosecuted, with an averge of £29,413 arrears of tax per case, and 186 VAT cases were settled by compounding, with a mean average of £11,759 per case.

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will state the number of tax evasion and related fraud cases resulting in prosecution in 1984-85 and the number of prosecutions as a proportion of the total number of cases discovered.

Mr. Norman Lamont [*pursuant to his reply*, 19 June 1986, c. *633*]: The Inland Revenue seeks civil money penalties for tax offences in all but a very small proportion of cases of evasion. Two hundred and thirty two prosecutions were completed in 1984-85.

In the year ended 31 March 1985, 797 cases were reported for VAT offences. In 83 cases during that year it was decided to take no offence action apart from collecting any arrears of tax that may have been outstanding. There were 165 prosecutions during the year and 445 settlements by compounding.

Income Tax Fraud

Mr. Hancock asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many income tax fraud investigators there are for the Portsmouth area; and how many people in the Portsmouth area have been successfully prosecuted in each of the last five years, indicating the total amounts involved for the same period.

Mr. Norman Lamont [*pursuant to his reply*, 16 June 1986, c. *468*]: Investigation of tax evasion is part of the normal duties of many Inland Revenue staff, and is measured in staff unit equivalents. For the Portsmouth area, it was 22 staff units for the financial year to 31 March 1986. The Inland Revenue seeks civil money penalties for tax offences in all but a very small proportion of cases.

The number of fraud cases in the Portsmouth area which led to criminal prosecutions, and the total amounts involved, in each of the last five years are:

31 March	Number	Amounts £
1982	—	—
1983	1	27,000
1984	—	—
1985	2	47,960
1986	—	—

DEFENCE

Fylingdales

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if the modernised phased array radar at Fylingdales will be part of the United States ballistic missile early warning system against attack on targets in north America;

(2) if the new radar at Fylingdales will give early warning against ballistic missile attack on Britain and western Europe.

Mr. Stanley: The modernised phased array radar at RAF Fylingdales will perform the same functions as the present system, which is to provide early warning of a strategic ballistic missile attack on either the European or North American members of NATO.

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Defence to what extent the new radar at Fylingdales will be built by *(a)* United States companies and *(b)* British companies, respectively; and if he will indicate the estimated proportion of work which will go to each category.

Mr. Stanley: The modernised radar itself will be constructed by an American company. British companies will carry out all the work to be undertaken in the United Kingdom on the infrastructure for the facility, including the dismantling of the present aerial domes. This work will amount to approximately 15 per cent. of the total. However, as I said in reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Scarborough (Sir M. Shaw) on 22 May at c. *263-64*, in addition, arrangements have been made which ensure that a range of British companies will have a significant opportunity to benefit to an extent closely equivalent to the investment undertaken by the Americans at Fylingdales.

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Defence who will be the owner of the new phased array radar installation at Fylingdales.

Mr. Stanley: Ownership of the modernised systems will be shared between the United States and the United Kingdom in accordance with the 1960 memorandum of agreement, but the installation will remain under RAF command and control.

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish the memorandum of agreement governing the operation of the new phased array radar at Fylingdales.

Mr. Stanley: The memorandum of understanding covering the modernisation programme is still under discussion with the United States authorities. A decision on whether or not to publish the final version will be taken in due course.

RAF (Equipment)

Mr. Soames asked the Secretary of State for Defence what are the operational and financial implications for the RAF of the sale of Tornadoes to Oman and Saudi Arabia, and the diverting of these aircraft from the RAF re-equipment programme.

Mr. Lee [*pursuant to his reply*, 23 June 1986, c. *27*]: Every effort is being made to minimise the operational and financial implications for the RAF of these sales. The effects of the Omani sale are, in any case, likely to be very small. However, the diversion of aircraft and equipment in support of the Saudi sale will have some temporary effect on the build up of the Tornado force and, in particular, will lead to a short delay in the build-up of the Tornado GR1 reconnaissance force. As my predecessor announced to the House on 26 February, at column 960, aircraft and weapons diverted to Saudi Arabia will be replaced at no cost to the defence budget, thereby minimising the budgetary impact.

Lightning Fighter Aircraft

Mr. Soames asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the timing, extent and cost of the life extension programme of the Lightning fighter aircraft.

Mr. Lee [*pursuant to his reply*, 23 June 1986, c. *27*]: The current programme of fatigue enhancement on the Lightning air defence fighter started in mid-1984 and is planned to be completed by early 1987. The programme is necessary to keep the aircraft in service until replaced by the Tornado ADV. These modifications extend the fatigue life of aircraft by strengthening the wing spars. The estimated total cost of the programme is £2 million at 1985-86 outturn prices.

Equipment Budget

Mr. Soames asked the Secretary of State for Defence what cuts he will be making in the equipment budget in 1987-88 and 1988-89.

Mr. Lee [*pursuant to his reply*, 23 June 1986, c. *26*]: Expenditure on equipment in 1987-88 and 1988-89 will depend on decisions on the allocation of funds and on the overall level of resources available for defence.

Tigerfish HWT Torpedo

Mr. Soames asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the precise dates of the concept stage, of the feasibility study stage, of the project definition stage and of the full development stage of the Tigerfish HWT torpedo; and if he will list the specific reasons for the delays at each stage.

Mr. Lee [*pursuant to his reply*, 23 June 1986, c. *26*]: The mk 24 evolved from various torpedo programmes, and it is not, therefore, possible to define concept, feasibility and project definition stages. Full development began in 1959 with an in-service date (ISD) of 1967. After development and engineering problems the mk 24 mod 0 torpedo entered service in 1974. This was intended to have an anti-submarine capability only.

In order to provide a combined anti-submarine and anti-surface capability the development of the mk 24 mod 1 torpedo was endorsed in 1968 with an ISD of 1977. The mod 1 entered service in October 1980 the delay being mainly due to technical shortcomings and under estimation of the task.

The consolidation programme was approved in mid 1984; the development phase was completed on time; the first modified torpedoes entered service as planned in 1986.

Communication Systems

Mr. Soames asked the Secretary of State for Defence what will be the cost of the upgrading of Royal Naval and Royal Air Force communication systems, including high frequency, low frequency and extra low frequency.

Mr. Lee [*pursuant to his reply*, 23 June 1986, c. *28*]: The upgrading of Royal Naval and Royal Air Force communications is a continuous process and covers a wide variety of systems. Information is not, however, available in the form in which it has been requested, and could be provided only at disproportionate cost and effort.

HMS Opossum

Sir Patrick Wall asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether the coming refit of HMS Opossum will be put out to tender.

Mr. Lee [*pursuant to his reply*, 23 June 1986, c. *29*]: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave earlier today to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown).

Contracts (Tendering)

Mr. Michael Brown asked the Secretary of State for Defence if the refit of HMS Opossum will be put out to competitive tender.

Mr. Lee [*pursuant to his reply*, 23 June 1986, c. *29*]: No. HMS Opossum forms part of the core programme of work which it is planned will be under way at Devonport dockyard at the time commercial managers take control and some preliminary design effort has already commenced.

Mr. Michael Brown asked the Secretary of State for Defence if it remains Her Majesty's Government's policy to submit submarine refits to competitive tender.

Mr. Lee [*pursuant to his reply*, 23 June 1986, c. *29*]: It remains our intention to open up the support areas of defence, including naval refitting, to competitive tender. It is necessary, however, to safeguard the capacity of the royal dockyards as strategically vital assets by providing them with a core programme of work, including submarine refits.

Royal Wedding

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the total estimated cost to his Department of providing security and ceremonial services at the wedding of His Royal Highness Prince Andrew.

Mr. Stanley [*pursuant to his reply*, 25 June 1986, c. *167*]: The present estimate of the total cost is some £12,000.

Armed Forces (Equipment)

Mr. Soames asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will make a statement on what future equipment orders he is currently considering for the Royal Air Force;

(2) if he will make a statement on what future equipment orders for the Army he is at present considering;

(3) if he will make a statement on what future equipment orders he is currently considering for the Royal Navy.

Mr. Lee [*pursuant to his reply*, 23 June 1986, c. *27*]: I refer my hon. Friend to the chart on page 28 of volume 1 of the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1986." It is not our practice to reveal details of possible or planned future equipment orders. However, figure 5 shows the main divisions of the procurement programme 1986-87 and serves to illustrate the significant investment in new equipment for the services.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 27 June 1986

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Gordon School, Gravesend

Mr. John Fraser asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what reply he has sent to a letter sent to him from the parents of children at the Gordon school, Gravesend, Kent, on its closure by Kent county council with the consent of his Department.

Mr. Dunn: Neither I nor my right hon. Friend have received recent correspondence from parents of children at the Gordon school.

Colleges and Universities

Mr. Alan Williams asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he is prepared to receive deputations led by hon. and right hon. Members about the future of individual colleges and universities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Walden: My right hon. Friend and I are always ready to receive deputations led by hon. and right hon. Members about matters within our responsibilities. In general, however, representations about the future of individual colleges and universities would be more usefully addressed in the first instance to the National Advisory Body for Public Sector Higher Education or to the University Grants Committee.

Teachers (Minority Groups)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what progress he has made in his discussions on the recommendations in the Swann report that more teachers from minority groups should be recruited.

Mr. Chris Patten: In his statement to the House on 14 March 1985, in column 452, my right hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, North-East (Sir K. Joseph) accepted the Swann recommendation that, without positive discrimination and without any reduction in the required level of qualification, an increase should be sought in the proportion of ethnic minority schoolteachers. In July 1985 the Department issued a consultation paper exploring possible ways to achieve this, to which responses have been received from 68 organisations and individuals. We are considering what further measures might now be taken. A representative working group set up by my right hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, North-East is considering whether acceptable arrangements could be devised for monitoring the ethnic composition of the school teacher force.

Teachers (Departmental Staff)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what progress he has made in the appointment in his Department in an advisory capacity of teachers with a primary or secondary school background.

Mr. Chris Patten: My right hon. Friend has no plans to appoint teachers to his Department in an advisory capacity.

West Midlands (Science Teaching)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science which West Midlands education authorities have received grants for science teaching in primary schools.

Mr. Chris Patten: No west midlands local education authority has yet received support through education support grants for science teaching in primary schools. From September 1986, Birmingham, Coventry, Dudley, Solihull, Walsall and Wolverhampton will receive funding under the education support grant programme for work on science and technology teaching in primary schools.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Uganda

Sir Peter Mills asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he will take to assist the Uganda Government as far as police training is concerned.

Mr. Raison: An offer to help with police training has been accepted by the Uganda Government and an adviser is currently visiting Kampala to assess the needs.

Sir Peter Mills asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what aid he intends to give to the Uganda Government as far as provision of Land-Rovers is concerned.

Mr. Raison: Forty-two Land Rovers, financed by the British aid programme, are on order for the Uganda police force and 20 for the Uganda electricity board.

Africa

Mr. Wallace asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will detail the aid programmes in sub-Saharan Africa which have British Government support; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Raison: In 1985 gross bilateral aid disbursements to sub-Saharan Africa totalled £285 million. The amounts to individual countries are as shown. In addition, substantial British aid funds are channelled through multilateral aid agencies and the European Community to support long-term development and disaster relief in Africa.

Gross bilateral aid to sub-Saharan Africa 1985

	(£'000)
Angola	164
Benin	187
Botswana	8,775
Burkina Faso	276

	(£'000)
Burundi	81
Cameroon	7,460
Cape Verde Islands	27
Central African Republic	38
Chad	1,448
Congo	120
Ethiopia	28,058
Gabon	14
Gambia	3,613
Ghana	11,555
Guinea	296
Ivory Coast	2,615
Kenya	34,438
Lesotho	2,382
Liberia	1,055
Madagascar	469
Malawi	13,825
Mali	744
Mauritania	888
Mauritius	2,187
Mozambique	8,366
Namibia	605
Niger	331
Nigeria	6,240
Rwanda	94
Senegal	1,025
Seychelles	1,136
Sierra Leone	3,626
Somalia	1,737
St. Helena and dependencies	9,354
Sudan	42,296
Swaziland	3,376
Tanzania	17,967
Togo	112
Uganda	9,171
Zaire	738
Zambia	25,579
Zimbabwe	23,636
Regional East Africa Community	8,964
South of Sahara-unallocable by country	95
	285,163

Descriptive material about British aid programmes in Africa will be included in the Overseas Development Administration's annual review "British Overseas Aid 1985", which will be published at the end of July.

Mr. Wallace asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what aid the British Government have provided to north-east Africa in terms of *(a)* farming, *(b)* irrigation and *(c)* hygiene improvement.

Mr. Raison: The Overseas Development Administration is currently involved in the following capital aid and technical co-operation projects in North-East Africa — Egypt, Ethiopia, Somalia, Sudan — in farming, irrigation and hygiene:

Country and Project	*£000 Total ODA commitment*
Farming	
EGYPT	
Cotton Pests	1,748
Alexandria University Farm	324
Agricultural Cooperatives	165
Cairo University Faculty of Agriculture	21
SOMALIA	
Juba Sugar factory	1,500
Provision of Veterinary Drugs	1,930
Tsetse and Trypanosomiasis eradication	1,600
SUDAN	
Livestock Meat Marketing Corporation	1,200
Animal production research	930
Central Veterinary Laboratories	750
Western Savannah Project	10,020
Equatoria Region Agricultural Project	6,330
Assistance to Darfur Regional Government	900
Gezira Pesticides Research	20
	27,438
Irrigation:	
SUDAN	
Northern Region Irrigation Rehabilitation	8,000
	8,000
Hygiene	
EGYPT	
Cairo Wastewater	50,200
SUDAN	
Blue Nile Health Project	450
	50,650

Information on projects and programmes in which the ODA has previously been involved could be produced only at disproportionate cost.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Regional Development Grant

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what proportion of total regional development grants has been paid to firms in the north-west region in 1979 and each subsequent year.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Most of this information has been published in the various annual reports on the Industrial Development Act. The details are as follows:

(A) Old regional development grants; payments in the North-West

	£ million
1979-80	
Amount	58·7
Percentage of Great Britain	17·7
1980-81	
Amount	105·7
Percentage of Great Britain	21·5
1981-82	
Amount	143·4
Percentage of Great Britain	23·2
1982-83	
Amount	97·3
Percentage of Great Britain	14·1
1983-84	
Amount	83·0
Percentage of Great Britain	18·9
1984-85	
Amount	79·9
Percentage of Great Britain	19·5

	£ million
1985-86	
Amount	76·9
Percentage of Great Britain	24·0

Note:
Up to and including 1984-5 the North-West figures do not include Cumbria; for 1984-85 and 1985-86 Cumbria is included in the North-West totals.

(B) New regional development grants; payments in the North-West

	£ million
1985-86	
Amount	6·0
Percentage of Great Britain	15·5

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many firms that have received regional development grants in the north-west in 1979 and each subsequent year have subsequently closed down or announced redundancies; and if he will give an estimate of the number of jobs involved.

Mr. Peter Morrison: These statistics are not monitored for old regional development grant and the cost of extracting them from the Department's records and other sources would be prohibitive. The Department is aware of 10 cases of closure — but fewer than 200 employees involved overall — among firms being paid under the new regional development grant scheme.

Regional Development Programme

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he sent the United Kingdom submission on the regional development programme to the European Commission.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I now expect the United Kingdom's regional development programme to be submitted to the European Commission next month.

Leyland Bus

Mr. Hickmet asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the bids received for Leyland Bus by the deadline of 26 June.

Mr. Peter Morrison: As I informed the House on 12 June, BL invited offers for Leyland Bus, on a tender basis, from the Laird Group, Aveling Barford and a Leyland Bus management consortium. Tenders have been received from all three. Details of the tenders are commercially confidential, but my right hon. Friend expects to receive a recommendation from the BL board shortly.

PRIME MINISTER

European Court

Mr. Foulkes asked the Prime Minister if she will list the occasions since June 1979 when the United Kingdom has been found guilty in a case before *(a)* the European Court of Human Rights and *(b)* the European Court of Justice; and what was the subsequent action taken by the United Kingdom in each case.

Mr. Biffen: I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend will reply to the hon. Gentleman shortly.

Legal Aid Funding

Mr. Shersby asked the Prime Minister if she will now make a statement on the review of legal aid funding.

The Solicitor-General [*pursuant to the reply*, 17 June 1986, c. *512*]: I have been asked to reply.

Copies of the report have today been placed in the Libraries of both Houses of Parliament. Further copies may be obtained, priced £5, from the Lord Chancellor's Department.

The Government are grateful to the scrutiny team for the careful and thorough way it has gone about its task and welcomes the report as a useful basis for consideration of improvements in the efficiency of the legal aid scheme. Before decisions are taken on the recommendations, the Government would welcome comments on them. These should be sent to the Lord Chancellor's Department, Room 316, Neville House, Page Street, London, SW1 to arrive by 30 September 1986.

SCOTLAND

Dairy Farms (Rates)

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any plans to introduce legislation to make milk pasteurisation and bottling plants on farms part of an industrial process for planning and rating purposes in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram: The present position as regards planning is that, under class V in schedule 1 to the Town and Country Planning (General Development) (Scotland) Order 1981, the carrying out on agricultural land having an area of more than 0·4 hectares and comprised in an agricultural unit of building or engineering operations requisite for the use of that land for the purposes of agriculture is development permitted without express planning permission. The Government take the view that an agricultural building is permitted development only if its intended use is ancillary to an agricultural activity carried out on the open land in that agricultural unit.

Whether milk pasteurisation and bottling plants on farms are permitted development or require express planning permission will depend on the facts in any individual case and will be a matter for the planning authority in the first instance to determine.

In a consultation paper on amendments to the General Development Order issued by my Department in January 1984 it was proposed that the wording of class V should be revised to make it clear that permitted development rights were allowed for agricultural buildings and engineering operations which are sited on an agricultural unit of 0·4 hectares or more and are needed for the furtherance of an agricultural activity on the unit. My right hon. and learned Friend is considering whether these changes should be included among the further amendments which will be made to the General Development Order, as announced in the White Paper "Building Businesses . . . not Barriers" (Cmnd. 9794, May 1986).

The present position as regards rating is that agricultural lands and buildings as defined in the Valuation and Rating (Scotland) Act 1956 are not entered in the valuation roll. My right hon. and learned Friend has no plans to change this.

Chernobyl Accident

Mr. Maclennan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish the results of the further monitoring of foodstuffs in Scotland likely to be affected as a result of the Chernobyl accident; and if he will make a statement on his conclusions about the testing.

Mr. John MacKay: I would refer the hon. Member to my right hon. and learned Friend's statement on 24 June. The results of the latest monitoring are being placed in the Library.

Dunfermline and West Fife Hospital

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) when he expects to approve the second phase of the Dunfermline and West Fife, hospital; and when he expects its construction to be completed;

(2) what he estimates to be the delays being caused to the Dunfermline and West Fife hospital phase two by the additional studies ordered into the feasibility of expansion at the Victoria hospital in Kirkcaldy; and when he expects those studies to be completed.

Mr. John MacKay: I shall consider Fife health board's proposals for phase II of West Fife district general hospital when the board submits a revised option appraisal study of acute hospital beds needs in the whole of Fife, which will take account of the results of the additional studies into the feasibility of further development at Kirkcaldy. I understand that these studies will be completed shortly. Meanwhile, I cannot say whether or when approval will be given, or when construction will be completed.

Leukaemia

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects to complete his study into the geographical distribution of leukaemia in young persons in Scotland with special reference to the Rosyth area.

Mr. John MacKay: Details of a preliminary report by the information services division of the Common Services Agency of the Scottish Health Service were given in a pursuant reply of 9 June to my hon. Friend the Member for Cunninghame, North (Mrs. Currie), at column 33. That report included figures for leukaemia in the Rosyth area. Further analysis is taking place, and I understand that the information services division hopes to complete the study by the autumn.

Sheep Thyroids

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish all the information from the recent routine monitoring of sheep thyroids in Caithness carried out by the isotopes section of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food central laboratory in Weybridge; what are the comparable figures for similar periods in previous years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram: As part of the routine surveillance in condition with the Dounreay nuclear establishment, samples of the thyroid glands of sheep slaughtered at Thurso are analysed at the central veterinary laboratories of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

Results for recent years were included in a report submitted by Her Majesty's Industrial Pollution Inspectorate as part of its evidence to the public local inquiry into the proposal to locate the European demonstration fast reactor reprocessing plant at Dounreay. That report was entitled: "Environmental monitoring for radioactivity around Dounreay Nuclear Power Development Establishment, 1981-1985; HMIPI Production No. 3, 1986". I am arranging for a copy of the report to be placed in the Library.

Fishing Vessels

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his estimate of the numbers of British fishing vessels engaged in monofilament net fishing in *(a)* North sea fishing grounds north of the Scottish border and *(b)* Scottish waters in each of the last three years; and what is his estimate of the value and volume of the catch landed in Scotland from such vessels.

Mr. John MacKay [*pursuant to his reply*, 5 June 1986, c. *605*]: No estimates are available for 1983. The estimates for 1984 and 1985 for Scottish vessels are:

	Number of vessels	*Weight of catch in tonnes*	*Value £*
1984			
**(a)*	10	18	10,400
†(b)	30	54	28,000
1985			
**(a)*	13	9	7,200
†(b)	40	50	25,000

* Reliable information is not available about the number of other British fishing vessles fishing with monofilament nets in North sea fishing grounds north of the Scottish border and outside Scottish inshore waters. However in 1984, four English vessels landed 14 tonnes of demersal fish, valued at £11,000 at Scottish ports, In 1985, two such vessels landed 30 tonnes valued at £20,000. These vessels may have used multifilament rather than monofilament nets.

† There is no record of any landings at Scottish ports in 1984 or 1985 by other British fishing vessels fishing with monofilament nets in Scottish inshore waters.

WALES

Welsh Language

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will take steps to establish the office of a commissioner in Wales to deal with questions relating to the use of the Welsh language, and to investigate cases of alleged discrimination against persons asking to use the Welsh language in dealing with public authorities.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: No.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales what is his Department's policy with regard to releasing statements to the press in the Welsh language or bilingually in Welsh and English.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Most departmental press notices are issued in English. However, where the subject relates specifically to the Welsh language, press notices are issued in Welsh as well as in English.

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Wales what action he has taken to commission research into the effect of S4C on the use of the Welsh language; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: In its response to the second report from the Committee on Welsh Affairs "Report on Broadcasting in the Welsh language", Cmnd. 8469, the Government accepted the Committee's recommendation about the need for cost-effective research.

In 1983 I commissioned the department of social theory and institutions at the University College of North Wales to undertake a feasibility study on the costs and methodology which could be employed in a possible full scale study. The Social Science Research Council was consulted prior to the commencement of the project and a member of the staff at the centre for mass communications research, University of Leicester acted as the Department's adviser during the course of the project.

I have now received the report, a copy of which has been placed in the Library of the House.

The complexities of the task were fully recognised by all from the outset, and I have concluded, with the benefit of expert advice, that a further long-term study at an estimated cost of £400,000 as recommended in the report could not be justified.

Radioactivity

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales what steps he is taking to monitor the radioactivity in beef in north Wales after the heavy rains of 2 May in the wake of the Chernobyl disaster; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Tests carried out in Gwynedd and Clwyd since the Chernobyl incident have shown levels of radioactivity in beef below the internationally recommended action levels. Further tests are being made.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Street Names

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland following the joint statements of the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference on 17 June 1986, what will be the basis of consultation to establish if a local community desires a street name in the Irish language.

Mr. Needham: I am considering how local wishes might be ascertained. If a practical scheme can be devised, legislation will be necessary and would be subject to public consultation in the normal way.

Newry-Warrenpoint Road (Detonator)

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the origin of the detonator found in the 1,000 lb terrorist bomb which was defused on 22 June on the Newry-Warrenpoint road near the land frontier with the Republic of Ireland.

Mr. Scott: The detonator was manufactured in Canada.

ENERGY

Coal Industry (Mine Developments)

Mr. Iain Mills asked the Secretary of State for Energy if, when he next meets the chairman of the National Coal Board, he will raise with him the board's practice with regard to the speed with which it pursues formal planning applications for new mine developments after the initial announcement of its intention to proceed, and the implications of this for planning blight in the areas affected; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: This is a matter for the National Coal Board, and I shall ask the chairman to write to my hon. Friend.

Council of Energy Ministers

Mr. Andrew MacKay asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement about the meeting of the European Community Council of Energy Ministers which met on 3 June.

Mr. Peter Walker [*pursuant to his reply*, 20 June 1986, c. 653-4]: I am happy to announce the formal adoption of the decision establishing a new regime governing the payment of state aids to the coal industry. I welcome the agreement for a long-term stable European Community framework for the coal industry.

THE ARTS

Export of Works of Art

Mr. Faulds asked the Minister for the Arts whether, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Warley, East on 26 February, *Official Report*, column *593*, he is now able to announce the publication of the report of the Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art covering the year ended 30 June 1985.

Mr. Luce [*pursuant to his reply*, 24 June 1986, c. *94*]: I am now able to announce that the report of the Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art covering the year ended 30 June 1985 has been published today. Copies are available in the Library of the House.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Value Added Tax

Mr. Wigley asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many official value added tax forms and explanatory leaflets are published in languages other than English; if he will list these languages; and what arrangements exist for staff to discuss problems with value-added tax officers in these languages.

Mr. Brooke: Customs and Excise publish English and Welsh versions of the three statutory VAT forms. These are the forms for applying for VAT registration, the VAT return form and the final return form which is used when a business ceases to be registered for VAT. No other forms are produced in any language other than English: nor are the explanatory leaflets. However, the local VAT offices in those areas where Welsh is spoken will always provide a Welsh-speaking officer to explain the VAT rules and procedures where necessary.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

European Commission

Sir Russell Johnston asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what part Her Majesty's Government play in the appointment of

representatives of the European Commission in *(a)* European Community member states and *(b)* other states; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: Decisions about appointments of Commission representatives in member states and in other states are for the Commission.

Polish-German Border

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if the United Kingdom recognises the present border between Poland and the German Democratic Republic de jure as well as de facto.

Mr. Eggar: No. Successive British Governments have given de facto but not de jure recognition to the border between Poland and the German Democratic Republic. There has been no change in that position.

Law of the Sea Treaty

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what further consideration Her Majesty's Government have given to signing the law of the sea treaty.

Mr. Eggar: The period for signature of the law of the sea convention ended on 9 December 1984. Although it remains possible for us to accede to the convention at any stage, our fundamental objections to the proposed seabed mining regime remain.

Falkland Islands (Penguins)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what efforts are being made by Her Majesty's Government to discover the cause of deaths amongst penguins around the Falkland Islands; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food exceptionally granted licences in April and May under the Importation of Animals Pathogens Order 1980 to allow the Falkland Islands Foundation to import 15 penguin carcases into the United Kingdom. These are currently being examined at the Ministry of Veterinary Investigation Centre in Norwich.

Diplomatic Missions (Parking Fines)

Mr. Wheeler asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a further statement about his Department's policy on unpaid parking fines incurred by members of diplomatic missions; and whether he will publish up-to-date figures held by his Department about the number of such fines incurred by individual diplomatic missions.

Mr. Eggar: The improvements, mentioned in my replies of 15 November 1985 and 21 February 1986 to my hon. Friend following the stiffer measures which came into effect on 1 May 1985, have continued. Quarterly figures for the 12 month period ending 31 March 1986 are as follows. On the basis of the figures for the most recent quarter, the annual rate of illegal parking offences is now under 30,000 compared with over 108,000 in 1984. These figures represent good progress and demonstrate the Government's determination to honour the commitment in last year's White Paper on diplomatic privileges and immunities to

"reduce very substantially the present level of illegal parking by diplomatic vehicles".

They are also welcome evidence of co-operation by most of the Diplomatic Corps.

Certain missions have brought about spectacular reductions in their parking figures. Many others have reduced their figures substantially but some are still too high. Now that missions have had adequate time to make practical arrangements to comply with our regulations we intend to intensify our efforts to persuade those which have not yet fallen into line to do so. The Government remain determined that persistent offenders who do not pay their fines shall be withdrawn or transferred.

	1985 1st quarter	*1985 2nd quarter*	*1985 3rd quarter*	*1985 4th quarter*	*1986 1st quarter*
Afghanistan	3	7	3	7	2
Algeria	285	299	254	139	75
Antigua and Barbuda	0	0	0	0	0
Australia	0	0	0	0	0
Austria	18	14	10	6	8
Bahamas	5	4	3	1	1
Bahrain	166	167	174	114	17
Bangladesh	71	70	48	53	32
Barbados	58	68	38	39	61
Belgium	12	17	13	9	17
Bolivia	15	2	0	2	0
Botswana	2	2	9	2	1
Brazil	1,025	499	15	16	36
Brunei	29	53	48	33	36
Bulgaria	579	647	389	317	162
Burma	91	95	91	29	33
Cameroon	268	268	297	119	122
Canada	67	45	69	51	58
Chile	131	89	50	31	38
China	149	263	203	148	164
Colombia	92	68	22	17	8
Costa Rica	146	114	54	63	14
Cuba	473	408	129	8	14
Cyprus	532	178	35	37	28
Czechoslovakia	60	34	24	20	15
Denmark	0	1	0	0	1
Eastern Caribbean States	6	1	5	7	7

	1985 1st quarter	1985 2nd quarter	1985 3rd quarter	1985 4th quarter	1986 1st quarter
Ecuador	58	49	25	12	7
Egypt	1,357	1,015	735	513	193
El Salvador	0	5	4	2	4
Ethiopia	88	44	25	27	35
Fiji	15	12	8	24	6
Finland	102	109	72	64	38
France	486	433	249	226	255
Gabon	50	51	51	43	26
Gambia	69	68	63	101	44
German Democratic Republic	130	112	49	38	100
Germany, Federal Republic of	31	27	35	39	41
Ghana	334	388	276	218	149
Greece	288	361	223	136	115
Grenada	0	1	0	1	0
Guyana	35	41	30	31	12
Haiti	0	0	2	0	0
Honduras	91	81	72	54	13
Hungary	397	290	135	133	37
Iceland	42	18	13	18	12
India	86	105	100	104	67
Indonesia	500	289	130	141	70
Iran	183	247	197	158	124
Iraq	498	692	439	335	231
Ireland, Republic of	221	149	53	47	89
Israel	50	64	32	48	53
Italy	633	347	212	189	143
Ivory Coast	101	157	118	56	43
Jamaica	375	164	92	40	23
Japan	433	231	87	96	99
Jordan	597	537	478	322	164
Kenya	269	481	468	197	126
Korea	35	16	25	16	60
Kuwait	176	136	111	48	63
Lebanon	21	7	10	4	8
Lesotho	25	25	22	31	19
Liberia	24	39	35	27	6
Luxembourg	0	0	0	0	0
Malawi	30	59	26	2	1
Malaysia	769	559	137	114	221
Malta, Republic of	58	69	31	76	21
Mauritius	27	32	22	14	16
Mexico	58	75	61	52	66
Mongolia	3	3	2	2	1
Morocco	203	232	95	80	117
Nepal	28	6	3	2	8
Netherlands	5	6	4	2	3
New Zealand	0	0	0	0	1
Nicaragua	21	17	10	13	5
Nigeria, Federal Republic of	1,070	549	458	399	361
Norway	21	19	16	18	9
Oman	220	178	122	54	132
Pakistan	533	305	170	99	122
Panama	51	46	38	17	7
Papua New Guinea	1	0	1	4	3
Paraguay	43	35	21	24	24
Peru	148	119	79	71	57
Philippines	77	101	73	100	26
Poland	519	486	133	92	129
Portugal	263	206	82	110	73
Qatar	249	87	0	61	174
Romania	104	86	59	63	49
Saudia Arabia	852	586	499	202	395
Senegal	69	118	31	13	11
Seychelles	3	2	4	5	6
Sierra Leone	76	103	110	77	34
Singapore	19	3	1	1	3
Somali, Democratic Republic of	62	25	6	10	9
South Africa, Republic of	2	4	3	6	3
Soviet Union	308	335	262	219	185
Spain	325	314	108	136	111
Sri Lanka	79	117	85	75	47
Sudan	479	333	257	194	236
Swaziland	2	7	1	1	5

	1985 1st quarter	1985 2nd quarter	1985 3rd quarter	1985 4th quarter	1986 1st quarter
Sweden	26	14	8	14	19
Switzerland	6	0	3	1	0
Syria, Arab Republic of	247	165	70	65	80
Tanzania	224	234	150	93	19
Thailand	365	279	173	147	83
Togo	22	5	14	23	34
Tonga	0	0	1	2	0
Trinidad and Tobago	36	39	26	23	11
Tunisia	99	91	49	46	52
Turkey	365	340	173	123	409
Uganda	522	319	125	135	96
United Arab Emirates	316	285	271	209	106
United States of America	47	65	28	34	18
Uruguay	84	87	84	58	29
Venezuela	117	117	69	87	53
Vietnam	0	3	3	2	1
Yemen Arab Republic	24	20	6	4	1
People's Democratic Republic of Yemen	62	69	44	35	33
Yugoslavia	143	178	89	63	16
Zaire	69	59	46	12	9
Zambia	135	134	89	68	48
Zimbabwe	149	133	159	143	26
Apostolic Delegation	0	0	0	0	0
Commonwealth Secretariat	36	49	47	39	32
IMO	0	0	14	2	2
WEU	1	0	1	2	1
Cocoa	0	1	0	1	1
United Nations	0	1	1	0	1
EEC	2	1	1	1	1
Coffee	2	0	2	0	0
Inmasat	1	0	1	0	0
Sugar	2	0	0	0	0
Total	21,962	18,114	11,407	8,647	7,276

TRANSPORT

M1 Hemel Hempstead

Mr. Richard Page asked the Secretary of State for Transport what is the reason for the closure of the northbound access to the M1 at Hemel Hempstead; and when he expects the access to be re-opened.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The slip road has been closed as part of major renovation works on the M1 northwards from junction 8 to near Redbourn. The hard shoulder is acting at some times as a running lane and at others as part of the contractor's site. It would not be safe to allow vehicles to enter the motorway at this point. We hope to reopen the slip road on Friday 4 July. It will have to be closed again for about a week in early September during the last phase of the works.

M11 (Slip Roads)

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he is in a position to make a statement on the outcome of his Department's consideration of the contested proposals for north-facing slip roads at an M11 interchange in the Debden estate of Loughton.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We have carried out a survey of the traffic implications of adding north-facing slip roads. We are considering the results in the light of the environmental consequences and will make an announcement in due course. If we decide to go ahead with proposals, they will be subject to the normal statutory procedures.

Driving Tests

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Transport what additional delay takes place for applicants for driving tests who indicate that they wish the examinations to take place in languages other than English; how many examiners are now able to hold examinations in languages other than English; which languages they are and how many examiners in Wales are now able to provide examinations in Welsh.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: With the single exception of tests in Wales which applicants may choose to have conducted in Welsh, driving tests in Great Britain are conducted in English only. Applicants for whom this may pose difficulties can be accompanied on test by an interpreter. The Department currently employs six examiners who can conduct tests in Welsh. No separate records are kept of applications for tests in Welsh. Candidates for such tests should not normally have to wait longer than other applicants.

Woolwich Ferry

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will set out the numbers of days between 1 April and 21 June on which there were interruptions to the Woolwich ferry service resulting from either mechanical or staffing difficulties.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Fifty.

Wheelclamping

Sir Brandon Rhys-Williams asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he proposes to extend wheelclamping within central London.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Yes. I have received requests from a number of local authorities in central London to adjust the boundaries of the clamping area. I propose to lay orders before Parliament shortly to designate further parts of Kensington and Chelsea and Westminster, part of Camden, and the City of London for wheelclamping. At the same time I propose to lift the time limit on the existing clamping order.

M4 (Safety Barrier)

Mr. Coombs asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the height of the central safety barrier on the M4 near junction 8/9.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: While it would be premature, pending completion of police investigations, to come to conclusions about the causes of the accident near junction 8/9 on 23 June, I have no reason at this time to think that the height of the barrier was a material factor.

EMPLOYMENT

Manpower Services Commission

Mr. Steen asked the Paymaster General what was the cost of running the Manpower Services Commission in each of the last three years; how many jobs were created as a result; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: Of the total Manpower Services Commission expenditure shown, approximately 84 per cent. related to grants and allowances to individuals and organisations; 15 per cent. to running costs; and 1 per cent. to capital expenditure.

Manpower Services Commission Expenditure†

	£ million
1983-84	1,769
1984-85	2,051
1985-86	*2,370

* (provisional)
† These figures include expenditure on behalf of the Department of Employment.

It is not possible to estimate the number of jobs created by the Manpower Services Commission. Although some programmes, such as the enterprise allowance scheme, create jobs directly, others do so only indirectly and figures are not available.

Skillcentres

Mr. Pike asked the Paymaster General how many places were available at skillcentres in: *(a)* the north-west region and *(b)* Lancashire in (i) 1979 and (ii) the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Trippier: 79,000 weeks of training were provided in the north-west region of the Skills Training Agency in 1985-86, 15,500 of them in Lancashire. Figures for 1979 are not available.

Statistics on skillcentre training volumes have, since 1983, been kept in terms of training weeks provided, rather than places available.

Jobcentres

Mr. Pike asked the Paymaster General, how many jobs were available at jobcentres in *(a)* the north-west region and *(b)* the Burnley constituency in (i) May 1979, (ii) June 1983 and (iii) the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Lang: Vacancy figures are not available by parliamentary constituency. However, the following table shows the numbers of unfilled vacancies in the north-west region and at Burnley and Padiham jobcentres, which cover an area closely corresponding to the Burnley constituency.

Vacancies at jobcentres (excluding community programme)

	North West Region	Burnley and Padiham Jobcentres
May 1979	20,134	414
June 1983	14,633	239
May 1986	18,500	256

Manufacturing (North-West)

Mr. Pike asked the Paymaster General how many people were employed in manufacturing industries in 1979 and each subsequent year in the north-west region.

Mr. Lang: The information is as follows:

Employees in employment in the manufacturing industries in the north-west region.

March of each year Year	Number
1979	972,000
1980	933,000
1981	829,000
1982	768,000
1983	713,000
1984	690,000
1985	680,000
*1986	673,000

* The latest date for which an estimate is available.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Pike asked the Paymaster General how many people were unemployed for more than one year in 1979 and each subsequent year in *(a)* the Burnley travel-to-work area and *(b)* the north-west region.

Mr. Lang: Following is the available information which is in the Library. The figures are affected by the 1983 Budget provisions which mean that certain older men, mainly aged 60 or over, no longer have to sign on to receive benefit, and by the change in the timing of compilation of unemployment statistics in March 1986. Larger discontinuities occurred in the local area statistics in 1982 and 1983, with the change in the basis of the count, the introduction of ward-based statistics and the revision of boundaries of travel-to-work areas. Therefore the figures are not directly comparable.

North-West Region—Burnley travel-to-work area

	Number	
Claimants—Unemployed for over 12 months		
April 1983	173,517	—
April 1984	188,540	2,360
April 1985	201,547	2,411
April 1986	203,662	2,425

	Number
Registrants—Unemployed for over 12 months	
April 1979	60,088
April 1980	59,088
April 1981	84,500
April 1982	152,154

Job Creation

Mr. Pike asked the Paymaster General if he will give details of job creating schemes *(a)* for the current year and *(b)* planned for 1987 in the Burnley, Pendle and Hyndburn constituencies.

Mr. Lang: The full range of employment, enterprise and training opportunities described in the "Action for Jobs" booklet is available to people living in Burnley, Pendle and Hyndburn. The only exception is the new career development loans initiative which we are piloting in four areas.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Low Newton Remand Centre

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what percentage of persons under 21 years of age were being retained at Low Newton remand centre for periods up to one month, two months, three months, four months, five months, six months, seven months, eight months, nine months and over, on 15 May;

(2) how many persons under the age of 21 years were being retained at Low Newton remand centre on 15 May.

Mr. Mellor: The readily available information is given in the tables.

Estimated population of untried and convicted unsentenced prisoners aged under 21 at Low Newton remand centre on 30 April 1986; by length of time since initial remand in custody*

Length of time since initial remand in custody†	*Percentage*
Up to 1 month	46
Over 1 month up to 2 months	25
Over 2 up to 3 months	13
Over 3 up to 6 months	11
Over 6 months	4
All (235 persons)	100

* Based on records held centrally which are approximate; detailed checking of individual cases would involve disproportionate costs.
† Including any time which may have been spent on bail after the initial remand in custody or in custody in other establishments.

Estimated sentenced young offender population of Low Newton remand centre on 30 April 1986: by length of time spent under sentence in any prison department establishment*

Length of time spent under sentence† in any prison department establishment	*Percentage*
Up to 1 month	72
Over 1 month up to 2 months	10
Over 2 up to 3 months	5
Over 3 months	13
All‡ (60 persons)	100

* Based on records held centrally which are approximate: detailed checking of individual records would involve disproportionate cost.
† Excluding any time spent on remand in custody.
‡ Including fine defaulters.

Wales (Police Vehicles)

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what guidance he has given the chief constables of the Welsh police forces as to the use of the word "heddlu" as a description on police vehicles.

Mr. Giles Shaw: None.

Prisoners (Welsh Language)

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make provision for any person being held in a prison or remand centre in Wales, or any person from Wales being held in a prison or remand centre in England when exercising their right to legal advice to be able to receive that advice in the Welsh language if they so desire.

Mr. Mellor: Any person requiring legal advice in prison custody in England and Wales can be provided with details of Welsh-speaking solicitors listed in the appropriate Law Society regional directory of solicitors.

Police (Welsh Language)

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the guidelines which he has issued to the police forces of Wales concerning the circumstances of their use of the Welsh language.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The code of practice for the detention, treatment and questioning of persons by police officers issued under section 66 of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 makes provision for the interviewing by the police of persons who have difficulty understanding English or where the officer cannot speak the person's own language. The codes of practice have been made available in the Welsh language to chief officers of police in Wales.

Probation Service (North Wales)

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will review the policy of his Department in regard to the provision of a probation service in North Wales which reflects the linguistic character of the area.

Mr. Mellor: We are satisfied that the policies and practices of the North Wales probation committee adequately reflect the linguistic character of the area.

Marches (Bans)

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the number of marches that have been banned in England and Wales in relation to Northern Ireland since 1969, detailing where the marches were, who applied for permission to hold them and the grounds on which they were refused.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Under section 3 of the Public Order Act 1936 a banning order may be made only where there is a reasonable apprehension of serious public disorder and the disorder cannot be prevented by the issue of directions. The table gives details of the occasions since 1969 on which marches in connection with Northern Ireland are known to have been caught by such orders.

Date order began	Class or classes, of procession banned	Area(s) concerned	Proposed marches or processions known to have been caught by order	Duration of order
20 November 1974	All public processions connected with the death of James McDade	Solihull Birmingham Coventry	Marches associated with funeral of James McDade	1 month
26 September 1981	All public processions except those of a religious, education, festive or ceremonial character customarily held	Luton	Marches organised by Irish Republican groups and the British Movement	9 days
30 January 1982	All public processions except those of a religious, educationalal, festive or ceremonial character customarily held	Coventry	Marches organised by Irish Republican groups and the National Front	9 days
27 January 1984	All public processions except those of religious, educational, festive or ceremonial character customarily held	Sheffield North-East Derbyshire Bradford Chesterfield Rotherham	Marches organised by Irish Republican groups and the National Front	2 days

Wales (Bilingual Passport Form)

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will take steps to introduce a fully bilingual passport form for applicants for passports living in Wales.

Mr. Waddington: The low level of demand for bilingual forms would not justify the expense of producing them. Passport offices serving Wales can, however, process forms completed in Welsh.

Immigration

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many of those against whom action was commenced as illegal immigrants in *(a)* 1983, *(b)* 1984, *(c)* 1985 and *(d)* the first quarter of 1986 had signed statements admitting that they had entered the United Kingdom illegally by deception;

(2) how many of those against whom action was commenced as illegal immigrants in *(a)* 1983, *(b)* 1984, *(c)* 1985 and *(d)* the first quarter of 1986 had also overstayed a leave to enter or remain in the United Kingdom;

(3) how many of those against whom action was commenced as illegal immigrants in *(a)* 1983, *(b)* 1984, *(c)* 1985 and *(d)* the first quarter of 1986 were detected as a result of each of the following (i) denunciatory letters, (ii) the INDECS system or manually held information from landing cards, (iii) routine checks on the Immigration Service Intelligence Unit, (iv) applications for variation of leave, (v) joint police-immigration service inquiries into alleged breaches of immigration control and (vi) joint police-immigration service inquiries into alleged criminal offences;

(4) how many of those against whom action was commenced as illegal immigrants in *(a)* 1983, *(b)* 1984, *(c)* 1985 and *(d)* the first quarter of 1986 had been in the United Kingdom for: (i) less than one year, (ii) between one and five years and (iii) over five years.

Mr. Waddington: The information is not readily available in the form requested and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many of those against whom action was commenced as illegal entrants in *(a)* 1985 and *(b)* the first quarter of 1986 absconded from temporary admission.

Mr. Waddington: In 1985, 21 persons absconded having previously been served with notice that they were illegal entrants. The figure for the first quarter of 1986 was nil.

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many of those against whom action was commenced as illegal entrants in *(a)* 1983, *(b)* 1984, *(c)* 1985 and *(d)* the first quarter of 1986 were alleged to have (i) entered clandestinely, (ii) entered in breach of a deportation order and (iii) exercised deception on entry, respectively.

Mr. Waddington: An entry may be unlawful for more than one reason. For example, a person may enter in breach of a deportation order by avoiding the controls or by presenting a forged passport making the definition of these categories unreliable for precise statistical purposes. The available information, however, indicates a breakdown along the following lines:

	1984	1985	1986*
(i) Clandestine entry	104	73	14
(ii) Entry in breach of a deportation order	61	67	17
(iii) Entry by deception	617	812	352

* First quarter only.

Corresponding information is not available for 1983.

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will provide a breakdown by nationality of *(a)* people against whom action was commenced as illegal entrants in each of the following years; 1983, 1984, 1985 and the first quarter of 1986, *(b)* those detained in custody as a result of such action in those years and *(c)* those removed as illegal entrants or who subsequently departed voluntarily in those years.

Mr. Waddington: The information requested is not readily available for 1983. Information of the number of different nationalities involved for the other years specified is as follows. The information on detention relates to sole

Immigration Act detention at any time including brief detention in order to effect removal after a period of temporary release.

In 1984 action was initiated [illegible] illegal entry against the nationals of 76 countries. Of these, the nationals of 48 countries were detained solely under powers given in the Immigration Act 1971 and the nationals of 59 countries were either removed or made a voluntary departure. The corresponding figures for 1985 were 80, 61 and 71, respectively, and for the first quarter of 1986, 52, 40 and 49.

Wormwood Scrubs

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how much money has been spent on the renewal and refurbishment of kitchens in Wormwood Scrubs prison; when each new and refurbished kitchen will be brought into use; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: The major redevelopment of Wormwood Scrubs prison will include a new building linking the four existing wings of the prison and including a kitchen. Subject to the necessary financial and planning procedures, it is hoped that work on this new building will begin in 1988 and be completed in 1991. The total cost of the building is estimated at £21·8 million, of which the cost of the kitchen is estimated at £1·5 million. Meanwhile, it is essential to undertake a minimum of upgrading and refurbishment in the existing kitchen in order to keep it functioning until the new building is complete. Tenders will be issued shortly for this work which will take about six months to complete at an estimated cost of £154,000. As part of the earlier redevelopment scheme begun in 1982 a building then intended to be used as a kitchen was built at a cost of about £1 million. That building will now be used as a workshop.

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on rat infestation at Wormwood Scrubs prison and upon steps being taken to combat it.

Mr. Mellor: The presence of rats in Wormwood Scrubs prison has been reported on two recent occasions. In May and June 1986; both incidents were dealt with promptly by pest control contractors. Any further sightings will be dealt with at once.

Young Prisoners (Violence)

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether there have been any Home Office or Prison Department investigations into inmate violence at any youth custody or detention centre regime; and if he will publish the findings.

Mr. Mellor: A number of surveys and investigations for management purposes have been carried out in young offender establishments in recent years covering a variety of matters, including inmate violence. We have no plans to publish any reports on this subject. Statistics relating to disciplinary proceedings against inmates for violence against officers, inmates or other persons are published in the annual volume "Prison Statistics England and Wales".

Probation and Community Service

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department for the latest year for which figures are available, what was the total expenditure on probation and commu. ty service in England and Wales.

Mr. Mellor: Precise information is not available in the form requested, but an estimate of total expenditure for 1983-84 on administering probation orders and community service orders is £34 million and £13 million, respectively, out of total expenditure on the probation service of £156 million.

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department, for the latest year for which figures are available, what was the total expenditure on alternatives to custody excluding probation and community service in England and Wales.

Mr. Mellor: It is difficult to isolate expenditure on alternatives to custody other than those which are the responsibility of the probation service. Available figures show that the cost of attendance centres in the financial year 1984-85 was around £1·1 million and the Government are giving £18 million for the development of intermediate treatment.

Prisons (Visits)

Mr. Clay asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what are the criteria applied in deciding whether particular prisoners at Her Majesty's prison Gartree receive open or closed visits respectively; and how these criteria have been applied in the particular cases of *(a)* Mr. Hugh Callaghan and *(b)* other convicted Irish Republican Army prisoners at the same establishments respectively;

(2) what are the criteria applied in deciding whether particular prisoners at Her Majesty's prison Frankland receive open or closed visits, respectively; and how these criteria have been applied in the particular cases of *(a)* Mr. Gerry Hunter and *(b)* other convicted Irish Republican Army prisoners at the same establishment respectively;

(3) what are the criteria applied in deciding whether particular prisoners at Her Majesty's prison Long Lartin receive open or closed visits, respectively; and how these criteria have been applied in the particular cases of *(a)* Mr. John Walker and *(b)* other convicted Irish Republican Army prisoners at the same establishment, respectively.

Mr. Mellor: All prisoners at Gartree and Frankland receive open visits unless with a view to securing discipline and good order or the prevention of crime or in the interests of any persons, the governor decides that closed visiting conditions are necessary, providing a barrier between the inmate and his visitors and thereby preventing physical contact.

There are no facilities for closed visits at Long Lartin at present and all prisoners there receive open visits.

Hippie Convoy

Mr. Chope asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the answer of 19 June, *Official Report*, column *643*, if he will specify for each of the offences committed by members of the hippie convoy the penalty imposed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The information which is readily available was set out in the answer referred to. If there is a particular case of concern to my hon. Friend, perhaps he would let me know.

ENVIRONMENT

Right to Repair Scheme (Bradford)

Mr. Lawler asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many people in Bradford have taken advantage of the right to repair scheme.

Sir George Young: The right to repair scheme began on 1 January 1986. Bradford city council has reported that it received no applications to use the scheme in the first quarter of its operation.

Defective Housing (Grants)

Mr. Heddle asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he proposes to give any guidance to local authorities on the definition of "financial hardship" for grants in respect of defective houses which fall within the scope of part XVI of the Housing Act 1985; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: My Department's circular 28/84 issued in 1984, offered authorities broad guidance, but it is for individual local authorities to decide their criteria for determining financial hardship cases under the housing defects legislation. We are monitoring authorities' practices, and will consider whether any further advice is needed.

British Waterways Board

Miss Boothroyd asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) whether he will list the level of subsidy provided to the British Waterways Board for each of the last five years for which records are available;

(2) whether he will give details of the expenditure of the British Waterways Board for each of the last five financial years for which records are available.

Mr. John Patten: Audited accounts for the British Waterways Board are included in its annual reports, which are laid before Parliament. The following table shows for each of the last five years the board's expenditure on waterways operation and maintenance and grant aid from the Department for this purpose:

£ million

	1980	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	**1984-85*
Gross expenditure on waterways operation and maintenance	30·9	32·1	37·4	41·7	52·3
DOE grant aid	23·5	27·3	34·6	38·8	49·7

* 15-month period to provide for translation of accounts to financial year basis.

Miss Boothroyd asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will list for each of the last five years for which records are available the levels of rental charged by the British Waterways Board for the use of waterways throughout Great Britain.

Mr. John Patten: Charging policies by the British Waterways Board are a matter for its day-to-day management and records are not held in the Department. The main charges for use of the waterways relate to licensing of boats. The board reviews and publicises these charges each year.

Warren Spring Laboratory (Contracts)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the total value of the contracts which have been gained by the Warren Spring laboratory from his Department for its work carried out on acid rain and oil pollution.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Department of the Environment has two contracts with the Warren Spring laboratory for monitoring and other work on air pollution. The contracts are varied annually. In 1985-86, some £1,230,000 of the contract sums was spent on work directly related to the acid rain problem. I understand that the Department of Transport lets a contract annually to the laboratory for work on marine oil pollution and that expenditure on the contract in 1985-86 amounted to £801,000.

Nuclear Waste

Mr. Douglas Hogg asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will specify precisely the criteria used to define the nature and quality of the low-level nuclear waste now disposed of at Drigg in Cumbria; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: Disposals of radioactive waste in the United Kingdom are authorised under the Radioactive Substances Act 1960. BNFL is authorised under sections 6(1) and 6(3) of that Act to dispose of solid radioactive waste, including sludges, at Drigg, by the Department of the Environment and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

The conditions of the authorisation requires that low-level waste for disposal at Drigg meets the following criteria:

a. that the dose-rate at the surface of substantially unshielded waste containing radionuclides emitting one or both of the following, that is to say, beta particles or gamma radiations does not exceed 7.5 milligrays per hour in air;

b. that in all the matter (whether or not consisting wholly of the waste) buried on the stie in any one day;

i. the alpha activity on the average does not exceed 740 megabecquerels per cubic metre; and

ii. the beta activity of beta emitting radionuclides which do not emit gamma radiation on the average does not exceed 2.2 gigabecquerels per cubic metre.

In order to secure compliance with the authorisation, and ensure safe working practices, BNFL, with the agreement of the authorising Departments, imposes its own more restrictive conditions on consignments of waste for disposal at Drigg.

Birlsbury Wood

Miss Maynard asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how much was paid to the owners of

Birlsbury Wood on the borders of Hampshire and Dorset under the provisions of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 for not clearing the woodland; under which sections of the Act; and how much has been paid in total in similar payments made under the financial guidelines of this Act in the past 12 months.

Mrs. Rumbold: I shall answer this question shortly.

Water Authorities (Privatisation)

Mr. Boyes asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list in the *Official Report* the names of merchant bankers, stockbrokers, public relations officers and accountants engaged by each water authority on the privatisation of the authority and the amount paid to each to date; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: This is a matter for the individual water authorities.

Mr. Boyes asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list in the *Official Report* the names of the merchant bankers, stockbrokers, accountants and corporate lawyers he will engage to meet preliminary expenses in the sale of shares in water authorities; and how much he expects to pay each one.

Mr. John Patten: The Government have appointed J. Henry Schroder Wagg and Co. as its merchant bankers and Touche Ross and Co. as their general accountancy advisers in connection with water authority privatisation. Stockbroking and legal advisers have not yet been appointed. It is too early to say what the costs of these advisers, which are based on a time input, will be.

London Wildlife Trust

Mr. Hanley asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if his Department has considered an application for an exhibition relating to the London Wildlife Trust to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall.

Mr. Waldegrave: I understand that arrangements have been made with the authorities of the House for the exhibition to be held in the Upper Waiting Hall from Monday 30 June until Friday 4 July.

Conference Centre, Westminster

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish the tariff for private use of each main facility at the new Westminster conference centre and the criteria he applies when considering its use by non-public organisations.

Sir George Young [*pursuant to his reply*, 26 June 1986]: The daily accommodation charges for the main conference rooms at the Queen Elizabeth II conference centre are as follows:

	£
Churchill Auditorium	3,000
Fleming Room	3,000
Whittle Room	1,800
Henry Moore Room	300
Rutherford Room	300
Fleet Room	300

Bookings on fully commercial terms will be considered from any non-Governmental organisation, body or person for functions appropriate to the conference centre. The overall aim will be to maximise the income to the centre so as to minimise any net cost to the taxpayer.

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will state the dates, occasions and nature of each event due to take place at public expense at the Queen Elizabeth II conference centre from its opening until 31 December.

Sir George Young [*pursuant to his reply*, 26 June 1986]: The overwhelming Government use of the conference centre during the remainder of 1986 is concerned with the United Kingdom's Presidency of the European Community. This will involve a series of meetings at both official and ministerial level culminating in a meeting of the European Council of Ministers on 5-6 December.

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will state the estimated outturn cost of the Queen Elizabeth II conference centre together with the expected gross cost and net cost of its operations during the remainder of 1986.

Sir George Young [*pursuant to his reply*, 26 June 1986]: The estimated cost of the construction and fitting out of the superstructure including the fitting out of the extension to the parliamentary telephone exchange, contractors' claims paid to date, inflation, variation of price payments and furnishing is £55·7 million.

The estimated total operating cost for the six-month period to the end of December 1986 is £3·6 million and the net cost is £2·75 million.

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the names of the bodies or persons he expects to be sponsoring private functions at the Queen Elizabeth II conference centre at Westminster in 1986 and the estimated income derived therefrom.

Sir George Young [*pursuant to his reply*, 26 June 1986]: Facilities at the conference centre are being made available for private functions on fully commercial terms. It would be contrary to accepted commercial practice to disclose such terms, or the names of the people or ogranisations with whom they have been agreed.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Equine Census

Mr. Iain Mills asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when the last equine census took place; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Fenner: No such census is conducted by my Department. However, information was sought in the 1983 agriculture census on the numbers of horses kept on farms. The results were as follows:

	England	*United Kingdom*
Horses used for agriculture or horticultural purposes	4,440	6,420
Other horses and ponies kept on farms	124,000	160,000

These figures did not include horses kept in specialised establishments such as racing stables and riding schools.

Radiation

Dr. David Clark asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will place in the Library the statistics relating to the testing of foodstuffs since the Chernobyl incident.

Mr. Jopling: I have placed in the Library of the House the results of monitoring of foodstuffs published by my Department on 20 June

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the instances known to his Department where food has been found to be contaminated to a level of 1,000 becquerels/kilo or more since the Chernobyl disaster, giving the type of food, the location and the level of contamination.

Mr. Jopling [*pursuant to his reply*, Thursday 26 June 1986]: I refer the hon. Member to the data published by my Department on 20 June, a copy of which is in the Library of the House.

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will publish a table showing, in comparable terms, the levels of radioactive contamination of food which are officially recognised in the United Kingdom as being normal, requiring precautions and dangerous, respectively, together with such comparable information as is available relating to France, West Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Belgium, Austria, Switzerland, Finland, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Poland and Czechoslovakia.

Mrs. Fenner [*pursuant to her reply*, Thursday 26 June 1986]: Control of exposure to radiation in the United Kingdom is exercised on the basis of recommendations published by the International Commission on Radiological Protection (ICRP).

Generalised Derived Limits (GDLs) are published by the National Radiological Protection Board (NRPB) for a range of radionuclides in a variety of foodstuffs, and these are designed to ensure that prolonged exposure will not result in the ICRP done limits being exceeded. Different considerations apply in an emergency and the NRPB have also published guidance on derived emergency reference levels which take into account the transient nature of the contamination; the levels are therefore higher then the GDLs. We have not been officially notified of the levels operating in the other countries referred to, but most if not all also subscribe to the recommendations of the ICRP, interpreting them according to their own particular circumstances.

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will publish details of all measurements of radiation taken on behalf of his Department since 2 May giving details of the materials sampled, the location and timing of each sample, and the results of each monitoring.

Mrs Fenner [*pursuant to her reply*, Thursday 26 June 1986]: The data published by my Department on 20 June (a copy of which is in the Library of the House) contain the results of monitoring for radioactive contamination by my Department since the beginning of May. Results of further monitoring will be published regularly.

Mr. John asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the dates on which lambs tested for radioactivity were found to have had doses in excess of 600 becquerels per kilo, the number of animals involved on each date, and the exact reading in each instance.

Mrs. Fenner [*pursuant to her reply*, 26 June 1986]: I refer the hon. Member to the monitoring data published by my Department on 20 June, a copy of which is in the Library of the House.

Entry and Search Powers

Mr. Michael Brown asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many officials for whom he has responsibility currently have the power to enter and search premises, subject to statutory conditions; and, in each case, if he will indicate the statutory authority under which power is exercised.

Mr. Jopling [*pursuant to his reply*, 13 June 1986, c *335*]: The power to enter and search premises arises under the legislation shown below. In each case except one the list also shows the number of officials for whom I have responsibility who are authorised to exercise that power.

(a) Sea Fish (Conservation) Act 1967.
54 Sea Fisheries Inspectorate Officers. (section 16(1)).

(b) Fisheries Act 1981.
23 British Sea-Fishery Officers. (section 25(2) which inserted a new sub-section (2A) into section 15 of the Sea Fish (Conservation) Act 1967).

(c) Food and Environment Protection Act 1985.
23 British Sea-Fishery Officers. (Part I, section 4 and Part II, section 11 together with Schedule 2, paragraph 4).
4 Fisheries Scientists. (Part II, section 11 together with Schedule 2, paragraph 4).
Investigating and Enforcement Officers who may be needed for short periods when an emergency order is in force or being considered; the actual number varies considerably at any one time. (Part I, section 4 together with Schedule 2, paragraph 4).
Of the 54 Sea Fisheries Inspectorate Officers mentioned at *(a)*, 23 are appointed British Sea-Fishery Officers and, as such, have the power to enter and search under *(b)* and *(c)*.
The British Sea-Fishery Officers mentioned at *(b)* and *(c)* also have powers under section 8(3) of the Sea Fisheries Act 1968 (as amended by section 26(2) of the Fisheries Act 1981) and under section 27(2) and (3) of the Fisheries Act 1981 to enter and search which are limited to boats.
The powers under *(c)* do not extend to dwellings without a specific warrant from a magistrate.

Sheep (Movement)

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what factors determined the timing of his decision relating to lamb movements announced on 20 June.

Mr. Jopling [*pursuant to his reply*, 26 June 1986]: The Ministry and the Welsh Office undertook a comprehensive programme of monitoring of foodstuffs following the accident at Chernobyl. High levels of radiocaesium were found in the middle of May only in young lambs not due to be coming onto the market until the autumn. However, results obtained last week showed that some lambs with

higher levels of radiocaesium were coming onto the market now. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales and I therefore took action on 20 June to prevent the marketing of animals in two areas in North Wales and Cumbria, respectively.

Radiation (Livestock Losses)

Mr. John asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) when he expects to be in a position to provide criteria for establishing severe loss in particular circumstances for purposes of paying compensation to farmers suffering losses as a result of restrictions on the movement, sale and slaughter of sheep;

(2) what plans he has to compensate farmers who incur losses as a result of the ban imposed on the movement, sale and slaughter of sheep in North Wales and Cumbria; and whether these include *(a)* compensation for the fact that the Guide Price will be lower when the animals are finally marketed and *(b)* compensation for those farmers whose lambs become over-fat as a result of the delay and who therefore lose entitlement to the variable premium.

Mr. Baldry asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will give details of compensation available for farmers who lose livestock due to dangerous levels of radiation.

Mr. Jopling [*pursuant to his reply*, 26 June 1986]: In my statement on 20 June I said that, while the measures I announced to protect consumers were in the general interest of the British sheep industry, the Government would if necessary be prepared to discuss cases of compensation for severe loss in particular circumstances to specific farmers. It is, however, too early to assess the extent of any losses and thus to consider the question of compensation.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Retardation and Autism

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what advice is given to general practitioners, hospital doctors and school doctors as to the extent and character of links between retardation and autism;

(2) what information he has as to the guidelines used by the teaching hospitals for training doctors on the detection and diagnosis of autism.

Mr. Hayhoe: The content of medical education and training is the responsibility of the professional bodies concerned. Keeping abreast of medical literature is a matter for doctors themselves. The advice on people with autism issued* by my Department is addressed to regional and district health authorities and is that such people should be identified and provision made for meeting their particular needs; that a range of services will be needed, taking account of the severity of features which are characteristic of autism, and also of the severity, or absence, of intellectual impairment, and other features; that authorities' plans should include provision for regular in-service education and training for staff to provide basic knowledge about this group, as well as about mentally handicapped people with other special needs; and that these are among the issues to which regions and districts need to address themselves in their strategic and operational plans, and which will need to be considered in the regional review process.

* Policy paper "Mental Handicap: Policies and Priorities" at annex 2 of the Government response to the report from the Social Services Committee on community care, Cmnd. 9674 1985.

Contraception

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many patients under the age of 16 years attended National Health Service clinics for contraceptive treatment in 1985.

Mr. Hayhoe: In 1984, 17,400 girls and 500 boys aged under 16 were seen in family planning clinics in England. Information for 1985 is not yet available.

Census (Welsh Language)

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will, in preparing for the 1991 census, include questions concerning the ability to speak Welsh for persons resident in England;

(2) if he will make it his policy to include a question as to how many of the people in Wales understand, as opposed to speak or write, the Welsh language in the 1991 census; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: No decisions have yet been taken concerning the questions to be included in the 1991 census, but in the course of the next two years the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys will be consulting users of census statistics and all requests will be carefully considered.

Departmental Publications (Welsh Language)

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if, pursuant to his answer of 13 June to the hon. Member for Caernarfon, *Official Report*, column *365*, he will state what constitutes economic viability in the context of decisions on whether to print bilingual Welsh/English forms, leaflets, posters and other printed matter produced by his Department in Wales.

Mr. Major: The decision on the economic viability of translating Department of Health and Social Security forms, leaflets and posters into the Welsh language depends on the frequency of demand. If the Department receives or anticipates, regular requests for a particular item it would, as a general rule, consider this as justifying the expense of translation, reproduction and distribution to local offices. This judgment is made by local and regional management.

Home Helps

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the number of home helps per 1,000 of the population over 65 years of age in each year from 1979 to 1986; and what percentage change that represents.

Mr. Hayhoe: The information is given in the table.

Table. Estimated number of home helps per thousand population aged 65 and over, 1979-85, and the percentage change. England

Year	*Number of home helps per thousand population aged 65 and over*
1979	6·40
1980	6·60
1981	6·55
1982	6·66
1983	6·99
1984	7·19
1985	7·16
Percentage change 1979-85	+11·8

Notes

(1) The numbers of home helps have been expressed as whole-time equivalents and relate to the position at 30 September each year.

(2) Estimated population at 30 June this year.

(3) The figures for 1985 are provisional, and the latest available.

(4) The figures relate to the population aged 65 and over rather than to those over 65 as they are more readily available and conform to usual practice.

New Hospitals

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, of the hospitals built or brought into operation since 1979 *(a)* how many of these were planned prior to 1979 and *(b)* how many are for sole use by National Health Service patients.

Mr. Hayhoe: Information held centrally shows that 45 hospital schemes each costing over £5 million have been completed since May 1979. Approval in principle was given to 39 of these schemes before that date. All but three of the hospitals of which these schemes form part are authorised to treat private patients.

NHS (Private Patients)

Mr. Onslow asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what are the current arrangements for crediting funds received for the treatment of private patients within the National Health Service.

Mr. Hayhoe: Health authorities retain in full the income they receive from private patients.

EC Nationals (Social Security)

Mr. John Mark Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the social security entitlements of European Economic Community visitors to the United Kingdom looking for work.

Mr. Major: European Community (EC) nationals looking for work in the United Kingdom may, if they have been receiving unemployment benefit in another EC country, continue to receive that benefit for up to 13 weeks here, subject to certain conditions laid down in EC rules. They may also claim means-tested social assistance benefits, such as supplementary benefit, under the same conditions as United Kingdom nationals. However, in these circumstances they may be asked to leave the United Kingdom on the ground that they have become a charge on public funds.

Dr. Issac Brave (Nursing Homes)

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many former patients of Rainhill hospital, St. Helens, have been transferred to nursing homes owned or formerly owned by Dr. Issac Brave in 1986 to date, 1985, 1984 and 1983.

Mr. Hayhoe: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Alvada Kooken

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many outside visits Alvada Kooken of Broadmoor hospital has had in each year of her detention.

Mr. Hayhoe: Miss Kooken has been detained in Broadmoor hospital since 29 November 1979. She made no outside visits other than to court and to collect her belongings until 1982. Since then she has had two visits in 1982, two in 1983, three in 1984, one in 1985 and one this year.

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what category patient is Alvada Kooken, who escaped on 23 June whilst on outside visit from Broadmoor hospital.

Mr. Hayhoe: Miss Kooken is detained in Broadmoor hospital under sections 47 and 49 of the Mental Health Act 1983.

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Social Services who authorised that Alvada Kooken, a patient of Broadmoor hospital, should be allowed to have £35 whilst on an outside trip.

Mr. Hayhoe: Arrangements for outings and the cash to be made available to a particular patient during an outing are considered initially at clinical team level, and are subject to approval by senior management.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the circumstances surrounding the abscondment whilst on day release from Broadmoor of Alvada Kooken, and what steps are being taken to secure her recapture.

Mr. Hayhoe: On 23 June, a group of 16 patients from Broadmoor hospital went on an outing to Southsea. They were escorted by six nurses. During a shopping expedition, Miss Kooken absconded from the party. The police were notified and given full details of those people considered to be at risk. As my hon. Friend will know, Miss Kooken was taken into police custody from a London hotel early on Wednesday 25 June and was returned to Broadmoor hospital on the same day.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Social Services on how many previous occasions Alvada Kooken has been allowed out of Broadmoor on day trips; how many of the current total number of patients have been allowed out in such circumstances during the last five years; what criteria are used in determining whether patients should enjoy this facility; what degree of supervision is applied in such cases; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

Broadmoor Hospital

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will suspend outside visits from Broadmoor hospital until an investigation on the escape of Alvada Kooken in Southsea, Portsmouth, on 23 June is completed.

Mr. Hayhoe: I understand that no further group outings from Broadmoor hospital are planned at present, and that arrangements for any future outings will take account of any lessons learned from Miss Kooken's absconding. It is not proposed to insist on any restrictions on other outside visits each of which is carefully considered before approval.

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will institute an urgent review of outside visits by patients of Broadmoor hospital following the escape of Alvada Kooken.

Mr. Hayhoe: Special hospital leave and outing arrangements have been reviewed on a number of occasions in recent years; and they are automatically reconsidered when there is an incident of some sort from which lessons might be learnt. The hospital has been asked for an urgent report on the regrettable incident.

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people were in the party including Alvada Kooken, from Broadmoor hospital, who visited Southsea on 23 June.

Mr. Hayhoe: There were 16 patients, accompanied by six nurses and a driver.

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many hospital officials accompanied the group from Broadmoor hospital on its visit to Southsea on 23 June.

Mr. Hayhoe: Six nurses from the hospital accompanied the group.

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many patients of Broadmoor have escaped whilst on outside visits in the last five years.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many patients of Broadmoor have absconded whilst on day release or some other form of approved temporary absence during the last five years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: Apart from Miss Kooken, one.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what procedures are followed when it is discovered that a patient of Broadmoor has absconded whilst on day release or some other form of approved temporary absence; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: In the case of a patient absconding while on escorted leave from the hospital, standing instructions require escorts to notify the local police immediately and to stand by to give any assistance or information the police might require. The hospital is also informed of the situation and, in the case of group outings, the remainder of the party is returned under escort to the hospital.

NHS Training Authority

Mr. Galley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the role of and the budget provided for the National Health Service training authority.

Mr. Hayhoe [*pursuant to his reply*, 3 June 1986, c. *545-46*]: I regret that my earlier reply contained an error. The figure for the authorities' budget for 1986-87 should read £5·734 million, not £4·734 million.

DEFENCE

Royal Yacht Britannia

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence on what basis the contract for the refit of the royal yacht Britannia will be awarded.

Mr. Lee: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave on 23 June, at column *28*, to a question by my hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Drake (Miss Fookes).

Arms Exports

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give the estimate for the expected value of total arms export sales from Britain in 1986; and what is the expected proportion of these which go to Third world countries.

Mr. Lee: It is not practicable to make annual forecast estimates of defence sales either in whole or in part.

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will state the figures for the total value of Britain's arms exports for the last calendar year for which figures are available and for each year since 1979; and if he will state the value of export sales to Third world countries in those years.

Mr. Lee: The information is as follows:

Total values of British exports of Identified Defence Equipment

	£ million
1980	537
1981	613
1982	904
1983	919
1984	825
1985	813

Total values of Exports to Third World Countries since 1979

	£ million
1980	53
1981	46
1982	30
1983	842
1984	443
1985	52

(Based on the World Bank's annual compilations of the world's 45 poorest countries, excluding dependencies and states with a population of less than 100,000).

Dr. Kurt Waldheim

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what steps he has taken pursuant to his inquiry into the interrogation and subsequent fate of British prisoners of war by German Army Group E, and further concerning the alleged involvement of Kurt Waldheim therein;

(2) when he expects to complete his inquiry into the interrogation and subsequent fate of British prisoners of war by German Army Group E and further concerning the alleged involvement of Kurt Waldheim therein;

(3) whether he will publish in full the result of his inquiry into the interrogation and subsequent fate of British prisoners of war by German Army Group E, and further concerning the alleged involvement of Kurt Waldheim therein; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: I refer the hon. and learned Member to the answer I gave him him on 3 June at column *427*.

Frigate Sales (Pakistan)

Mr. Chope asked the Secretary of State for Defence when he or one of the other Ministers in his Department next intends to visit Pakistan to discuss the possible sale of frigates to that country; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: My noble Friend the Minister of State for Defence Procurement is considering an early ministerial visit to Pakistan. As I said in reply to the hon. Member's question of 13 June details of the negotiations on these ships must at present remain confidential.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 30 June 1986

ENVIRONMENT

Faslane Bay

Mrs. McCurley asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he is now in a position to make a statement about dredging in Faslane bay and the means by which he intends to dispose of the waste, and in particular that part of it which is contaminated with asbestos.

Sir George Young: On behalf of the Ministry of Defence, the Property Services Agency is today letting a contract to dredge an area of Faslane bay in the vicinity of the proposed shiplift and finger jetty to enable submarines to dock there. The work entails the dredging of some 65,000 cubic metres of silt and transporting it by barge to the recognised underwater dumping ground in the Firth of Clyde between Cloch point and Strone point. Work is expected to start on site within the next few weeks.

Although this is essentially a straightforward dredging operation, there is known to be asbestos on the sea bed in Faslane bay arising from the former civil shipbreaking activities there. The quantity of asbestos is estimated to be only a small proportion of the dredged material by weight overall.

The Property Services Agency, employing specialist consultants Balfours, has taken great care to specify environmental constraints on dredging and disposal activities that will ensure the minimum of disturbance to the marine environment.

Even though the asbestos levels are low, it has been decided in view of public concern about asbestos that the selected contractor will be licensed under the Asbestos (Licensing) Regulations 1983 and may only employ workers properly trained in the correct working and hygiene procedures. The Health and Safety Executive has been fully informed of the proposed working method and is satisfied that no risk to the health of those undertaking the work is involved. Masters of vessels engaged in the work will be provided with details of the correct requirements. Throughout the operation and for a period thereafter, there will be careful monitoring around the area of dredging and the dumping ground and in selected locations around the estuary. This will be carried out by specialist consultants on behalf of the Property Services Agency. Monitoring stations will be set up to measure levels of turbidity, suspended solids and dissolved oxygen as well as asbestos content. Stringent monitoring levels will be set. The Clyde river purification board will also carry out its routine monitoring of turbidity, suspended solids and dissolved oxygen around the dredging area.

In resolving the best approach, the Property Services Agency has discussed in detail with the appropriate authorities the proposed working method and the most suitable method of disposal. From these discussions it is clear that the site between Cloch point and Strone point is the best solution on environmental and economic grounds. It is a regularly used dumping ground; it is well charted and known to fishermen as such. The material from the dredging operation will be discharged through opening the bottom of each vessel within a restricted area in a mean water depth of 59 m and marine scientists from the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland are satisfied that if, as planned, the dumping is properly controlled, material will not spread beyond the designated area. Depositing the dredged material elsewhere in the Gareloch was ruled out because of the risk of adversely affecting the oxygen regime; the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland ruled out "The Hole" off Rosneath point for fishery reasons and Birch point off Arran because of the important fishery grounds around the periphery of the dump site and to prevent interference with DAFS monitoring in the area.

Although a Government Department does not require a dredging licence, the Property Services Agency has obtained one from the Clyde port authority. In addition, the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland, which would normally license deposits in the sea under Part II of the Food and Environment Protection Act 1985, the Clyde river purification board and the Marine Directorate of the Department of Transport have confirmed that the agency's proposals are acceptable to them. Local fishing interests have also been consulted and have confirmed that they have no objections.

None of the asbestos contaminated material bagged and stored on site last year at the Clyde submarine base, nor any onshore material, will be deposited under water. Entirely separate arrangements have been made to deal with that material, as announced last year, and work is already under way.

ENVIRONMENT

Widdicombe Committee

Mr. Litherland asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will seek to ensure that all submissions to the Widdicombe committee are made available to the public.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Widdicombe report explains that the written evidence submitted to the Inquiry has been placed on deposit at the Public Record Office where it is open to public inspection, with the exception of those submissions which were expressly made to the committee in confidence. In addition, several of the main submissions have been separately published by the authors themselves.

Hampshire Club, Winchester

Mr. Heddle asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give an indication as to the likely date when the decision in respect of planning appeal number APP/A5270/A85/31065 (The Hampshire club, Winchester) heard on Wednesday 16 October 1985 is to be announced.

Mr. Tracey: I wrote to my hon. Friend on 25 June informing him of the latest position on the appeal concerning the Hampshire club, Winchester.

Satman

Mr. Heddle asked the Secretary of State for the Environment, further to his answer to the hon. Member for Mid-Staffordshire of 30 April, *Official Report*, column 408, what further discussions he has had with the London residuary body about £76 million granted by the Greater London council to the firm Satman for housing repairs in the London boroughs.

Sir George Young: The London residuary body has kept my Department informed of its actions in the matter. On the basis of its own legal advice, it has decided to seek judicial review of the GLC's decision in relation to part of the payment amounting to some £39 million.

River Thames

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what conditions he expects to impose on any private company in respect of the ownership, maintenance and operation of the locks and weirs of the River Thames.

Mr. John Patten: Navigation responsibilities, including duties relating to the ownership, maintenance and operation of locks and weirs in the Thames, are subject to the requirements of various local statutes. I intend that all existing obligations of Thames WA should be transferred to the successor PLC.

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will list the names of statutory bodies, organisations and persons he has consulted in respect of his plans to transfer the ownership of the River Thames to a private limited company;

(2) what consultations he has had with each London borough, respectively, concerning the future discharge of statutory duties on the tidal reaches of the River Thames currently exercised by the Thames water authority.

(3) what consultations he has had with the council of the London borough of Richmond on Thames concerning his plans to transfer the ownership and management of the River Thames to a private limited company;

(4) what consultations he has had or expects to have with the council of the Royal borough of Kingston on Thames concerning his plan to transfer the ownership of the River Thames to a private limited company;

(5) what consultations he has had or expects to have with the corporation of the city of London in respect of future discharge of statutory responsibilities in the tidal reaches of the river Thames, currently the responsibility of the Thames Water Authority;

(6) what consultations he has had or expects to have with the county councils of Surrey, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Gloucestershire, respectively, concerning the future ownership, control and management of the river Thames;

(7) what consultations he has had or expects to have with the boroughs of Elmbridge, Runnymede, Windsor and Maidenhead, Reading, and Oxford, respectively, concerning his plans to transfer the ownership and management of the river Thames to a private limited company;

(8) what consultations he has had or expects to have with the district councils of Spelthorne, Wokingham, Beaconsfield, Wycombe, South Oxfordshire, Newbury West, Oxfordshire, the Vale of Whitehorse, and Thamesdown, respectively, concerning transfer of the ownership and management of the river Thames to a private limited company.

Mr. John Patten: The possibility of transferring the water authorities to the private sector was presented in our discussion paper issued last year. The Government's proposals were subsequently set out in the White Paper "Privatisation of the Water Authorities in England and Wales" (Cmnd. 9734) issued in February 1986. We have received comments from a wide variety of organisations and individuals, but it is for the originators of these comments to decide if they wish to make their views public. We have not initiated, and do not plan, consultation specifically on the future of the Thames water authority.

Water Authorities (Privatisation)

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if, in respect of the statement made in respect of foreign capital and water services, 23 June, *Official Report*, column 37, he will state the nature of the safeguards he expects to seek to include in future legislation relating to such investment.

Mr. John Patten: I do not expect that it will be necessary to insert safeguards in future legislation. PLC status will enable the Government to retain a golden share which may regulate the size of particular shareholdings. The Monopolies and Mergers Commission will also have a significant role to play in safeguarding the public.

Housing Statistics

Mr. Nellist asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list, pursuant to the answers to the hon. Member for Bimingham, Perry Barr, (Mr. Rooker) *Official Report*, 17 June, columns *505-6*, those factors which led to the Z score of 3·71 for Coventry; if he will give the figures for previous years for which data are available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: The indicators and method used by my Department in its analysis of urban deprivation are set out in "Census Information Note No 2: Urban Deprivation" produced by the inner cities directorate. This publication is in the House of Commons Library.

The indicators used in the combined index of deprivation (basic Z-Score), which are all taken from the 1981 census, are:

i. per cent. unemployed persons
ii. per cent. overcrowded households
iii. per cent single parent families
iv. per cent. households lacking exclusive use of basic amenities
v. per cent. pensioners living alone
vi. per cent residents living in households where the head of household was born in New Commonwealth or Pakistan.

The position of any authority on each of these indicators in relation to the national average will determine the contribution of each to the basic Z-score. In Coventry indicators (i), (ii), (iii) and (vi) were the main contributors to the overall Z-score. In each case Coventry was in the top 50 of the English local authorities.

As indicated in the previous answer the "Housing" Z-score is not a measure of housing need, but an indicator

of multiple deprivation (the basic Z-score) in which housing factors (indicators (ii) and (iv)) are given an additional weighting.

There are no comparable figures for previous years. However, in 1971 Coventry only ranked in the top 50 authorities on indicators (ii) and (vi).

Gipsy Sites

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many gipsy sites in England and Wales have partial designation; and in which counties they are.

Mr. Tracey: Designation under section 12 of the Caravan Sites Act 1968 refers to local authority areas. A list of designated areas in England was included in my recent reply to the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley), *Official Report* 18 June 1986 columns *549-550*.

A list of gipsy sites in England is in the Library. Questions on gipsy matters in Wales are for the Secretary of State for Wales.

Rates

Mr. Straw asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has any plans to use his powers under part II of the Rates Act 1984 in respect of rate limitation for the financial year 1987-88.

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. Friend will be announcing his proposals for selective rate limitation in 1987-88 before the summer recess. As the hon. Member is aware, a proposal to introduce general rate limitation would require consultation with the local authority associations and be subject to the approval of both Houses of Parliament.

Lime Street Chambers, Liverpool

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when his Department first received a letter from the solicitor of Liverpool city council concerning a planning appeal in relation to advertising panels on Lime street chambers; when a reply was sent; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tracey: The Department received a letter dated 14 March from the Council, following a communication from the Department about an appeal against a discontinuance notice issued by the council. A substantive reply has not been sent; but the council has been told by telephone that the Department is considering the legal issues, and a reply will be sent shortly.

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the action he proposes to take on the representations from Liverpool city council for the removal of advertisment panels at Lime street chambers, details of which have been sent to him by the hon. Member for Liverpool, Riverside.

Mr. Tracey: The Department is considering the legal issue of whether the council's power to issue a discontinuance notice in respect of advertisement panels at Lime street chambers was properly exercised, and therefore whether there is a valid appeal against the notice. A reply will be sent to the council shortly.

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many letters his Department has received from the Liverpool city council's solicitor concerning a planning appeal in relation to advertisement panels on Lime street chambers.

Mr. Tracey: One letter, dated 14 March, followed by two reminders.

Correspondence

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how long on average it takes his Department to reply to letters from local authorities.

Mr. Ridley: This information is not available.

Birlsbury Wood

Miss Maynard asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how much was paid to the owners of Birlsbury Wood on the borders of Hampshire and Dorset under the provisions of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 for not clearing the woodland; under which sections of the Act; and how much has been paid in total in similar payments made under the financial guidelines of this Act in the past 12 months.

Mrs. Rumbold [*pursuant to her reply*, 27 June 1986, c. *348-9*]: I am advised by the Nature Conservancy Council that during 1985-86 it paid a total of £1,967,715 in respect of management agreements made under section 15 of the Countryside Act 1968. Approximately £300,000 of this total related to woodland agreements.

Block Grant (Disregards)

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list in the *Official Report* those items for which disregards have been requested for 1985-86 under section 8(4) of the Local Government Finance Act 1982.

Mr. Ridley [*pursuant to his reply*, 25 June 1986, c. *239*]: I am writing to the hon. Member.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Community Radio

Mr. Forth asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will make a statement about the community radio experiment.

Mr. Hurd: Last year my predecessor invited applications for 21 experimental community radio licences, explaining that in selecting the successful applicants he would have the benefit of advice from a panel of advisers under the chairmanship of Mr. Stephen O'Brien. I am most grateful to him and his colleagues for their careful work in sifting the large number of applications which were made.

It had been hoped to start this two-year experiment several months ago. But various difficulties arose and anxieties were expressed about its exact form. There would have been no regulatory body, and yet the public would have expected certain minimum standards of objectivity and decency to be maintained. Even in an experiment in partial deregulation, some minimum would still be necessary, particularly when existing local radio stations are subject to the rules in the BBC charter and the 1981

Broadcasting Act. Home Office Ministers would in practice have been held directly responsible for the content of what was broadcast during the experiment. Their only method of control would have been to insert conditions in the licence, and their only sanction the withdrawal of the licence if the conditions had been breached—a sanction which might well have seemed arbitrary and open to challenge.

As we sought a satisfactory answer to this problem, it became clear that the whole question needed to be looked at in the light of other problems and proposals now affecting radio. The Indpendent Broadcasting Authority wishes to proceed with an independent national radio. Some ILR stations are concerned about their commercial future under the existing system. Professor Peacock's committee has included some proposals on radio in his report to be published later this week.

The Government have therefore decided to give up the idea of an immediate experiment in community radio, the exact form of which was still causing difficulty, and to look again at community radio among the matters to be covered in the forthcoming Green Paper on radio. As the timing has worked out, an experiment in community radio would have delayed the time when the whole future of radio could be coherently considered. The Green Paper will undertake that consideration.

I am conscious of the disappointment which this statement will cause to some, and of the effort which many people have incurred. I would like to express my regret in particular to all those who made applications and to the advisory panel which considered them. Their efforts have shown that there is enthusiastic and constructive support for community radio and I hope that we shall be able to devise suitable arrangements for it to take its part in our radio system.

Community Programme

Mr. Steen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the results of the trial runs of the comprehensive community programme in Wandsworth, the Wirral, Bradford and Gateshead; and what was the total cost involved.

Mr. Waddington: I understand that only two pilot projects under the comprehensive community programme were actually started—in Bradford and Gateshead—and that they became 'mainstream' projects under the urban programme when responsibility for urban deprivation was transferred from the Home Office to the Department of the Environment in June 1977. I regret that I have no information about the results of either of these projects and that it is not now possible to estimate their total cost.

Civil Defence

Mr. Coombs asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he is satisfied with the provisions for civil defence in Swindon; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The Civil Defence (General Local Authority Functions) Regulations 1983 make it a duty of county councils to make provision for civil defence in their areas. We are examining the civil defence plans prepared by Wiltshire county council under these regulations along with those of other county councils. We will report to the House in due course.

Gillingham Police Station (Firearms)

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement concerning the recent disappearance of a handgun and ammunition from Gillingham police station and the consequent inquiry.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I understand from the chief constable of Kent constabulary that a routine check of firearms stored at Gillingham police station at the end of April revealed that a firearm and some ammunition were unaccounted for. The chief constable has ordered a full investigation of the matter as well as a review of force procedures for the storage and security of firearms. The chief constable will in due course forward a report to Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary who is aware of the incident and who will keep us informed.

Liverpool Prison (Shower Facilities)

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department for how long there has been a dispute about shower facilities at Liverpool prison; if he has any plans to increase manning levels at the prison; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: The use of the showers on K wing, which was refurbished in 1982-83, involves the wider issue of the provision of association at Liverpool prison. We have no plans at present to increase manning levels there but it is expected that manning will be reviewed in the general follow-up to the recent study of shift and complementing systems.

News International, Wapping

Mr. Nellist asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many arrests have taken place at Wapping in connection with the printing dispute from 16 June to date.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Ninety six up to midnight on 29 June.

Mr. Kaufman asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) when he expects to be able to provide a substantive reply to the question tabled by the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton, for priority written answer on 16 June relating to the police operation at Wapping;

(2) what has been to date *(a)* the cost to public funds of the public operation outside Mr. Rupert Murdoch's establishment at Wapping, *(b)* the proportion of total Metropolitan police manpower engaged in these operations, *(c)* the proportion of total Metropolitan police time taken up by these operations, *(d)* the effect of these operations on other Metropolitan police operations and *(e)* which anti-crime activities have specifically been affected.

Mr. Giles Shaw [*pursuant to his reply*, 16 June 1986, c. *409*]: I understand from the Commissioner that the additional costs of policing the News International dispute at Wapping up to 14 June are estimated to be about £1 million. The number of officers deployed varies from day to day and hour to hour according to the operational requirement; the maximum number of officers deployed on any one occasion has been 1870. Over 570,000 police man hours have been spent in connection with the dispute.

As to the effect on other Metropolitan police operations, I would refer the right hon. Member to the reply I gave to a question from my hon. Friend for Hayes and Harlington (Mr. Dicks) on 8 May at column *207*.

Plastic Baton Rounds

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will withdraw Home Office circular No. 40-1986 (Plastic Baton Rounds/CS: Central Facilities); what action he is taking in response to a letter dated 19 June from the clerk to the Northumbria police authority concerning that circular; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The letter referred to is being considered and a reply will be sent as soon as possible.

Civil Defence

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) whether the police, the armed forces and other statutory bodies, including public utilities, will be asked to participate in the regional defence exercises in November;

(2) whether the regional emergency committees will be participating in the civil defence exercises taking place in November;

(3) whether the emergency communications network will be activated during the regional defence exercises;

(4) what regional civil defence exercises are planned for November in the current year; what are the exact dates of these; and what is the purpose of each;

(5) whether the county councils will be asked to activitate their emergency plans during the regional civil defence exercises in November;

(6) whether the pilot study on the co-ordination of regional emergency planning being carried out in the north-west will be tested during the regional civil defence exercise in the region;

(7) whether the regional civil defence exercises are intended as a pilot for a future national civil defence exercise;

(8) what will be the scenario for the regional civil defence exercises in November.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Exercises are being planned in region 6 (south-east England) to take place from 24 to 26 November, and in region 10 (north-west England) on 27 and 28 November. The scenarios for both will cover a period of international tension prior to the onset of hostilities and in region 10 conventional war.

The region 6 exercise will test the plans of the local authorities at county and in some cases at district level. The region 10 exercise will test the regional emergency committee arrangements; local authorities can participate if they wish. Final details on participation have not yet been settled, but in addition to the local authorities, it is hoped that all civil organisations with responsibilities in a war crisis will take part.

The emergency communication network will not be used in region 10. No decision has yet been reached in region 6.

The purpose of the pilot study in No. 10 region is to examine the requirement for co-ordination of regional home defence planning and how it might be met. The exercise may therefore inform the study, but the question of testing it does not arise.

There are no present plans for a national civil defence exercise.

Wormwood Scrubs Prison

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department to what use the existing purpose-built replacement hospital block at Wormwood Scrubs prison is currently being put; how much has been spent on its construction; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: There is as yet no purpose-built replacement hospital block at Wormwood Scrubs prison, and the hospital is at present operating in temporary accommodation in B wing. As part of the original redevelopment plan for the prison, the old hospital building was to have been refurbished and improved. When that redevelopment scheme was abandoned in 1983, £762,000 had been spent on the provision of a new roof and limited structural alterations, but to have brought it up to an acceptable standard to meet health and safety and fire requirements would have involved much additional work and cost, which it was decided could not be justified.

A very small part of the old hospital building is being used for storage, and part of its mechanical services are operational to provide a feeder service to the nearby visits building. It is otherwise not in use. At a later stage, however, it will play an essential part in the redevelopment programme by providing temporary accommodation for a number of individual units, including the farms and gardens unit, clothing exchange stores and works department, when their existing buildings have been demolished to make way for permanent replacement facilities.

As part of the redevelopment we propose to provide a permanent hospital and operating theatre within a new building linking the four existing wings of the prison. Subject to the necessary financial and planning procedures, it is hoped that work on this new building will begin in 1988 and be completed in 1991.

Police Cadets (West Yorkshire)

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his policy to accept a request from the West Yorkshire police authority for him to sanction the continued employment of 33 police cadets, appointed in the financial year 1985-86, and to permit the direct recruitment of a further 54 police cadets, of whom 15 would be financed by the Manpower Services Commission through the YTS; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: My right hon. Friend has now approved the inclusion of 87 police cadets in the establishment scheme on the understanding that the actual intake will not exceed 10 per cent. of the force's annual recruitment.

Police Motorcycles (Noise)

Mr. Robert Hughes asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment has been made as to whether current police motor cycles in use with the Metropolitan Police will be able to pass the noise during acceleration tests included in the most recent EEC directives on motor cycle noise.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis informs me that the Metropolitan police have not carried out any assessment of motor cycles currently in use because there is no requirement under existing or proposed EC directives for the operator as opposed to the manufacturer to do so.

South Africa (British Nationals)

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will introduce legislation to withdraw British nationality from United Kingdom citizens who serve in the South African defence force or police.

Mr. Waddington: No.

South Africa (Draft Resisters and Conscientious Objectors)

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his policy to offer asylum to draft resisters and conscientious objectors from South Africa.

Mr. Waddington: All applications for asylum are carefully considered on their individual merits in accordance with our obligations under the 1951 convention relating to the status of refugees. Unwillingness to perform military service is not generally regarded as of itself justifying refugee recognition.

Correspondence

Mr. Winnick asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he will be giving a substantive reply to the letter of 21 April sent by the hon. Member for Walsall, North regarding a constituent in Short Heath, Willenhall.

Mr. Waddington: My office has recently informed the hon. Member that arrangements have been made for his constituent to be seen by an immigration officer on 2 July. I will write to him after that meeting.

Mr. Nellist asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he will be in a position to reply to the letter of 24 April from the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East, acknowledged by his Department in May, concerning Mr. Vilis Grinvalds of School House, Ravensdale road, Wyken, Coventry.

Mr. Waddington: I wrote to the hon. Member on 26 June.

Hippie Convoy

Mr. Kaufman asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to be able to provide a substantive reply to the question tabled by the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton, for priority written answer on 16 June relating to the cost of breaking up the hippie convoy.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I understand from the chief constable of Hampshire than an accurate assessment of the costs of police operations relating to the convoy on 9 June should be available next week. I will then be able to let the right hon. Member have a substantive reply to his question of 16 June.

Criminal Damage, Merseyside

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Merseyside on the recent rise in the incidence of urban criminal damage and thefts from motor vehicles on Merseyside; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: I understand from the chief constable that changes in recording practices are largely responsible for the apparent rise in criminal damage offences on Merseyside. The rise in thefts from motor vehicles is not readily explicable; but the incidence of particular types of offence can vary considerably from year to year. Comparable figures for the whole of England and Wales are not yet available.

Birmingham (Riot Damage)

Mr. Kaufman asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how much compensation has been *(a)* claimed and *(b)* paid in respect of damages from riot in the Handsworth and Lozells areas of Birmingham; how many such claims were received; and how many remain outstanding.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The West Midlands police authority is the relevant compensation authority for outstanding claims under the Riot (Damages) Act 1886 arising from the Handsworth disorders in September 1985. The Home Office is not involved in the processing of claims.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Ministerial Visit

21. **Mr. Bowen Wells** asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he expects to pay an official visit to the Duchy.

Mr. Tebbit: On 23 September this year.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

British Books (Canadian Tariff)

Mr. Baldry asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) what action Her Majesty's Government have taken in response to the decision of the Canadian Government to impose a 10 per cent. tariff on imports of British books;

(2) if he plans to ask the European Community to take any action in response to the Canadian Government's imposition of a 10 per cent. tariff on British books;

(3) what is the estimated loss to British exports resulting from the recent Canadian tariffs on imports of books from the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: The Canadian Government have imposed a 10 per cent. tariff on imports of English language books. The loss to United Kingdom exports, which was some £22 million in 1985, will depend upon the extent to which the 10 per cent. tariff can be absorbed by United Kingdom exports; but is clearly a matter of concern. Her Majesty's Government have therefore raised the issue with the European Commission and has made bilateral representations to the Canadian authorities.

Mr. Baldry asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if Her Majesty's Government have made any

representations to the Canadian Government on the possibility of Canada acceding to the Florence agreement prohibiting tariffs on the import of books.

Mr. Alan Clark: No. However the question of the recent imposition of a 10 per cent. tariff on English language books has been taken up bilaterally with the Canadian Government.

Takeovers and Mergers

Mr. Arnold asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the policy of Her Majesty's Government on takeovers and mergers; and what recent representations he has received about this policy.

Mr. Howard: Our policy on takeovers and mergers is that references to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission should be made primarily on competition grounds. I believe that this policy has in general operated effectively. However, it has attracted attention in recent months as a result of the high level of merger activity; and my right hon. Friend announced on 5 June a review of law and policy on mergers and restrictive trade practices.

My right hon. Friend and I receive regular representations on aspects of mergers policy. We are inviting representations in the context of the review, in the first instance no later than the end of July.

Investment

Mr. MacKenzie asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if, using 1979 prices, he will publish in the *Official Report* the figures for investment in *(a)* manufacturing industry and *(b)* service industries for each year since 1978 to the latest convenient date.

Mr. Butcher: The information requested is not available in terms of 1979 prices. The latest figures for investment, at 1980 prices, were published on pages 603 to 605 of British business on 27 June 1986.

Television Sets (China)

Mr. Dykes asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he is now in a position to announce his Department's response to the recent official request by the overseas trade authorities of the People's Republic of China to open a quota for imported television sets from China to the United Kingdom.

Mr. Alan Clark: A proposal to open an import quota for Chinese television sets has been submitted to the European Commission. An announcement will be made when the Community has reached a decision.

Jaguar

Mr. Hoyle asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what request his Department has made to BL for the repayment of open market borrowings with some of the receipts from the sale of Jaguar; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I will reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Leyland Bus

Mr. Hoyle asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what part of the spares business is proposed to be sold off with Leyland Bus.

Mr. Peter Morrison: In order to achieve BL's aim of keeping the parts business intact, the company has proposed to sell to any eventual purchaser of Leyland Bus a significant minority equity interest in a separate Leyland parts company.

Land Rover

Mr. John Mark Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the latest position on the future of Land Rover.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The position on Land Rover remains as outlined to the House in my right hon. Friend's statement on 24 April.

Brymbo Steelworks

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what action he has taken to date and what action he proposes to take to secure investment at Brymbo steelworks.

Mr. Peter Morrison: When the formation of United Engineering Steels (the owners of Brymbo Steelworks) was announced, the Government stated that they had approved the provision of funds for BSC to subscribe £55 million for preference shares and loans stock in the new company, on the understanding that the company would undertake further investments. Decisions on the location of new investment projects at UES plants are of course matters for the UES board.

EMPLOYMENT

Youth Training Schemes

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Paymaster General, pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for Caerphilly of 23 June, *Official Report*, column *14*, if he will say why he did not provide a substantive reply to the first part of the hon. Member's question on the same basis as the answer given to the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) the same day, *Official Report*, column *15*; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: I shall write to the hon. Member.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Paymaster General what arrangements apply to disabled young people refusing an offer of a place on YTS with regard to their existing benefit payments or future claims for benefit.

Mr. Lang: Under the Social Security Act 1975, YTS has been designated as approved training, and any young person who unreasonably refuses such training may lose unemployment benefit for up to six weeks; supplementary benefit may also be reduced for this reason.

Entitlement to benefit is decided by independent adjudicating authorities set up under the Social Security Act. They take into account the individual circumstances of each case, including a person's physical or mental ability to undertake the training offered, in deciding whether a refusal is unreasonable.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Paymaster General how many disabled young people presently take part in YTS in Britain.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I regret this information is not available at the moment. The Manpower Services Commission's computerised management information system, from which YTS statistics are obtained, is currently being re-programmed and improved to meet the needs of two-year YTS. As a result of this work information about the participation of young disabled people on YTS will not be available until the end of this Summer.

I shall write to the hon. Member with this information as soon as it becomes available.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Paymaster General what figures he has to show the number of young people applying to take part in YTS each year.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I regret that I am unable to answer the question, as the Manpower Services Commission does not record numbers of young people applying for YTS.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Paymaster General what figures he has to show the number of disabled young people refusing the offer of a place in YTS in each of the last three years.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I regret that this information is not available.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Paymaster General (1) if he has evidence to indicate whether the level of payments under YTS are a disincentive to disabled young people in receipt of social security benefits for their disablement;

(2) if he has any plans to vary the fixed rate of training allowance paid to YTS trainees to meet individual cases of need.

Mr. Lang: There is no evidence of any significant disincentive effect from the present system of allowances and we have no plans at present for any change. A balance has to be struck between a level of allowance sufficient to attract young people to YTS and the need to use as much as possible of the money available for the actual provision of training. I am satisfied that, in general, trainees' needs are being met adequately through the existing system of allowances, together with the provision for payments of supplementary benefit where this is appropriate.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Paymaster General (1) why figures showing numbers of young people taking part in YTS are not published in the latest issue of *Employment Gazette;*

(2) if he will ensure that figures showing numbers of young people taking part in YTS are published for the latest available date in every issue of *Employment Gazette.*

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I regret that the necessary information was not available in the time for the regular article containing YTS statistics to appear in the June edition of the *Employment Gazette.* However, figures showing the number of young people in training on YTS at the end of May will appear in the next edition of the *Employment Gazette,* to be published on 3 July, and the latest available figures will be published in future editions.

Disabled 16 and 17-year-olds

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Paymaster General what is the population of disabled economically active 16 and 17-year-olds in Britain.

Mr. Ian Lang: Information is not available in the exact for requested.

Preliminary labour force survey results for the spring of 1985 estimate that there were about 47,000 economically active 16 and 17-year-olds in Great Britain who were limited in the kind of paid work they could do by a health problem or disability.

ENERGY

Radiation

Mr. Frank Cook asked the Secretary of State for Energy in what form stocks of potassium iodide tablets, potassium iodate tablets and aqueous iodine Lugol's solution, are held; and what are the doses in which each of these forms are to be administered to adults and children in the event of excessive radiation exposure.

Mr. Goodlad: Stocks are held by operators mainly in the form of potassium iodate tablets and would be administered on their instruction in accordance with medical advice.

Mr. Frank Cook asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will publish details of the system by which stocks of iodine will be administered to the population in the event of an emergency; and whether it is proposed that such administration will be prior to or after people have been exposed to excessive levels of radioiodines.

Mr. Goodlad: The system is set out in the Health and Safetyh Executive's booklet "Emergency Plans for Civil Nuclear Installations".

Coal (Output)

Mr. Favell asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement about the current output per manshift in British Coal.

Mr. David Hunt: The deep mine overall revenue output per man shift for British Coal in the week ending 7 June was 3·23 tonnes, the highest weekly figure achieved so far.

Coal Industry (Funding)

Mr. Ron Davis asked the Secretary of State for Energy what discussions he has had with the chairman of the National Coal Board regarding the funding of the industry.

Mr. David Hunt: My right hon. Friend and I meet the chairman of the National Coal Board regularly to discuss all aspects of the coal industry, including its funding. The NCB's recovery during 1985-86 put the board on a firmer foundation at the start of 1986-87, although lower oil prices have increased the competitive pressure on the industry. The NCB's external financing limit for 1986-87 has been set at £730 million, and its capital approval for that year at £650 million.

British Gas

Mr. Maples asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will publish a further revised draft of the proposed authorisation to be given to British Gas under the Gas Bill.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: I have today arranged for copies of the further revised draft authorisation, together with the draft of the directions to be given under clause 63 of the Bill, to be placed in the Libraries of both Houses, the Printed Paper Office and the Vote Office.

Plutonium

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Energy, in what ways the plutonium with plutonium-240 content less than 15 per cent. produced by Hinkley Point A, Sizewell and Oldbury since 1 April 1969 has been disposed of.

Mr. Goodlad [*pursuant to the reply,* 26 June 1986, c. *269-70*]: It is the practice to co-process all fuel discharged from the generating board's Magnox reactors. The resulting plutonium is retained in the civil cycle.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

South Africa (Products)

Mr. Hancock asked the Lord Privy Seal if any product of South Africa is on sale in the Palace of Westminster.

Mr. Biffen: I understand that there are no South African products on sale in the Refreshment Department of the House of Commons.

Summer Recess

Mr. Deakins asked the Lord Privy Seal on how many occasions since 1970 the House has adjourned for the summer recess *(a)* before 23 July, *(b)* between 23 and 26 July, *(c)* between 27 and 31 July and *(d)* in August.

Mr. John Biffen: Since 1970, the House has adjourned on one occasion before 23 July; on three occasions between 23 and 26 July; on five occasions between 27 and 31 July; and on seven occasions in August.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Sri Lanka

Mr. Tom Clarke asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the current amount of overseas aid for Sri Lanka; if he will indicate what percentage has been allocated for military equipment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Raison: Expenditure for Sri Lanka from the overseas aid programme during the current financial year is expected to be about £5 million. None of this has been allocated for military equipment; aid programme resources are not made available for this purpose.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Expenditure

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if, further to his answer of 13 May, *Official Report,* columns *433-4,* he will publish in the *Official Report* particulars showing which items of expenditure account for the difference between the United Kingdom and each of the other countries concerned at the secondary level, including salaries, school books and equipment, and maintenance of buildings.

Mr. Dunn: The available information is shown in the following table based on my pursuant answer of 12 June, at column *278.* No breakdown by level is available for the United States of America. The proportion of administrative and other educational expenditure unallocated to educational levels varies between the countries concerned affecting these comparisons.

Expenditure[1] per pupil at 1983 values (£)[2], second level[3], by area of expenditure

	Year	*Total*	*Teacher emoluments*	*School books, teaching materials*	*Scholarships and Welfare Services*	*Administration and Unclassified[9]*
France	1980	1,300	960	[4]—	200	130
Japan[5]	1982	1,120	680	100	50	290
Germany, Federal Republic of[6]	1982	1,320	1,040	[7] n.a.	60	220
United Kingdom[8]	1983	1,210	800	60	70	290

n.a. = Not available.

[1] Current expenditure only, rounded to nearest £10.

[2] No specific inflator for education expenditure is available. Hence, as a proxy, expenditure per pupil in foreign currencies were converted to pound sterling at 1983 values by adjusting to 1983 levels via OECD consumer price indices and then applying OECD purchasing power parity factors. These allow for exchange rates and differences in the cost of living between countries. Public sector costs, including subsidies to private education, (covering costs such as teachers' salaries) have been divided by all pupils, (except for Japan—see footnote).

[3] Equates broadly with secondary school education and non-advanced further education.

[4] Parents provide textbooks in some types of school.

[5] Excludes public subsidies and pupil numbers in private sector secondary schools. Tuition fees are charged for post-compulsory education.

[6] Including expenditure but excluding students in part-time vocational education (some 1·8 million for all levels).

[7] Not included in the unit cost.

[8] Rates based on full-time equivalent pupil/student numbers. Excludes privte sector schools and colleges.

[9] Includes expenditure on maintenance and operation of buildings and equipment.

Sources:

United Kingdom—Department of Education and Science.

Other countries —UNESCO Statistical Yearbook 1985.
—"Statistical Abstract of Education, Science and Culture, 1983 Edition" (Japan).
—"Basic and Structural Data 1984-85" (Federal Republic of Germany).
—*Employment Gazette.*

Playing Fields

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what are the criteria for the extent of provision of playing fields at sixth form or tertiary colleges.

Mr. Dunn: The statutory requirements for the provisions of playing fields at sixth form colleges are set out in regulation 6 and schedule 3 of the Education (School Premises) Regulations 1981 (S.I. 909). The regulations do not apply to tertiary colleges but my Department's building bulletin 28 "Playing Fields and Hard Surface Areas" (a copy of which is in the Library of the House) contains advice relevant to provision for the 16 to 19 age group.

Teachers' Salaries

Mr. Batiste asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is his policy on differentiated salaries to facilitate the recruitment in secondary, further and higher education on staff with scarce and marketable skills.

Mr. Chris Patten: The Government believe that salary structures should be such as to attract, retain and motivate teachers, including those who have scarce and marketable skills. Structure reform talks are currently taking place in the schools, further education and university sectors. The Government have made clear their view that one outcome of those talks should be sufficent flexibility for employers to attract and retain staff whose skills are in short supply.

Teachers (Computer Training)

Mr. Batiste asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what action he is taking to promote training for teachers in computer skills.

Mr. Chris Patten: My right hon. Friend will be supporting through the in-service teacher training grants scheme from September this year 90 per cent. of the replacement costs of teachers attending approved courses on teaching computing and microelectronics and training in the uses of microelectronics across the curriculum. A wide range of other in-service training courses in computing is supported by our system for pooling local authority training costs. In addition we are providing £3 million this financial year to fund the microelectronics education support unit, which will assist with the training of teachers, provide a central resource of information and develop curriculum materials across the whole area of new technology in schools. This work builds upon the highly successful microelectronics education programme.

Primary Schools (North Devon)

Mr. Speller asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the information available to him on the replacement building programme for primary schools in north Devon; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: Our knowledge of local education authorities' building programmes is derived from their annual bids for capital allocations. In their bid for 1986-87, Devon LEA included the following references to primary schools in North Devon:

Start year	*Name of school*	*Project*	*Bid 1986-87* £
1984-85*	Bradworthy County Primary		2,000
1985-86*	Barnstaple Newport County Primary		270,000
1986-87	Dolton CE Aided Primary	Small upgrading scheme (minor work)	24,000
1987-88	Chulmleigh County Primary	Replace and enlarge	—
1988-89	Abbotsham CE Aided Primary	Replace and enlarge	—

* These are projects already underway (committed expenditure).

Illiteracy

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has as to the number of illiterate people in the United Kingdom; and what steps he is taking to seek to eliminate illiteracy.

Mr. Walden: The national child development study survey of 1981 found that 10 per cent. of the 23 year olds asked said they had had reading problems since leaving school which had made things difficult for them in everyday life.

The Government's policy for raising standards of literacy in schools are set out in the White Paper "Better Schools", published last year. The Department of Education and Science and the Welsh Office jointly fund the adult literacy and basic skills unit to help develop educational provision to overcome illiteracy amongst adults. Grant has been raised from £360,000 in 1979-80 to £2,170,000 in 1986-87; a sixfold increase.

Policies to combat literacy problems in Scotland and Northern Ireland are the responsibility of my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Scotland and for Northern Ireland.

Commonwealth Education Ministers (Conference)

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what proposals Her Majesty's Government are preparing to put forward at the Commonwealth Education Ministers conference in 1987.

Mr. Chris Patten: On the basis of ideas discussed at a meeting of Commonwealth Education Ministers in Sofia in October 1985, in which my hon. Friend the Member for the City of London and Westminster, South (Mr. Brooke) participated, the Commonwealth Secretariat hopes shortly to propose the theme for the 1987 conference in Nairobi. My right hon. Friend will then consider how best to make a positive and constructive contribution to the discussion of the theme in Nairobi and to any opportunities for useful, practical co-operation between Commonwealth countries which could arise from it.

School Books and Equipment

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list per capita spending in primary and in secondary schools on *(a)* books and *(b)* equipment at outturn and at real prices in each of the last five years.

Mr. Dunn: The information is as follows:

Expenditure per pupil on books and equipment—England

	Primary schools				Secondary schools			
	Books		Equipment		Books		Equipment	
	Cash	Real terms*	Cash	Real terms*	Cash	Real terms*	Cash	Real terms*
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
1980-81	5·32	6·81	10·73	13·74	8·08	10·34	21·17	27·11
1981-82	5·91	6·88	12·25	14·26	8·60	10·01	23·58	27·44
1982-83	7·00	7·61	13·90	15·12	9·89	10·76	26·64	28·98
1983-84	7·14	7·44	15·65	16·30	10·09	10·51	29·12	30·32
1984-85	7·29	7·29	16·26	16·26	10·15	10·15	32·38	32·38

*The cash figures for the earlier years have been repriced to 1984-85 prices using the Gross Domestic Product (Market Prices) Deflator.

Universities (Funding)

Mr. Radice asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what has been the change in the funding of universities in cash and constant 1985-86 prices between 1980-81 and 1986-87, excluding those amounts representing compensation for changes in home student fees, for redundancy and for early retirement, changes to take account of minor capital works from the recurrent grant, changes in local authority rates and additions made for the information technology and new blood programmes.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Between 1980-81 and 1986-87 public funding of universities has increased by 28·8 per cent. in cash terms, which is a fall of 6·3 per cent. in constant 1985-86 prices (using the GDP deflator). Excluding the funding elements selectively listed by the hon. Member, there was an increase over the same period of 13·1 per cent. in cash terms equivalent to a reduction of 17·8 per cent. in 1985-86 prices. Such exclusions are unrealistic; payment of items such as local authority rates and compensation for redundancies and early retirement are part and parcel of the cost of running large institutions. Since 1980-81, universities' income from private sources has increased substantially.

SCOTLAND

Visitors (North America)

Mr. Norman Hogg asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what discussions he has had with the chairman of the Scottish tourist board about the number of visitors from North America expected in the current summer; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: My right hon. and noble Friend the Minister of State met the Chairman of the Scottish Tourist Board at the opening of the British Travel Centre on 13 June. Later that day, he joined the Chairman at a special welcome for North American visitors at the Scottish Tourist Board office at 19 Cockspur street, London. The theme for the day was "Go for Scotland, America."

There was evidence of some downturn in visitors from North America in April and May. The indications are that the situation is beginning to return to normal and that the North American trade is picking up again. There are a number of special factors this year which are having an impact. Firstly, 1984 and 1985 were exceptionally good years with considerable growth in the number of Americans visiting the United Kingdom. It would have been unrealistic to expect this rapid growth to have continued indefinitely. Exchange rates are not this year as favourable for the North American visitor, gasoline prices have fallen in America and their home market is being aggressively marketed with many competitive packages on offer. Also, we cannot ignore the special attraction this year of EXPO '86 in Vancouver.

The British Tourist Authority and the Scottish Tourist Board have stepped up their marketing activities. Last year the Scottish Tourist Board launched a new scheme—AMNET—to promote Scotland and Scottish tourist products through the United States travel trade. The aim is to increase awareness of Scotland as a holiday destination and to build up a network of United States travel firms handling Scottish holidays. It is expected that this scheme will increase visits to Scotland but it is too early to assess its impact.

Radioactivity

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what improvements he proposes in the arrangements for regular monitoring of all levels of radioactivity throughout Scotland, in the light of the recent Chernobyl incident and representations from local inhabitants and others in south-west Scotland.

Mr. Ancram: The regular monitoring of radioactivity in the environment in Scotland is already kept under review. The need for any extension to these arrangements, in the light of the Chernobyl incident and representations about monitoring in general, is currently being considered by my Department in conjunction with other agencies involved in this field, such as the National Radiological Protection Board.

Mr. Norman Hogg asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what arrangements are made by his Department for monitoring radioactivity among livestock; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: A wide-ranging programme of testing of both grazing animals and animals in slaughterhouses has been put in hand and will be continued for as long as is necessary. The results of tests on animals in slaughterhouses have given rise to no cause for concern. Results are being published as and when they become available.

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish in the *Official Report* the text of the letter of 2 June to him from the Director of the Clyde river purification board on monitoring of radioactivity in the Clyde area and his reply; if he will give the information on

which he based his statement that the board had undertaken monitoring of radioactivity in the Clyde estuary; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram: I have arranged for copies of the letter of 2 June from the Director of the Clyde river purification board and the Scottish Development Department's reply of 19 June to be placed in the Library.

The Scottish Development Department's letter did not state that the Clyde river purification board was undertaking monitoring of radioactivity but clarified earlier correspondence which appears to have led to this erroneous interpretation. The correct position is that long term research work on radioactivity in the Clyde estuary being undertaken by the department of chemistry of Glasgow university involved the analysis of water samples taken by the Clyde river purification board.

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what indications were obtained from spectographic and other analysis of the radioactivity in lambs, and elsewhere in South West Scotland of the source or sources.

Mr. John MacKay: The ratio of the two caesium isotopes (Cs-134 and Cs-137) found in current tests on lambs is characteristic of Chernobyl fallout.

Incontinence Aids

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many patients in Scotland receive incontinence aids, including pads and pants, on prescription; what he estimates to be the annual cost of this service; and what estimate he has made of the cost if the service were provided through the health centres and district nurses.

Mr. John MacKay: I shall reply to the hon. and learned Member as soon as possible.

Ambulances

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if his Department holds any information on the age and mileage of dual purpose ambulances in Scotland.

Mr. John MacKay: The Scottish Home and Health Department does not hold this information.

Environmental Protection

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make available the review of his Department's arrangements for dealing with environmental topics in Scotland; if he will outline the specific remits and areas of interest of the newly-established rural, environment and countryside division and of the environmental protection unit; and what are the annual budgets and numbers of staff at the disposal of each.

Mr. Ancram: The organisational arrangements within the Scottish Development Department for discharging its responsibilities relating to the environment are kept under continuous review to ensure that appropriate action can be taken to meet current needs.

The main responsibilities of the rural environment and nature conservation division of the Department are to carry forward the Government's policies in relation to environmental conservation in the countryside; to discharge the Secretary of State's sponsorship responsibilities for the Countryside Commission for Scotland; and to liaise with the Nature Conservancy Council and the Forestry Commission on countryside and conservation issues. It has a budget of £380,000 in 1986-87 and a staff of 15.

The main responsibilities of the environmental protection division are to deal with policy and legislation on the maintenance and improvement of the aquatic, aerial and land enforcement, and on the supply of water and sewerage services. It has a budget of about £300,000 in 1986-87 and a staff of 14. In addition, the civil engineering and water services unit and Her Majesty's industrial pollution inspectorate provide technical advice and services on environmental matters and supply the staff for the hazardous waste inspectorate in Scotland. The number of staff directly involved in the provision of these services is 10, with a budget of approximately £305,000 in 1986-87.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Norman Hogg asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many jobs have been lost, and how many have been created, in the Cumbernauld and Kilsyth constituency since May 1979.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Comprehensive information on jobs created and jobs lost is not available. There were 3,419 redundancies affecting 10 or more employees notified to the Cumbernauld and Kilsyth jobcentres in the period since 1 May 1979: the area covered by these jobcentres is slightly larger than the constituency. In the period 1 May 1979 to 31 May 1986, 1,230 new jobs and 860 safeguarded jobs were associated with offers of regional selective assistance to businesses in Cumbernauld and Kilsyth constituency. In the period to 31 May 1986, 940 jobs were associated with offers of the new regional development grant. It should be noted that some projects receive both types of assistance.

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the number of people employed in Scotland in the microelectronics industry in each of the past five years.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Information in respect of the electronics industry in Scotland is set out in the table below. These estimates are based on information from the Regional Data System. Although estimates from RDS normally reflect the latest known classification of plants, these estimates are derived from a special exercise carried out by the Industry Department for Scotland in which plants have been given the classification appropriate to each year.

Electronics employment

	Number
1981	40,500
1982	39,700
1983	42,800
1984	44,700
1985	43,800

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what numbers of people were employed in the shipbuilding and ship repair industry in Scotland in each year since 1974.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The estimated numbers of persons employed in the shipbuilding and ship repair industry (activity heading 3610 of the 1980 standard industrial

classification) in Scotland for the years 1979 to 1983, the latest at present available, are set out below. Prior to 1979, only figures for the shipbuilding and marine engineering industry (minimum list heading 370 of the 1968 standard industrial classification) are available.

Shipbuilding and marine engineering 1968 SIC, MLH 370

	Number
1974	39,100
1975	40,400
1976	40,800
1977	37,300
1978	37,600
1979	35,600

Shipbuilding and Repairing 1980 SIC, Activity Heading 3610

	Number
1979	30,600
1980	26,500
1981	25,900
1982	26,000
1983	24,800

Source: Annual Census of Production.

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people in Scotland were employed by the British Steel Corporation in each year since 1974.

Mr. Allan Stewart: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people in Scotland were employed by the National Coal Board in each year since 1974.

Mr. Allan Stewart: It is estimated that the numbers of people in Scotland employed by the National Coal Board in each year since 1974 are as follows:

Year Ending March	*Thousands*
1974	28·8
1975	29·2
1976	28·2
1977	27·5
1978	25·9
1979	25·0
1980	24·9
1981	23·7
1982	21·5
1983	20·4
1984	16·6
1985	14·3
1986	10·0

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the net change in the number of employees in employment in Scotland in *(a)* manufacturing industry and *(b)* service industries in each year since 1980.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The estimated net changes in thousands, as compared with the previous year, in employees in employment in manufacturing and services are set out in the table for June of each year since 1980.

Net Change

	1981	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*
Manufacturing employment	−55	−33	−31	−8	−2
Service employment	−12	+4	0	+25	+23

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will publish a table to show the average monthly count of persons registered as unemployed in Scotland, in each year since 1974 who were *(a)* school leavers and *(b)* aged 19 years and under;

(2) what is the number of people in Scotland, at the latest date, who have not been in full-time employment since leaving school; and how many of them are school leavers from *(a)* 1986, *(b)* 1985, *(c)* 1984 and *(d)* 1983 or before;

(3) if he will publish a table showing the average monthly count of persons registered as unemployed in Scotland for each year since 1974; and if he will give the percentage unemployment figure for each year.

Mr. Allan Stewart: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the number of wholly oil-related jobs in Scotland in each of the past five years.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Total employment in firms in Scotland identified by the Manpower Services Commission as being wholly related to North sea oil and gas activity is estimated to have been around 63,700 in December 1985. This is the most recent estimate available. The estimates for June of the years 1981 to 1985 are as follows:

June	*Thousands*
1981	49·6
1982	58·3
1983	63·3
1984	64·0
1985	63·8

A74 (Improvement)

Mr. Norman Hogg asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects the current programme of improvement to the A74 to be completed.

Mr. Ancram: The 1986 programme of carriageway reconstruction and resurfacing work on the A74 is expected to be completed by mid-July. The M74 Draffan to Millbank extension is planned to be completed in the spring of 1987.

NHS Staff

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many staff and practitioners in terms of whole-time equivalents there were in the National Health Service in Scotland at 30 September in each year since 1978.

Mr. Rifkind: The number of NHS staff expressed as whole-time equivalents and the number of general medical and dental practitioners at 30 September is shown below:

Year	*NHS Staff (whole-time equivalents)*	*Practitioners (numbers)*
1978	114,025·4	4,384
1979	115,983·5	4,425
1980	118,895·9	4,536
1981	122,467·9	4,674
1982	124,010·1	4,760
1983	124,491·3	4,853
1984	123,496·8	4,963
1985	124,122·4	5,062

Housing Action Areas

Mr. Craigen asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many housing action areas for improvement were approved during 1974 to 1985 *(a)* within the statutory 28 days, *(b)* in more than 28 days but within 84 days and *(c)* in more than 84 days; how many were approved in 1986 (i) within the statutory 28 days, (ii) in more than 28 days but less than 84 days and (iii) in more than 84 days; and how many are now outstanding (1) 28 days or less, (2) more than 28 days and (3) more than 84 days, respectively.

Mr. Ancram: The function exercised by my right hon. and learned Friend in regard to housing action area draft resolutions is to consider whether or not he should direct the local authority concerned to rescind their resolution. He may at his discretion notify the local authority that he requires a longer period than 28 days from his acknowledgement of the draft resolution in which to do so. From 1974 to 1985 the Secretary of State considered 1,167 draft housing action area resolutions for improvement or for demolition and improvement, of which he directed nine to be rescinded. The other information requested is as follows:

Housing Action Area Resolutions considered

	1974-1985	*1986*
Within statutory 28 days	1,158	1
More than 28 days but less than 84 days	4	5
More than 84 days	5	4
TOTAL	1,167	10

Numbers outstanding in 1986

Less than 28 days—8; more than 28 days—28 of which more than 84 days—19.

Mr. Craigen asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the names of all housing action areas for improvement now awaiting his approval, showing the local authority which submitted them, and the date on which they were submitted.

Mr. Ancram: The names of the draft housing action area resolutions for improvement on which my right hon. and learned Friend has yet to come to a decision are given below together with the dates on which they were received by the Scottish Development Department:

District council housing action areas for improvement

	Date
City of Aberdeen	
The Stafford Street (No. 1)	28 January 1986
The Stafford Street (No. 2)	2 May 1986
Clackmannan	
The 1-21 Candleriggs, Alloa	6 March 1986
Cunninghame	
The Ardrossan (No. 8)	18 June 1986
City of Dundee	
The Cleghorn (No. 7)	19 December 1985
The Ann Street (No. 1)	19 December 1985
The Roseangle (No. 1)	19 December 1985
The Hilltown (No. 7)	20 December 1985
The Albert Street (No. 2)	24 January 1986
The Albert Street (No. 3)	6 June 1986
The Perth Road (No. 1)	6 June 1986
The Strathmartine (No. 2)	6 June 1986
City of Edinburgh	
The Albert Street (No. 3)	27 January 1986
The Comely Green Place	12 June 1986
The Taylor Place etc	2 May 1986
The Brighton Street etc	13 June 1986
The Teviot Place etc	18 June 1986
City of Glasgow	
The Shettleston (Shettleston Road No. 1)	27 September 1985
The Kingston (Scotland Street No. 1)	7 October 1985
The Park (West Princes Street No. 1)	21 October 1985
The Cowlairs (Flemington Street No. 6)	21 October 1985
The Cowlairs (Springburn Road No. 7)	14 November 1985
The Cowlairs (Angus Street No. 1)	9 December 1985
The Woodlands (Maryhill Road No. 1)	16 December 1985
The Alexandra Park (Walter Street No. 1)	4 February 1986
The Alexandra Park (Walter Street No. 2)	4 February 1986
The Scotstoun (Dumbarton Road No. 2)	21 March 1986
The Scotstoun (Henrietta Street No. 1)	21 March 1986
The Dennistoun (Ark Lane No. 1)	20 May 1986
The Hutchesontown (Inglefield Street No. 1)	20 May 1986
The Mount Vernon (Tollcross Road No. 1)	20 May 1986
The Parkhead (Westmuir Street No. 3)	22 May 1986
The Hutchesontown (Govanhill Street No. 1)	6 June 1986
The North Kelvin (Clouston Street No. 1)	6 June 1986
The Partick (Dumbarton Road No. 2)	11 June 1986
Inverclyde	
The Wellpark (Bank Street)	31 October 1985

Bracken

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what estimate he has of the area of land covered by bracken in Scotland.

Mr. John Mackay: The area of land in Scotland at present covered by bracken is estimated to be around 200,000 hectares.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what estimate he has of the probable area of land covered by bracken in Scotland, at present rates of encroachment, by the year 2000.

Mr. John Mackay: The rate at which bracken spreads is variable: encroachment of heathlands and moorland is negligible while the rate rises to approximately 3 per cent. on underused grassland. The overall rate of encroachment is further affected by factors such as livestock numbers and the level of afforestation. It is not therefore possible to give a realistic figure for the year 2000.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many grants were paid for the purpose of bracken control in Scotland; and what was their total value in each of the last five years.

Mr. John Mackay: The information is set out in the table below:

Calendar Year	*Number of Claims*	*Total Grant £*
1981	*22	79,495
1982	*62	85,232
1983	200	124,175
1984	185	106,248
1985	179	118,704

• Figures for the number of claims under the Farm and Horticultural Development Scheme/Agricultural and Horticultural Development Scheme are not available.

Industrial Production

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the index of industrial production in Scotland in each of the past 10 years, using 1980 as a base.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Information on the production industries component of the index of industrial production and construction is set out below. No figures for 1986 are yet available.

Index of Output (1980 = 100) for the Production Industries in Scotland

	Index
1976	105·3
1977	105·1
1978	105·8
1978	106·5
1980	100·0
1981	98·1
1982	98·6
1983	97·7
1984	101·2
1985	106·0

Skoal Bandits

Mr. George Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has replied to the letter sent to him from Hamilton-East Kilbride local health council of 30 May regarding the petition presented to his office on 6 May calling for a ban on the production and promotion of Skoal Bandits; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: A reply was sent on 27 June. In this area it is preferable to proceed by way of voluntary agreement rather than by introducing legal prohibitions. The situation is, however, being kept under constant review.

Torness Power Station

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will now reply to the letter from the hon. Member for East Lothian of 21 May concerning the date for the commissioning of Torness power station.

Mr. Allan Stewart: A reply has been sent to the hon. Member today.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Test Ban Treaty

Mr. Soames asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will take steps to secure a mandate for the conference on disarmament in Geneva to negotiate a comprehensive test ban treaty.

Mr. Eggar: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer that I gave to the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) on 25 June, at column *165*.

South Africa

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the South African Government on the effect on British citizens of the South African Citizen Amendment Act 1984; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: The South African Citizenship Amendment Act 1984 provided for the automatic extension of South African citizenship to all immigrants between the ages of 15 and 25 who had been in South Africa for five years. This did not affect, and could not have affected, a British citizen's status as such. No representations were made.

Nuclear Arms Limitation

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what response he has made to Mr. Gorbachev's latest nuclear arms limitation proposal.

Mr. Eggar: The nuclear and space talks at Geneva are confidential bilateral negotiations between the United States and the Soviet Union. But as my right hon. and learned Friend said on 18 June, there are elements in the latest Soviet proposals which deserve exploration. As President Reagan also said in his Glassboro speech on 19 June, it appears that the Soviet Union has begun to make a serious effort.

Chemical Weapons

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affars what is the policy of Her Majesty's Government towards United States proposals, at the conferece on disarmament in Geneva, for mandatory short notice inspections as a necessary verification procedure for a chemical weapons ban.

Mr. Eggar: We believe that the proposed chemical weapons convention will need two levels of verification. This would comprise first a mandatory system of inspection at certain declared sites: including verification of declaration and destruction of stocks and production facilities; and verification of non-production of chemical weapons in the civil chemical industry. Second, there would need to be a strigent challenge inspection regime as a deterrent against cheating at other sites. The United States proposals provide a valuable standard for the stringency that will be required for a challenge inspection regime.

Sri Lanka

Mr. Tom Clarke asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received from the Government of India on the issue of aid for military equipment for the Government of Sir Lanka; what has been the nature of his reply; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: We have received no representations from the Government of India about the use of British aid funds for the purchase of military equipment by the Government of Sir Lanka. Nor would we expect to. British aid is not used for the supply of military equipment to Sri Lanka, nor is there any credit arrangement between our two Governments for arms purchases.

Council of Ministers

Mr. Dykes asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish in the *Official Report* a statement of forthcoming business in the European Community Council of Ministers.

Mrs. Chalker: The usual forecast was deposited in the House earlier today. At present five meetings of the Council of Ministers are planned for July.

The *Economic and Finance Council* is expected to meet on 7 July to consider the second quarterly review of the economic situation in the Community and to discuss the budgetary situation of 1986.

The *Agriculture Council* is expected to meet on 14/15 July. Among subjects likely to be discussed are the sale of reduced-price butter to persons receiving social assistance; the mandate on ACP sugar; registration of vineyards; supplementary trade mechanisms; Portuguese wine structures; imitation dairy products; and French overseas sugar. The Fisheries Council is not expected to meet in July.

At its meeting on 16/17 July the *Budget Council* will discuss the 1987 preliminary draft budget. It may also need to deal with the unfinished business of the 1986 Budget.

The *Foreign Affairs Council* will meet on 21/22 July. The Council is likely to review the current state of its trade relations with the United States and with Japan. The Council will also discuss EC/Turkey, in preparation for the EC/Turkey Association Council in September, and EC/GCC relations. The Council may, in addition, discuss the Mediterranean policy of the enlarged Community, to agree a revised mandate for trade negotiations and, if necessary, EC/Yugoslavia to agree an EC position prior to the meeting of the EC/Yugoslavia Co-operation Council in the margins of the Foreign Affairs Council.

The *Internal Market Council* will meet on 24 July. The Council will discuss a number of items from the presidency action programme.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Anglo-Irish Agreement

Mr. Flannery asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on progress to date in fulfilling the aims of the Anglo-Irish agreement.

Mr. Tom King: We have made significant progress in a number of areas, although it would be unrealistic to expect to achieve all the aims of the agreement rapidly. I welcome in particular progress in enhancing cross-border security co-operation. Work is also continuing on both the policy aspects of extradition and on the search for measures to enhance public confidence in the administration of justice in Northern Ireland. In addition, I have told the Irish Government that the United Kingdom Government intend to take legislative action to apply the provisions which govern the franchise for parliamentary elections throughout the United Kingdom to local government and Assembly elections in Northern Ireland. I have indicated a number of specific areas for possible future development of the Irish language, and agreed to explore further with the Irish Government the best way of improving the road link between Newry and Dundalk. The joint statements issued after each meeting of the intergovernmental conference record in more detail the matters discussed with the Irish Government.

Political Leaders (Exchanges)

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what exchanges he has had with Northern Ireland political leaders since Unionist right hon. and hon. Members were last received by the Prime Minister.

Mr. Tom King: I have discussed a range of matters with the leaders of the Social Democratic and Labour party and the Alliance party since 25 February 1986. I regret that the leaders of the Ulster Unionist and Democratic Unionist parties still decline offers of dialogue with the Government.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Thames Barrier

Mr. Spearing asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what conditions he plans to impose on any private corporation to which he transfers ownership and responsibility for operation of the Thames barrier.

Mrs. Fenner: Following the presentation of the White Paper on the privatisation of the water authorities in England and Wales (Cmnd. 9734) detailed arrangements for land drainage and flood protection are under consideration.

Bracken

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what estimate he has of the probable area of land covered by bracken in England, at present rates of encroachment, by the year 2000;

(2) if he will provide details of the grants presently available for bracken control in Britain; and if he will provide figures to show the number of such grants, and their total value, paid in each of the last five years;

(3) what estimate he has of land covered by bracken in England.

(4) what information is held by his Department concerning the treatment of bracken by the various means available; and if he will give figures to show the area of bracken so treated by each method for each of the last five years.

Mrs. Fenner: Official statistics are not collected on the area of bracken. Estimates put forward by research organisations suggest that about 40,400 hectares in England are infested with bracken. The rate of encroachment is presently estimated to be something over 1 per cent. per annum. I cannot give a meaningful estimate of the likely area in the year 2000. Bracken is usually controlled by mechanical and chemical means, by husbandry practices and by burning. I have no information on the extent to which each of these methods is in use. Grants are available for bracken control under the agriculture improvement scheme. The rates are 30 per cent. in the less favoured areas and 15 per cent. elsewhere. The number and value of grant payments is not separately distinguishable from those for operations concerning heather. The available information is as follows:

Grants for bracken and heather control

	Number	Value (£)
1981	19	14,265
1982	51	50,389
1983	50	36,675
1984	45	47,697
1985	51	50,976

West Wood

Mr. Livsey asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when an application was received from Center Parcs Ltd. for the purchase of a substantial part of Lyminge forest, known as West wood; and how his Department proposes to deal with this application.

Mrs. Fenner: The Forestry Commission, which manages West wood, was first approached by Center Parcs only in March of this year about its possible sale as a holiday village development. The decision whether to sell rests with the Forestry Commissioners, who are still considering the matter.

Radioactivity

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he is satisfied with the monitoring of radiation undertaken on behalf of his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Fenner [*pursuant to her reply*, 26 June 1986, c. *307*]: My Department set in train a comprehensive monitoring programme of foodstuffs following the accident at Chernobyl. This programme will continue for as long as necessary to ensure that food which may have been affected as a result of the accident does not go for human consumption above the agreed action level. My Department also conducts routine monitoring of foodstuffs in pursuance of its responsibilities under the Radioactive Substances Act 1960.

Lambs

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many fat lambs were sold at grading centres in Cumbria in May and early June of the current year.

Mr. Gummer [*pursuant to his reply*, 26 June 1986, c. *308*]: In the period 28 April to 20 June 1986 inclusive, 46,457 fat lambs were certified and sold at liveweight grading centres in Cumbria.

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will publish details of the number of fat lambs which qualified for the standards of the European Community sheepmeat régime at each grading centre in England in each week of each year from 1982 to 1985.

Mr. Gummer [*pursuant to his reply*, 26 June 1986, c. *308*]: The information is not readily available and would be disproportionately costly to provide.

Plastic Waste

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what measures are being adopted by Her Majesty's Government to reduce the amount of plastic waste being dumped in British territorial waters.

Mr. Gummer [*pursuant to his reply*, 26 June 1986, c. *308*]: In accordance with the provisions of the London and Oslo dumping conventions, the sea disposal of persistent plastics which may interfere materially with fishing, navigation or other legitimate uses of the sea is prohibited by means of the licensing system operated under part II of the Food and Environment Protection Act 1985.

River Esk

Mr. Soames asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he will be publishing the report of the Yorkshire River Esk inquiry; and for what reason it has been delayed.

Mr. Gummer [*pursuant to his reply*, 26 June 1986, c. *308*]: I am still awaiting the inspector's report following this inquiry, which has been unavoidably delayed because of his continuing ill health.

WALES

Milk Quota Scheme

17. **Sir Raymond Gower** asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will state his latest assessment of the operation of the milk quota scheme in Wales.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: All producers have now been allocated their quota entitlements and are fully aware of the operation of the supplementary levy. We have made additional quota available to many producers suffering specific difficulties and for over half of the milk producers in Wales the effects of quotas have been virtually eliminated through reallocations of quota to small producers.

Sir Raymond Gower asked the Secretary of State for Wales what was the percentage reduction in milk production in Wales and in South Glamorgan, respectively, from the introduction of the milk quota scheme to the latest convenient date.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Sales of milk off farms in Wales in the past three years are as follows:

Year ending	Million Litres
March 1984	1,780·3
March 1985	*1,646·7
March 1986 (provisional)	†1,656·3

* (−7·5 per cent.).
† (+0·5 per cent.).

I regret that separate figures for South Glamorgan are not available.

Welsh Language

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales how much money has been provided for Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin for each year since 1980-81 by his Department.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The information is as follows:

Year	£
1980-81	117,000
1981-82	259,000
1982-83	278,000

Year	£
1983-84	292,000
1984-85	310,350
1985-86	329,400
1986-87	360,800

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales how much was spent on the teaching of Welsh as a subject in primary and secondary schools in Wales in the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Information is not collected centrally on the expenditure incurred in the teaching of individual subjects.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many O-level and A-level examination subjects can now be taken through the Welsh language in Wales; and how this compares with the number 10 and 20 years previously.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: I am informed that examination papers in all subjects offered by the WJEC at GCE O and A-level have been available in the Welsh language on demand since 1958.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales what consideration is given to Welsh language education in provision of capital expenditure allocations to county councils for 1986-87.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The education services component of capital allocations is, with the agreement of the local authority associations, distributed on the basis of a simple formula which takes account of pupil numbers and sparsity.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales what information he has as to how many of all secondary school children in Wales at September 1985 were being taught Welsh as a first language and as a second language and how many were not taught Welsh at all; and what are the corresponding figures for the years 1980 to 1984.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Provisional figures for September 1985 are given in the following table.

Number of pupils taught Welsh at maintained secondary schools

	Forms I-V	Form VI	Total
Pupils taught Welsh as a first language	20,938	928	21,866
Pupils taught Welsh as a second language	81,751	610	82,361
Pupils not taught Welsh at all	93,883	21,404	115,287

Corresponding figures for the years 1980-84 are given in tables 5.11 and 5.12 of "Statistics of Education in Wales" (Volumes 6-10), copies of which are in the Library.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he is satisfied with the provision and results of Welsh, English and foreign language teaching in Welsh secondary schools; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: It is the Government's policy to raise the standard of all children's achievements across the whole ability range and in all areas of the curriculum. To this end HMI has published discussion papers on the teaching of both Welsh and English, "Welsh from 5-16" and "English from 5-16" in the "Curriculum Matters" series. My right hon. Friends the Secretary of State and the Secretary of State for Education and Science have recently published a draft statement of policy concerning foreign languages in schools. Much good work in all of these subjects is being done in Welsh schools and it is our aim that evidence of good practice should be brought to the attention of all schools.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales if any steps have been taken in the current year to encourage the parents of young children in Wales to consider giving their children a bilingual education; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: It is the Government's policy that education through the medium of Welsh should be available to all children whose parents wish it, within the constraints of available resources. It is for parents to express a preference for bilingual education for their children. A number of LEAs and others have publicised the availability and scope of bilingual education.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales what are the latest estimates of numbers and percentages of children of school age attending Welsh medium schools or Welsh units.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Information in the form requested is not available. However, the number of primary school pupils in classes where Welsh was the sole or main medium of instruction in September 1985 is provisionally estimates as 29,400, representing nearly 12 per cent. of all full-time and part-time pupils. The number of pupils in secondary schools which use Welsh as a medium for teaching in five or more subjects in September 1985 totalled 28,400, representing almost 13 per cent. of the total secondary school population.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list circulars which have been issued by his Department over the past 20 years to local education authorities in Wales dealing with the teaching of the Welsh language or the provision of education through the medium of the Welsh language.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Since 1966 the following circulars dealing with the teaching of Welsh or teaching through the medium of Welsh have been issued to local education authorities in Wales:

Number	Subject
1/69	St. David's Day: The National Language Unit.
2/69	Report of the Central Advisory Council for Education (Wales) 'Primary Education in Wales'. Welsh in the Curriculum.
44/81	The School Curriculum and Welsh in Schools.
59/83	The Curriculum and Welsh in Schools.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales what information he has as to those secondary schools in Wales where it is now possible for pupils to undertake most or all of their education through the medium of the Welsh language and as to how many pupils at these schools currently receive all or a large part of their secondary education through the medium of the Welsh language.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The latest available information for maintained secondary schools relates to September 1985 and is as follows:

Number of subjects taught through the medium of Welsh	*Number of schools*	*Number of pupils on roll*
5 or more subjects	41	28,400
3 or 4 subjects	6	5,700
1 or 2 subjects	6	5,600

Information on the number of pupils taught through the medium of Welsh is available in respect of individual subjects and the latest figures, which relate to 1984, are published in table 5.09 of "Statistics of Education in Wales, No. 10, 1983," a copy of which is in the Library.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many teachers in Wales are qualified to teach French, German and Welsh, respectively.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The secondary school staffing survey indicated that in 1984 over 1,200 full-time and part-time teachers recorded a qualification in French, 400 in German. Nearly 1,000 have recorded a qualification in Welsh as a first language and some 500 as a second language.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had with Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin concerning the proposal to establish a Welsh language education development body.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Prior to the decision to invite the Welsh Joint Education Committee to undertake a co-ordinating role in Welsh language education, representatives of Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin attended a meeting with the then Minister of State, my hon. Friend the Member for Monmouth (Sir J. Stradling Thomas), in company with other Welsh language organisations.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish a detailed breakdown of the grants for Welsh language education allotted in each year since 1979.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The information is given in the following tables.

	1980-81 £	*1981-82* £	*1982-83* £	*1983-84* £	*1984-85* £	*1985-86* £	*1986-87* £
Clwyd CC	46,375	109,651	123,483	151,691	133,570	133,420	171,450
Dyfed CC	42,545	102,237	82,690	104,300	90,750	131,300	152,000
Gwynedd CC	56,623	123,000	99,442	126,956	120,870	153,945	163,800
Gwent CC	7,500	8,250	21,350	32,995	23,100	79,000	72,500
Mid Glamorgan CC	49,416	69,410	71,000	83,700	58,350	116,200	126,750
Powys CC	21,579	46,602	45,976	62,558	60,000	76,650	82,000
South Glamorgan CC	40,005	37,535	39,170	56,860	52,800	81,550	77,500
West Glamorgan CC	54,150	76,960	79,820	96,429	67,874	122,928	121,000
North East Wales Institute of HE	1,150	900	8,350	2,950	Included with Clwyd CC		
Polytechnic of Wales	925	5,458	12,706	22,636	3,350	22,086	13,500
College of Librarianship	—	—	—	—	8,500	10,000	10,000
Normal College, Bangor	3,057	3,916	3,000	4,000	7,000	8,200	8,500
West Glamorgan Institute of Higher Education	—	5,069	3,500	3,500	Included with West Glamorgan CC		
WJEC	115,000	50,273	133,551	149,000	260,000	215,100	277,000
UC Cardiff (Extra Mural Dept)	—	3,000	—	3,000	—	—	—
UC Cardiff (Science & Technology Centre)	—	452	491	519	—	—	750
UC Swansea (Extra Mural Dept)	3,650	5,263	6,300	6,600	5,000	6,000	7,000
UC Aberystwyth (Extra Mural Dept)	3,400	5,913	7,000	8,000	8,500	9,000	9,000
UC Aberystwyth (Education & Welsh Depts)	8,340	16,357	31,330	38,480	33,592	57,150	46,000
UCNW (Extra Mural Dept)	3,075	10,750	9,000	11,000	12,000	16,000	26,000
UCNW (Dept of Social Theory & Institutions)	—	—	—	—	5,000	12,000	12,000
University of Wales Registry	14,635	615	—	2,540	4,500	3,500	3,500
UCNW (Education Dept)	—	—	—	—	—	2,400	—
Trinity College Carmarthen	—	8,800	8,000	5,739	—	16,200	17,500
Schools Council Committee for Wales (SCDC as of 1984)	—	—	5,000	30,023	29,758	—	12,000
WEA	—	—	—	3,450	3,500	3,500	3,000
Gwynedd Health Authority	—	—	10,000	10,000	9,350	10,000	7,000
National Scientific Association (Y Gymdeithas Wyddonol)	—	2,000	—	2,000	1,000	1,000	1,000
Schools Broadcasting Council for Wales	—	—	—	—	5,000	7,000	5,000
Parents for Welsh Medium Education	—	—	—	—	500	650	800
Welsh Books Council	—	24,000	5,000	—	12,500	—	—
Welsh National Centre for Childrens Literature	—	11,575	12,244	Subsequent support under S26 of the Development of Rural Wales Act			
Yr Academi Gymraeg	—	5,000	7,000	"	"	"	"
National Language Unit	22,000	8,000	7,391	Subsequently embraced in the grant to WJEC			
Welsh National Centre for Religious Education	—	—	—	6,500	—	—	—
Christian Education Movement in Wales	—	—	5,000	—	—	—	—

	1980-81 £	1981-82 £	1982-83 £	1983-84 £	1984-85 £	1985-86 £	1986-87 £
Council for Sunday Schools and Christian Education in Wales	—	—	—	—	12,000	—	—
Mudiad Cymraeg Casnewydd	—	—	—	—	150	—	—
Welsh Learners Council	—	—	—	—	—	—	750
Canolfan Iaith Nantgwrtheyrn	—	—	—	—	—	6,000	—
Llandovery Welsh Learners Club	200	—	—	—	—	—	—
Y Coleguim Cymraeg	—	—	—	—	—	6,500	6,000
The Welsh School—London	2,000	—	—	—	5,000	—	—
Keep Wales Tidy	7,250	—	—	—	—	—	—
Council for Education in World Citizenship	700	1,000	—	—	—	—	—
Cynoeddiadau Mei	—	1,000	—	—	—	—	—
Cardiganshire Technical College	—	6,500	—	—	—	—	—
Carmarthen Technical College	—	6,500	—	—	—	—	—
Gwynedd FE Colleges	—	6,000	—	—	—	—	—
Ystrad Mynach College	—	5,444	—	—	—	—	—
Radnor College of FE	—	15,249	—	—	—	—	—
South Glamorgan Institute	—	2,365	—	—	—	—	—
North Staffordshire Polytechnic	—	576	—	—	—	—	—
David Watson (Computer Software)	—	—	—	—	—	—	5,000

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales what steps have been taken to give in-service training to Welsh speaking teachers to enable them to teach through the medium of Welsh; and what is his policy as to the encouragement of Welsh-speaking teachers to receive in-service training.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Under the Department's in-service training specific grant scheme, introduced in 1983, grant of 90 per cent. is available to local education authorities to meet the cost of releasing teachers to attend courses to improve their ability to teach through the medium of the Welsh language. Support has also been provided under section 21 of the Education Act 1980. The Department is at present engaged in discussions with the local education authorities to establish what further steps are needed to provide in-service training for Welsh-speaking teachers to equip them to teach through the medium of Welsh.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what are his latest estimates of the number of primary, junior and secondary school children classified as fluent Welsh speakers in each of the Welsh counties; and what are the corresponding figures for the previous five years;

(2) what information he has about the number of primary school children in Wales coming from homes whose language is not Welsh, who speak Welsh with fluency in September 1985, and the respective figures for the years 1980 to 1984, for each county in Wales.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Available information relates only to children at maintained primary schools and the provisional figures for September 1985 are given in the following table:

Number of pupils assessed as being fluent in Welsh

	First* language	Second† language	Total
Clywd	1,401	2,367	3,768
Dyfed	4,783	4,032	8,815
Gwent	17	393	410
Gwynedd	6,638	5,114	11,752
Mid Glamorgan	264	3,307	3,571
Powys	454	520	974
South Glamorgan	278	700	978
West Glamorgan	685	837	1,522

* Pupils whose home language is Welsh.

† Pupils whose home language is not Welsh.

Corresponding figures for the previous five years are given in table 5.02 of "Statistics of Education in Wales" (Volumes 6-10), copies of which are in the Library.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment has been made of the linguistic effects of the establishment of bilingual classes in English medium schools and Welsh medium primary schools.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: No such assessment has been undertaken.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish for each local education authority in Wales the number of candidates and the passes at O and A-level in French, German and Welsh over the past three years.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Information for individual local authorities is not available centrally.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales if any assessment has been made of the likely growth in demand for Welsh-medium education over the next years in Wales.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Provision of Welsh-medium education is the responsibility of the individual local education authorities. This provision is subject to a process of constant reassessment.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he is satisfied that there is sufficient co-ordination between the various sectors of education in Wales with regard to the provision of Welsh-medium instruction.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: It is because my right hon. Friend believes there to be room for improvement that he has invited the Welsh Joint Education Committee to undertake a co-ordinating role in Welsh language education. One of the tasks it will perform will be to co-ordinate and inform the activities of other bodies.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received concerning the establishment of a Welsh language education development body in Wales; and how many of those were in favour of its establishment and how many opposed.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: In addition to the 27 representative bodies formally consulted by our Department, of which

five were in favour of the proposal to establish such a body, some 1,500 unsolicited representations were also received, in the form of pre-printed postcards circulated by Cymdeithas Yr Iaith Gymraeg, in favour of the proposal. Some unsolicited representations from individuals opposed to such a development have also been received.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will discuss with the Welsh local education authorities the provision of Welsh-medium teaching in secondary schools not designated as bilingual in areas with a substantial proportion of Welsh speakers.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: My right hon. Friend has no plans to hold such discussions. It is for individual authorities to determine appropriate levels of provision in their own area.

Foreign Language Teaching

Mr. Grist asked the Secretary of State for Wales what steps his Department proposes to further the teaching of foreign language in schools and colleges in Wales.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: On Monday 16 June 1986 my right hon. Friends the Secretary of State and the Secretary of State for Education and Science published a draft statement of policy on foreign languages in the school curriculum. It sets out a programme of action which is in our view essential to raise standards.

The draft policy statement has been sent for comment to a wide range of organisations in education and in industry and commerce. We intend to issue it substantively before the end of the year. Copies of the draft statement have been placed in the Library.

Bilingual Education

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales whether there are any proposals by his Department to develop and increase the provision of bilingual schools in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: It is for individual authorities to determine the nature of provision in their own area. The Government's policy is that education through the medium of Welsh should be available, within the constraints of available resources, to all children whose parents are desirous of it.

National Trust Commons

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Wales in how many cases he has given his consent to an application to fence National Trust commons in Wales pursuant to section 23 of the National Trust Act 1971, in the last five years.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: None.

District Health Authorities (Expenditure)

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales what proportion of the expenditure of the district health authorities in Wales was taken up in administrative costs in the last year for which figures are available; and what are the corresponding figures for each year since 1979.

Mr. Mark Robinson: For the years for which figures are available the overall management costs proportions of total expenditure by district health authorities in Wales were as follows:

	Per cent.
1979-80	4·88
1980-81	4·66
1981-82	4·46
1982-83	4·23
1983-84	4·10
1984-85	3·98

Note These figures relate to expenditure on district headquarters administration as well as the salaries of other administrators and managers (above a specified grade) employed within the hospital and community health services. They do not, however, include the costs of certain other administrative activities such as the wages and salaries of medical records clerks and medical secretaries, since these are not regarded as management costs and are thus not disaggregated in the accounts.

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales what proportion of the expenditure of the district health authorities in Wales was taken up by wages in the last year for which figures are available; and what are the corresponding figures for each year since 1979.

Mr. Mark Robinson: For the years for which figures are available the information requested is as follows:

	Wages and salaries charged to revenue as percentage of total revenue expenditure	*Total wages and salaries as percentage of total expenditure**
1979-80	76·2	73·3
1980-81	78·0	75·6
1981-82	76·0	73·2
1982-83	75·0	72·2
1983-84	75·2	72·6
1984-85	75·8	72·0

* Inclusive of district health authorities' capital expenditure.

Radioactivity

Mr. Geraint Howells asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he is satisfied that no radioactive fallout was discharged from either Wylfa or Trawsfynydd nuclear power stations on north Wales in the current year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Low-level radioactive waste discharges from the nuclear sites in Wales are carefully controlled under the Radioactive Substances Act 1960. There have, however, been two uncontrolled discharges of radioactivity from the Welsh nuclear power stations to the atmosphere in the current year: at Wylfa on 10 February and at Trawsfynydd on 21 February. Both incidents, which were widely reported at the time, had no significant effect on local produce and presented no hazard to the public or to animal and plant life.

Ambulances (Tourists)

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish in the *Official Report* for each district health authority the additional allocation made for the ambulance service to convey tourists to hospital; and if he will supply these statistics for each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Mark Robinson: No specific allocations are made to health authorities for ambulance services. Health

authorities determine the level of provision for ambulance services within their overall discretionary revenue and capital allocations on the basis of their own assessments of local circumstances and priorities. However, in recogniton of the significant extra demands placed upon accident and emergency services in the summer months, allocations of £20,000 were built in to the revenue funding of Clwyd, Gwynedd and the former Dyfed health authorities in 1976-77 on a recurring basis. This provision has since been enhanced by the varying percentages of discretionary growth which the respective authorities have received and by allowances for inflation over the past 10 years; but no further allocations specifically in respect of tourism have been made since then.

The scale of this provision and its distribution was reviewed by the former steering committee on resources allocation in Wales in 1981 and it was agreed that no changes should be made. It will be reviewed again by the steering group's successor body, the resources allocation working group, during the coming months.

I should also point out that, in using the RAWG revenue formula to assess the relative funding needs of health authorities in Wales and hence to determine the distribution of resources made available by my right hon. Friend for further progress towards equalisation, account is taken of cross-boundary flows of patients and thus the impact which tourists and other visitors make upon all hospital and ambulance services in Wales.

Opencast Coal Mining

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish in the *Official Report*, for the period 1958 until the most recently available date, a list of the opencast coal sites in Wales that have been the subject of public inquiry, indicating *(a)* the date that inquiry commenced, *(b)* the date the inquiry was completed, *(c)* the date that the inspector reported, *(d)* whether or not the inspector's recommendations were accepted and *(e)* what the decision was.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Information in the form requested by the hon. Gentleman is available from 1962 for NCB sites in respect of which inquiries have been held into applications for authorisation under section 2 of the Opencast Coal Act 1958, and from 1979 in respect of private sites where appeals have been made to the Secretary of State under the provisions of section 36 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1971. Earlier records are not available. Information is given in the following table.

Table 1
National Coal Board (British Coal) opencast sites
Decisions given on applications for authorisation (including deemed planning permission) inquiries held

Site	*Date commenced*	*Date completed*	*Date inspection reported*	*Whether inspector's recommendations accepted*	*Decision*
Blaina Deep	30 October 1962	31 October 1962	November 1962	*	Authorised
Abercrave Gwaunton	31 July 1963	1 August 1963	22 August 1963	Yes	Authorised
Colliers Row	3 June 1970	—	10 September 1970	Yes	Not authorised
Cwmgorse	24 November 1970	25 November 1970	23 December 1970	Yes	Authorised
Bryngoleu	14 September 1971	14 September 1971	23 September 1971	Yes	Authorised
Dryn	19 September 1972	21 September 1972	10 October 1972	Yes	Authorised
Brynpica Extension South	24 April 1974	26 April 1974	24 May 1974	*	Authorised
Glynglas South	11 November 1975	13 November 1975	December 1975	No	Authorised
Hirwaun Common North 2 (near Pencoed-Llanharan)	3 February 1976	5 February 1976	19 March 1976	Yes	Authorised
Cross Tree Farm	10 November 1976	10 November 1976	28 January 1977	Yes	Authorised
Park Slip Extension	23 May 1978	25 May 1978	June 1978	Yes	Authorised
Glyn Tai	20 March 1979	22 March 1979	19 June 1979	No	Authorised
Pont Einion	25 September 1979	23 October 1979	18 January 1980	No	Not authorised
Ffyndaff	4 December 1979	6 December 1979	14 January 1980	Yes	Authorised

* No recommendation made.

Table 2
NCB opencast applications—in hand
Inquiries held

Site	*Date commenced*	*Date finished*	*Date inspector's report received*	*Decision*
Garnant Amman Valley (Authorisation and Planning Appeal)	10 September 1985	4 October 1985	18 April 1986	Under consideration
Ley Farm Chirk (Authorisation and Orders)	7 May 1986	12 May 1986	5 June 1986	Under consideration

Table 3
Private opencast coal sites—Planning appeals
Inquiries held

Site	*Date commenced*	*Date completed*	*Date inspector reported*	*Whether inspector's recommendations accepted*	*Decision*
Gelliwarog Farm	19 September 1979	20 September 1979	26 October 1979	Yes	Dismissed
Pencoedcae Farm, Rhymney	12 September 1979	14 September 1979	15 October 1979	Yes	Allowed
Clyngwllym Seam	5 December 1979	5 December 1979	9 January 1980	Yes	Dismissed
Cefn Crib, Hafodyrynys	19 February 1980	20 February 1980	14 May 1980	Yes	Dismissed
Penyrheol Reservoir, Upper Race, Pontypool	16 November 1980	22 November 1982	*n/a	n/a	Dismissed
Panyganol Farm, Manmoel	12 November 1985	13 November 1985	*n/a	n/a	Allowed
Gelliwarog Farm	3 December 1985	5 December 1985	*n/a	n/a	Allowed

* Appeal transferred to Inspector for decision.

Health Visitors

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Wales what information his Department holds on the visits health visitors make to families following childbirth; and if he will specify the level of statistical disaggregation.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Information is collected from DHA's annually on the numbers of first home visits and on the total number of home visits made to children born during that year.

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish in the *Official Report* the health visitor to population ratio for *(a)* Wales and *(b)* each district health authority in Wales.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The information for September 1985 is given in the following table:

Number of health visitors per 10,000 population*

	Number
Clwyd	1·83
East Dyfed	2·29
Pembrokeshire	1·83
Gwent	1·79
Gwynedd	2·31
Mid Glamorgan	2·04
Powys	2·87
South Glamorgan	2·36
West Glamorgan	2·09
Wales	2·09

* Whole-time equivalents.

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Wales what information his Department holds on the percentage of health visitors' time spent on *(a)* clinical, *(b)* non-clinical duties and *(c)* travelling.

Mr. Mark Robinson: This information is not available centrally.

Livestock Compensation Scheme

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy to base any compensation scheme for loss of income as a result of the order controlling the movement of sheep and lambs, on schemes implemented for infectious diseases such as foot and mouth epidemics; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The present circumstances are not comparable with those that arise in cases of infectious disease, where slaughter is the effective means of control. The Government have said that if it should prove to be necessary they will be prepared to discuss cases of compensation for severe loss in particular circumstances to specific farmers.

Sheepmeat

Sir Raymond Gower asked the Secretary of State for Wales what is his latest information concerning the recent fall in lamb prices in Wales and the consequences for farmers in Wales.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The average market prices of lambs sold in markets in Wales in recent weeks are as follows:

Week commencing:	*Price*
9 June	234·59p per kg. liveweight
16 June	190·45p per kg. liveweight
23 June (estimate)	150·00p per kg. liveweight

It is too early to assess the impact that the recently announced restrictions on the movement and slaughter of sheep will have on the industry.

However, any fall in prices will be compensated under the sheep variable premium scheme which makes good any shortfall between the market price and the guide support price.

Sir Raymond Gower asked the Secretary of State for Wales what is his latest information regarding the levels of radiocaesium in the parts of north Wales affected by the order made on 20 June prohibiting the movement and slaughter of sheep; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The latest published results were contained in a press notice on 20 June a copy of which is in the Library of the House of Commons. Further lists will be published covering the current testing programme.

Sir Raymond Gower asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on results to date of efforts to improve the marketing of Welsh lamb; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: I welcome the increasing emphasis on the marketing and promotion of Welsh lamb

in recent years and recognise the financial contribution which the industry itself has made, on a voluntary basis, through Welsh Lamb Enterprise and through the levy collected by the Meat and Livestock Commission. Results to date are encouraging but more remains to be done.

Beef

Sir Raymond Gower asked the Secretary of State for Wales what advice he will give to farmers in Wales pending European Economic Community decisions on beef support, expected later in the current year.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The European Commission's proposals for reform of beef support measures are to be further examined by the Council of Ministers with a view to a decision by 31 December 1986. In the meantime farmers in Wales will benefit from the continuation of existing support measures.

Roads

Sir Raymond Gower asked the Secretary of State for Wales what recent discussions he has had with highway authorities in Wales concerning the condition of roads for which they are responsible; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: None. However, the subject has been raised by representatives of the local authority associations in the transport and highways working party of the expenditure sub-group on local authority expenditure in Wales. I will be meeting the Welsh Consultative Council on Local Government Finance on 9 July to discuss the sub-group's report in the context of the rate support grant settlement for 1987-88.

Outgoers Scheme

Sir Raymond Gower asked the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what has been the impact of the outgoers scheme in Wales and in South Glamorgan, respectively; and what has been the net reduction in the numbers of farmers producing milk in each case;

(2) what reduction has resulted in Wales and in South Glamorgan, respectively, in the number of milk producers since the introduction of the milk producers' scheme.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: As at 20 June 1986 a total of 255 producers in Wales had ceased production under the terms of the outgoers' scheme, surrendering a total of 25·8 million litres of quota.

For south Glamorgan the figures are seven producers and 1·8 million litres, respectively.

Agricultural Support

Sir Raymond Gower asked the Secretary of State for Wales what discussions he has had recently with Welsh farming unions and interests concerning likely changes in agricultural support during the next 12 months; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: I and my officials met both farming unions and other interests on several occasions for substantive discussions on the European Community price proposals for 1986-87, and will continue to do so on issues outstanding from the price agreement.

Youth Training

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Wales what figures he has to show the number of disabled young people refusing the offer of a place in YTS in each of the last three years.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Comprehensive information on YTS refusals is not readily available centrally. Individual careers services have information but it is not on a consistent or consistently accessible basis.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many disabled young people presently take part in YTS in Wales.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: This information is currently not available. The Manpower Services Commission's computerised management information system, from which YTS statistics are obtained, is currently being reprogrammed and improved to meet the needs of two-year YTS. As a result of this work information about the participation of young disabled people on YTS will not be available until the end of this summer.

I shall write to the hon. Gentleman with this information as soon as it becomes available.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Wales what figures he has to show the number of disabled young people applying to take part in YTS each year in Wales.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The Manpower Services Commission does not hold information on the number of young people applying for YTS.

Disabled Young People

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Wales what is the population of economically active disabled 16 and 17-year-olds in Wales.

Mr. Mark Robinson: This information is not available.

Bracken

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what estimate he has of the area of land covered by bracken in Wales;

(2) what estimate he has of the probable area of land covered by bracken in Wales, at present rates of encroachment, by the year 2000.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: As I said in my reply to the hon. Gentleman on 24 January 1986, at column *322*, estimates put forward by research organisations suggest that 118,000 hectares in Wales are subject to bracken infestation and that the annual rate of encroachment is between 1 and 3 per cent.

I have no estimate of the probable area of infestation by the year 2000 because bracken infestation is so variable.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many grants were paid for the purpose of bracken control in Wales; and what was their total value in each of the last five years.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The information requested is not available for bracken only, but the number of payments and the amount of grant paid in respect of bracken control and heather regeneration was as follows:

	Number of Payments	Grant (£)
1981	19	7,076
1982	31	15,075
1983	28	8,766
1984	25	15,692
1985	49	22,654

Brymbo Steelworks

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Wales what action he has taken to date, and what action he proposes to take, to facilitate securing investment at Brymbo steelworks.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: When United Engineering Steels was set up my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Department of Trade and Industry made it quite clear that the company would be a freestanding private sector company. The location of investment projects is equally clearly a matter for the board of UES and it would not be appropriate for me to intervene in a commercial decision.

Kidney Dialysis

Mr. Favell asked the Secretary of State for Wales, if he will make a statement on the performance of the two privately run kidney dialysis units in Wales.

Mr Mark Robinson: The performance of the two privately run subsidiary renal units which provide a service to district health authorities in Wales is the subject of an evaluation study by Professor William Asscher, professor of renal medicine at the University of Wales college of medicine. Whilst the evaluation has not yet been completed, the indications are that the units are operating effectively and providing a real benefit to patients.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Inland Revenue

Mr. Tim Smith asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish in the *Official Report* the letter dated 25 April 1986 from the Inland Revenue to certain professional bodies concerning inquiries made by tax practitioners to the technical division of the Inland Revenue; if it was with his authority that this change of policy was made; why it was made; why it was not the subject of a press release; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The text of the letter of 25 April 1986 is printed as follows. Treasury Ministers were informed of the issue of this letter. It was sent to six professional bodies representing tax practitioners. No more widespread notification was considered necessary.

A practice had been growing of treating technical division at Somerset house as a free tax advisory service for tax practitioners. That is not its function and, with increasing pressures of work and a current shortage of experienced inspectors of taxes, the Board of Inland Revenue could no longer continue to provide this service. The change does not mean that the Inland Revenue is no longer prepared to provide information to practitioners. The technical division will respond to inquiries about recent legislation and changes in Inland Revenue practice, and the normal point of contact for tax practitioners with the Inland Revenue will continue to be the tax office responsible for dealing with the tax affairs of the practitioner's client. Notification of the Revenue's interpretation of tax law will continue to be provided by way of press releases and booklets and the Inland Revenue will ensure that inspectors in tax offices can provide an authoritative Revenue view in relation to questions arising in any particular case.

"I am writing to let you know of some new guidance which, with considerable regret, we have found necessary to issue to our specialists in Technical Division, and to explain the background.

As you know, our Technical Division at Head Office is responsible for advising Inspectors in Tax Districts on tax problems arising from their examination of accounts and tax returns, and for ensuring that the law is applied uniformly and consistently throughout the network; and it is also responsible for helping Policy Divisions prepare advice for Ministers and assisting with the preparation of new legislation. In addition, in recent years it has become increasingly involved with providing information or guidance to tax practitioners, who telephone or write direct to the specialists here. For our part, we have generally been happy to provide this help, where we can; and—though there are obviously some difficult areas—I think your members will agree that Technical Division staff have always tried to be helpful in responding to legitimate enquiries about difficult tax problems.

I am afraid however that I have to tell you that against a background of continuing losses of experienced Inspectors from the Department, our Technical Division will, as regards enquiries from tax practitioners, in future be able to respond only to those involving recent legislation and changes in practice.

Let me say again that I am sorry that it has become necessary for me to write to you, and to other professional bodies affected, in these terms. I thought, however, that those of your members who have found it helpful in the past to get in touch with Technical Division rather than the appropriate Tax District would at least like to be forewarned of this change, and be told why it has become necessary."

Unemployment (Costs)

Mr. Dormand asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the basis for his assessment that the true cost of unemployment could be less than the total of transfer payments made to unemployed persons; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: I am not clear what assessment the hon. Member has in mind. But of the benefits paid to unemployed people, an estimated £1·15 billion is currently being spent on housing benefit. Some part of that would continue to be spent if the claimants returned to work because housing benefit can be paid to those in full or part-time employment.

Manufacturing Output

Mr. MacKenzie asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish in the *Official Report* the annual percentage change in manufacturing output from 1979 to the latest convenient date.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Latest available annual figures for manufacturing output — from 1978 to 1985 — were published in tables accompanying the index of output of the production industries press notice dated 18 June 1986, a copy of which is available in the Library of the House.

Local Authorities (Borrowing)

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer, for each year since the scheme was commenced

in 1973, and cumulatively, how much profit or loss the Treasury has incurred by requiring local authorities to pay a premium when borrowing from the European Investment bank as an insurance against losses resulting from changes in sterling parities.

Mr. Ian Stewart: My hon. Friend is referring to the Treasury's exchange cover scheme. Local authorities which borrow under this scheme surrender the proceeds to the exchange equalisation account (EEA) in return for sterling, and pay an exchange cover charge in return for which the EEA undertakes to provide foreign currency at the guaranteed rate for the servicing and repayment of the loan. The charge is calculated in such a way that the total sterling costs of the loan to the borrower are equivalent to the interest it would have paid on a comparable loan from the Public Works Loans Board (PWLB), less a margin which is at present ½ per cent. on new loans. The EEA holds the foreign currency proceeds of the loan in the form of foreign currency assets, as part of the Government's overall reserves management operation. Provided the foreign currency assets match the foreign currency liability on the loan, the EEA's net overall position will not be affected by exchange rate movements during the life of the loan. As the EEA holds its foreign currency assets in the form of a pool, EEA transactions cannot be attributed to particular sources of funds.

Shipping

Sir William Clark asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what arrangements exist in each member state of the European Economic Community to exempt from tax income derived by shipping companies from the sale of ships; and what conditions have to be met to qualify for such tax exemption;

(2) which member states of the European Economic Community have investment promotion arrangements comparable to the business expansion scheme; whether such arrangements apply to investment in ships; and what conditions are imposed in each case, including particularly restrictions on the nationality of the operating company, the ability of the companies concerned to hire in management services, the provenance of the ships, the flags under which they sail, the nationality of their crews and the trades or trading areas in which they operate.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

PRIME MINISTER

Nuclear Accident (Effects)

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Prime Minister if she will give an estimate of the effects which would be caused by an accident at a British nuclear power station of similar magnitude to that which occurred at Chernobyl in terms of deaths, effects on human health, costs of emergency arrangements, costs of rehabilitating land and property in Britain and elsewhere and the cost of replacing the generating plant.

The Prime Minister: The Chernobyl design is different from that of United Kingdom reactors. Planning against the remote possibility of an accident serious enough to affect people in the vicinity of a nuclear installation in the United Kingdom is described in the HSE's booklet "Emergency Plans for Civil Nuclear Installations", a copy of which is in the Library of the House.

Pharmacists

Mr. Michael Morris asked the Prime Minister if she will make a statement about co-ordination between the Department of Health and Social Security and the Department of Trade and Industry and the Office of Fair Trading on the implications of Her Majesty's Government's competition policy of the new proposed pharmacists' contract.

The Prime Minister: Officials at the Department of Health and Social Security had discussions with officials at the Department of Trade and Industry, the Office of Fair Trading and other interested Government Departments, during the preparation of the proposed new contract for retail pharmacists.

Crime Prevention

Mr. Batiste asked the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on progress arising from the latest crime prevention seminar which she held at No. 10 Downing street and the progress and achievements made in the field of crime prevention under her Administration.

The Prime Minister: The Government have placed crime prevention to the forefront of their strategy against crime. I met the participants at the second Downing street seminar on crime prevention on Monday. They reported substantial progress on the wide range of important action points agreed at the seminar I chaired in January. I heard, for example, of discounts being offered by a number of insurance companies to those who make their homes more secure; of the progress on a British standard for car security to be published later this year; and of the wealth of locally based activity throughout the United Kingdom. It is a sign of progress that crime prevention now comes high on the agenda of so many public, private and voluntary sector organisations.

The Government are devoting considerable financial resources to crime prevention related activity, including: an estimated £20 million from the urban housing renewal unit's resources to be devoted to the security of run down local authority housing estates; resources to provide over 5,000 places under the community programme devoted to crime prevention work (some £22·5 million); £2·5 million on Home Office crime prevention publicity.

The number of neighbourhood watch schemes in England and Wales has increased to over 14,500.

Welsh Language

Mr. Wigley asked the Prime Minister what is the extent of the responsibilities of the Secretary of State for Wales regarding encouraging support of the Welsh language in relation to university education.

The Prime Minister: Responsibility for funding first degree and postgraduate courses at the university of Wales rests with the Secretary of State for Education and Science and the University Grants Committee. The Secretary of State for Wales is responsible for providing grant for the four extramural departments of the University of Wales constituent colleges. Parts of the annual Welsh Office

grant to the extramural departments is used to provide tuition through the medium of the Welsh language. The Welsh Office also assists various departments within the constituent colleges of the university of Wales with funding for specific Welsh language projects under section 21 of the Education Act 1980.

Overseas Aid

Mr. Tom Clarke asked the Prime Minister if she will publish in the *Official Report* the exchange of letters dated June 1986 between the hon. Member for Monklands, West and herself on the subject of overseas aid; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: Yes.

The information is as follows:

10 Downing Street
London SW1A 2AA
10 June 1986

Dear Mr. Clarke

You will recall our correspondence earlier this year about the figure for official and private flows from this country to developing countries. The information then available suggested that the 1984 figure for total flows was 0·89 per cent. of GNP. Since then, more information has become available which indicates that the amount of direct private investment in developing countries from this country rose sharply in 1984. This means that the revised figure for total official and private flows is 1·23 per cent., rather than 0·89 per cent. This figure is close to that for 1982 and 1983 and compares with the United Nations target for official and private flows of 1 per cent.

Yours sincerely
Margaret Thatcher

Tom Clarke Esq. CBE MP

House of Commons
London SW1A 0AA
11 June 1986

Rt. Hon. Margaret Thatcher,
Prime Minister

Dear Prime Minister,

Thank you for your letter dated 10 June.

I am grateful for the trouble you have taken on this matter.

However, I am interested to know what new information led to the revised figures, and I should be most grateful if you could help to clarify the matter.

Yours sincerely
Tom Clarke

10 Downing Street
23rd June 1986

Dear Mr. Clarke

Thank you for your letter of 11th June in which you asked for further clarification of the revised figure of 1·23 per cent. of GNP for combined official and private flows from Britain to developing countries in 1984.

I explained in my earlier letter that the change is almost entirely due to revised estimates of British direct private investment in developing countries. The Department of Trade and Industry conducts surveys of British firms in order to collect these statistics. The original estimate was based upon a quarterly sample survey. The revised estimate is based upon the results of a full survey. Total net direct investment in developing countries in 1984 is estimated to have been £1,896 million, more than double the earlier estimate. On this basis the total of net official and private flows to developing countries in 1984 represented 1·23 per cent. of GNP. When OECD calculate and publish the flows one element of direct investment overseas, that relating to investments in financial subsidiaries, is omitted. In Britain's case this amounted to £149 million. As a result the final published figure against the 1 per cent. UN target will be 1·18 per cent. for 1984.

Yours sincerely
Margaret Thatcher

Tom Clarke Esq CBE MP

South Africa

Mr. Nellist asked the Prime Minister if, pursuant to her answer to the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field), *Official Report*, 18 June, columns 546-7, she will list the Government's actions to encourage British companies with interests in South Africa to comply fully with the provisions of the European Economic Community code, with the date on which each action was initiated, and to which firm it was directed.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field), on 24 June at column 89. Ministers and officials have had many contacts with the companies concerned, and the various organisations and trade associations of which they are members. One measure of the success of our efforts is that the number of firms who declined to submit returns for the last reporting period was reduced to only three, compared with 10 the previous year.

Civil Defence

Mr. Strang asked the Prime Minister which Government Departments will be asked to participate in the regional civil defence exercises.

The Prime Minister: Final details have not yet been settled, but it is expected that all civil Departments with responsibilities in a war crisis will participate.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Mentally Ill People

Mr. Irving asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what discussions have been held with voluntary bodies concerning the involvement of families in the care of the mentally ill.

Mr. Whitney: This Government are committed to the close involvement of the families of people suffering from a mental disorder in decisions concerning their care and in the planning of relevant services. The Department has regular contact with a wide variety of voluntary bodies active in the mental illness field. We are currently funding nineteen organisations directly involved and are in contact with others that we do not fund. During the many exchanges we have with this wide range of organisations, the involvement of families is a topic that arises on many occasions. We frequently use those occasions to repeat our commitment to family care, which for many people is the essence of community care.

Radiation

Mr. Frank Cook asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will take steps to ensure that sufficient stocks of potassium iodide and potassium iodate tablets are available to the population through local chemist shops; and if he will issue guidance to all householders on the safe and effective measures to be taken to reduce exposure to radiation in general and radioiodines in particular in the event of future accidents involving release of radiation and exposure to the population.

Mr. Whitney: I am advised that there is no need for community pharmacies to stock iodine tablets so that they are available to the population in the event of a release of

radioiodine. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy in his reply to the hon. Member today explains the system by which iodine tablets will be administered in an emergency.

As for guidance to householders, I refer the hon. Member to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister's reply to him on 8 May at column *216*.

Hip Replacements (Northern Region)

Mr. Fallon asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the average number of hip replacement operations performed annually by consultants in the Northern regional health authority area.

Mr. Whitney: The estimated number of operations for total hip replacement and other arthroplasty of hip performed in National Health Service hospitals in the northern regional health authority in 1984, the latest year for which figures are available centrally, was 2,010. A whole-time equivalent of 46·1 consultants in the specialty of traumatic and orthopaedic surgery were employed by this authority during 1984-85 but no information is held centrally about how many individual consultants performed these operations.

Foster Parents (Sexual Orientation)

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what guidance his Department gives on the sexual orientation of foster parents; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: The suitability of an individual to be a foster parent is a matter of professional judgment to be made within the requirements of the Boarding-Out of Children Regulations 1955. General guidance on the selection and assessment of foster parents is given in "Foster Care—A guide to practice" published in 1976.

Institute for Motor Disorders, Budapest

Mr. Hannam asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what ministerial or other visits have been made from his Department during the past five years to the Institute for Motor Disorders in Budapest; and if he has any plans to make any visits.

Mr. Whitney: As I explained in my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth on 23 April at columns *162-163*, my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Rushcliffe (Mr. Clarke), the then Minister of State for Health, visited the Peto education and training institute in Budapest in November 1984. No other visits by Ministers or officials from the Department have been made during the last five years, nor are there plans at present for any such visits. However, the possible desirability of such a visit will be considered in the context of the current discussions with the Spastics Society about its proposed study of conductive education in this country.

Sugars

Mr. Coombs asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has received any recent advice from the Committee on Medical Aspects of Food Policy on sugars.

Mr. Whitney: At its meeting on 20 June the Committee on Medical Aspects of Food Policy (COMA) advised that a COMA panel be set up to examine the effect of sugars in the diet.

Drug Addiction (Acupuncture)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if, in view of the successful treatment by acupuncture now being given to drug addicts in the Liverpool area, he will seek to make this method of treatment more widely available to addicts.

Mr. Whitney: The Department does not prescribe treatment approaches. It is for health authorities and practitioners in the field to consider whether they wish to incorporate treatment by acupuncture into their services for drug misusers.

Children in Care

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many children have been placed into care as a result of matrimonial care orders in each year since 1979.

Mr. Whitney: The information is given in the table.

Children admitted to the care of local authorities in England under section 43(1) of the Matrimonial Causes Act 1973, 1979-84

During the year ended 31 March	*Number of children admitted*
1979	524
1980	605
1981	527
1982	529
1983	400
1984	330

District Health Authorities (General Managers)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the names of those district health authorities whose general manager posts have been filled by doctors.

Mr. Hayhoe: I understand the following fifteen district health authorities have appointed a doctor as their general manager:

Bradford
Airedale
Central Nottinghamshire
City and Hackney
Maidstone
West Lambeth
Wandsworth
Kingston and Esher
Oxfordshire
Northampton
Milton Keynes
Bristol and Weston
Cheltenham
Frenchay
Sandwell

Severe Weather Payments

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many claims for severe weather payments have been made in the current year at his Department's offices in Burnley; and how many were successful.

Mr. Major: Separate information on the number of claims for exceptionally severe weather payments is not

collected. Information on the number of payments made this year is not yet available. When the period during which payments are likely to be made is over, local offices will be asked to make a return, so that the total number of payments can be calculated.

NHS (Unemployed Doctors)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what plans he has to create posts in the National Health Service for the present number of unemployed doctors.

Mr. Hayhoe: There are no such plans. I have not seen evidence to indicate that special action is needed to combat medical unemployment. What evidence there is suggests that most spells of unemployment are very short and represent doctors between jobs.

Benefit Statistics

Mr. MacKenzie asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the total sum of money paid, in the form of unemployment benefit to male, female and young claimants in the last 12 months for which figures are available in Scotland, England, Wales and Northern Ireland, respectively.

Mr. Major: The total estimated expenditure on unemployment benefit in Great Britain and Northern Ireland in the financial year 1985-86 was £1,640 million.

A breakdown of this figure is available as follows:

	£ million
Scotland	189
England	1,314
Wales	88
Northern Ireland	49

I regret that the information requested regarding expenditure by sex and age is not available.

Social Security Recipients

Mr. Adley: asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what obligations he imposes upon those in receipt of social security; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Major: Every person who makes a claim for a social security benefit, is under an obligation in law to furnish such certificates, documents, information and evidence as the Secretary of State, acting through his officials, may require for the determination of the claim. This may involve the claimant being required to attend for interview at either a DHSS local office or an unemployment benefit office.

There is a similar obligation on every person receiving a benefit, whether on his own behalf or on someone else's, to furnish such information as the Secretary of State may require in order to confirm continued title to benefit. In particular, the benefit recipient is obliged to notify the Secretary of State promptly of any change of circumstances that he might reasonably be expected to know might affect the right to benefit. To this end, benefit recipients are advised by way of DHSS leaflets, benefit notes issued with girocheque payments and printed notes in benefit order books of those changes which they should report.

An unemployed claimant is, as a condition of his receiving unemployment or supplementary benefit, usually required to attend at an unemployment benefit office at intervals determined by the Secretary of State, in order to demonstrate his fitness and availability for work. These intervals are in most cases fortnightly, although they can be longer or shorter, depending on the circumstances of each individual case.

Hospital Schemes

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the hospital schemes costing over £5 million which have started on site since May 1979 giving in each case *(a)* the date of commissioning, *(b)* the date of start on site, *(c)* the initial planned completion date, *(d)* the actual completion date or, the present intended completion date, *(e)* the number of beds involved, *(f)* the number of operating theatres involved, *(g)* the cost and *(h)* the health district.

Mr. Whitney: The information available centrally is listed as follows:

Hospital building schemes over £5 million started since May 1979

District	*Scheme*	*Estimated cost £million**	*Beds where provided*	*Operating theatres where provided*	*Approval*	*Start*	*Initial planned completion date*	*Actual or estimated (E) completion*
South Cumbria	Furness General scheme 2 PH 1	7·8	—	—	1980	April 1986	July 1988	July 1988
North Tyneside	North Tyneside PH 1	13·5	334	6	1977	April 1980	January 1984	December 1983
Gateshead	Queen Elizabeth Gateshead PH 1	7·9	200	6	1979	September 1981	December 1984	April 1985
South Tees	South Cleveland general PH 1B	11·8	150	—	1981	May 1985	November 1987	December 1987 E
East Yorkshire	Bridlington New Community hospital	14·5	219	1	1980	January 1985	January 1988	January 1988 E
Scunthorpe	Goole New Community hospital	12·6	166	1	1980	May 1985	May 1988	May 1988 E
Scarborough	Scarborough DGH PH 1 (nucleus)	8·5	161	—	1981	November 1983	November 1986	November 1986 E
Dewsbury	Staincliffe DGH PH 1 (nucleus)	17·4	306	4	1979	January 1985	July 1988	July 1988 E
North Derbyshire	Chesterfield and North Derby Royal hospital PH 2B	7·9	168	4	1981	October 1985	April 1988	April 1988 E
Southern Derbyshire	Derby City PH 1	15·7	242	4	1980	August 1982	January 1986	December 1985
Southern Derbyshire	Derby Royal infirmary PH 2	13·9	316	—	1980	January 1984	January 1987	January 1987 E
Leicestershire	Glenfield DGH PH 1	16·0	200	4	1976	September 1980	September 1983	April 1983
North Lincolnshire	Lincoln county PH 1	11·7	112	4	1978	July 1981	October 1984	July 1984

District	Scheme	Estimated cost £million*	Beds where provided	Operating theatres where provided	Approval	Start	Initial planned completion date	Actual or estimated (E) completion
Sheffield	Northern General Geriatric	7·8	196	—	1983	October 1985	April 1988	April 1988 E
Sheffield	Northern General PH 1C	7·9	236	—	1980	January 1983	October 1985	May 1985
Rotherham	Rotherham DGH PH 2	8·5	204	—	1978	September 1980	September 1983	May 1983
Huntingdon	Hinchingbrooke hospital PH 3	13·8	227	7	1979	August 1979	August 1982	January 1983
East Suffolk	Ipswich PH 1 Heath road wing (nucleus)	8·0	308	6	1977	April 1980	April 1983	April 1983
Peterborough	Peterborough 2nd DGH PH 1	17·8	284	4	1978	February 1984	June 1987	July 1987 E
North West Herts	Hemel Hempstead PH 1	7·8	84	3	1982	November 1983	August 1986	September 1986 E
Paddington and North Kensington	St. Mary's W2 PH 1B	26·5	338	8	1980	November 1982	February 1987	February 1987 E
South West Herts	Watford (Shroddells wing) PH 3	17·5	368	12	1970	September 1979	September 1983	February 1984
Mid Essex	Broomfield PH 5	9·7	—	4	1980	April 1981	April 1984	November 1984
North East Essex	Colchester DGH PH 2	14·3	286	4	1979	March 1981	March 1984	October 1984
Barking, Havering, Brentwood	Harold Wood hospital PH 1	10·8	112	3	1981	February 1984	August 1986	December 1986 E
City and Hackney	Homerton hospital PH 1	18·5	428	4	1979	June 1982	August 1985	March 1986
Newham	Newham hospital PH 1 (nucleus)	11·8	293	4	1976	September 1979	September 1982	September 1982
Tunbridge Wells	Kent and Sussex PH 1	6·6	20	2	1978	April 1982	January 1985	November 1984
Lewisham/North Southwark	Lewisham DGH PH 1A	8·0	—	4	1977	February 1982	October 1984	March 1986 E
Maidstone	Maidstone DGH PH 1 (nucleus)	14·0	262	4	1977	April 1980	April 1983	April 1983
Bromley	Orpington PH 1	8·0	308	—	1978	June 1980	October 1983	December 1983
Croydon	Croydon Mayday DGH (nucleus)	11·0	330	8	1976	September 1979	December 1982	December 1982
Wandsworth	St. Georges block H PH 2A	23·4	360	6	1977	June 1984	November 1987	June 1987 E
Wandsworth	St. Georges blocks G2 + F PH 2	13·3	—	—	1979	November 1981	January 1985	May 1985
East Dorset	Bournemouth DGH PH 1	18·3	289	4	1978	August 1984	May 1987	September 1987 E
Winchester	Royal Hants county PH 4 (nucleus)	14·0	278	4	1980	December 1982	December 1985	February 1986 E
Southampton/South West Hampshire	Royal South Hants Southampton PH 3	14·3	25	3	1980	October 1983	October 1986	October 1986 E
Isle of Wight	St. Mary's IOW PH 3B (nucleus)	20·5	187	4	1981	October 1985	September 1988	September 1988 E
West Dorset	West Dorset DGH PH 1	14·0	134	2	1980	May 1984	November 1986	January 1987 E
Milton Keynes	Milton Keynes DGH PH 1	16·4	265	4	1979	October 1980	April 1983	September 1983
Cheltenham and district PH 1B	Cheltenham general PH 1b	8·1	120	2	1981	August 1985	May 1988	May 1988 E
Somerset	West Somerset (Musgrove park) DGH PH 1	8·5	150	2	1979	November 1982	November 1985	June 1986 E
Bristol and Weston	Weston-super-Mare new hospital	14·3	252	4	1979	September 1982	January 1986	April 1986 E
Bromsgrove/Redditch	Bromsgrove Redditch DGH PH 1 contract 2 (nucleus)	20·5	393	4	1980	November 1982	January 1986	April 1986
North Staffordshire	City general Stoke Surgical accommodation (nucleus)	17·9	278	—	1980	March 1985	September 1988	September 1988 E
Shropshire	Telford DGH PH 1	24·0	338	4	1980	November 1984	May 1988	May 1988 E
Walsall	Walsall PH 4A + 4B (nucleus)	19·1	297	4	1979	January 1985	July 1988	July 1988 E
Halton	Halton DGH PH 2 (nucleus)	7·9	232	2	1981	February 1982	August 1984	August 1984
Macclesfield	Macclesfield development (nucleus)	11·4	208	4	1978	January 1980	April 1983	June 1983
Southport/Formby	North Sefton DGH PH 1 (nucleus)	21·3	301	4	1981	May 1984	August 1987	August 1987 E
Salford	Hope hospital Salford PH 1	15·1	83	7	1976	October 1979	March 1983	May 1983
Oldham	Oldham DGH PH 1	16·2	308	7	1978	February 1985	February 1988	February 1988 E
Tameside/Glossop	Tameside general PH 2	15·6	139	3	1981	July 1984	March 1987	April 1987 E
Hammersmith and Queen Charlotte SHA	Hammersmith hospital redevelopment PH 1	16·1	60	8	1983	September 1985	May 1988	March 1988 E

* includes building and engineering, fees and equipment.

Competitive Tendering

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) for each health authority, what is the saving achieved to date by competitive tendering as a percentage of the total savings achieved;

(2) for each health authority, what is the saving achieved to date through competitive tendering as a percentage of the district's total expenditure on ancilliary services.

Mr. Whitney: The information requested, based on estimated savings reported for 31 March 1986, is shown in the table. The total expenditure figures refer to catering, domestic cleaning and laundry services for 1983-84, the year in which our competitive tendering initiative began.

Districts	Total expenditure on these services for 1983-84 (£000)	Estimated savings achieved from tendering (£000)	Savings as percentage of district expenditure on these services	Savings as percentage of national savings from tendering (£52·0 million)
Northern Regional Health Authority				
Hartlepool	1,556	42	2·7	0·1
North Tees	2,340	14	0·6	*
South Tees	5,055	167	3·3	0·3
East Cumbria	2,869	156	5·4	0·3
South Cumbria	1,980	257	13·0	0·5
West Cumbria	2,281	1	*	*
Darlington	2,626	300	11·4	0·6
Durham	2,451	54	2·2	0·1
North West Durham	1,632	141	8·6	0·3
South West Durham	3,429	nil	nil	nil
Newcastle	9,720	1,025	10·5	2·0
North Tyneside	1,888	176	9·3	0·3
South Tyneside	2,286	271	11·9	0·5
Sunderland	5,873	24	0·4	0·1
Northumberland	6,449	108	1·7	0·2
Gateshead	3,022	375	12·4	0·7
Yorkshire Regional Health Authority				
Hull	5,082	173	3·4	0·3
East Yorkshire	3,675	298	8·1	0·6
Grimsby	2,107	223	10·6	0·4
Scunthorpe	2,276	289	12·7	0·6
Northallerton	975	16	1·6	*
York	4,833	645	13·3	1·2
Scarborough	1,758	54	3·1	0·1
Harrogate	2,483	41	1·7	0·1
Bradford	5,953	318	5·3	0·6
Airedale	2,688	28	1·0	0·1
Calderdale	3,003	530	17·7	1·0
Huddersfield	4,293	597	13·9	1·1
Dewsbury	2,356	397	16·9	0·8
Leeds Eastern	7,049	nil	nil	nil
Leeds Western	7,513	272	3·6	0·5
Wakefield	3,675	369	10·0	0·7
Pontefract	2,412	485	20·1	0·9
Trent Regional Health Authority				
North Derbyshire	3,692	546	14·8	1·0
South Derbyshire	7,965	85	1·1	0·2
Leicestershire	12,124	783	6·5	1·5
North Lincolnshire	4,859	194	4·0	0·4
South Lincolnshire	4,188	168	4·0	0·3
Bassetlaw	999	25	2·5	0·1
Central Notts	4,584	453	9·9	0·9
Nottingham	12,100	306	2·5	0·6
Barnsley	3,089	258	8·4	0·5
Doncaster	3,835	195	5·1	0·4
Rotherham	2,998	33	1·1	0·1
Sheffield	13,993	455	3·3	0·9
East Anglian Regional Health Authority				
Cambridge	4,721	481	10·2	0·9
Peterborough	3,442	115	3·3	0·2
Huntingdon	1,018	493	48·4	1·0
Great Yarmouth/Waverley	2,779	304	10·9	0·6
West Norfolk/Wisbech	2,432	399	16·4	0·8
Norwich	8,387	1,038	12·4	2·0
West Suffolk	3,361	160	4·8	0·3
East Suffolk	5,702	42	0·7	0·1
North West Thames Regional Health Authority				
North Bedfordshire	2,954	146	4·9	0·3
South Bedfordshire	3,749	285	7·6	0·5
North Hertfordshire	2,308	18	0·8	*
North West Hertfordshire	5,280	219	4·1	0·4
South West Hertfordshire	4,350	194	4·5	0·4
East Hertfordshire	1,792	nil	nil	nil
Barnet	7,118	8	0·1	*
Harrow	3,832	295	7·7	0·6
Hillingdon	3,912	457	11·7	0·9

Districts	Total expenditure on these services for 1983-84 (£000)	Estimated savings achieved from tendering (£000)	Savings as percentage of district expenditure on these services	Savings as percentage of national savings from tendering (£52·0 million)
Ealing	4,504	526	11·7	1·0
Hounslow/Spelthorne	4,679	1,412	30·2	2·7
Riverside (Hammersmith/Fulham)	4,562	1,053	23·1	2·0
Paddington & North Kensington	5,851	853	14·6	1·6
Riverside (Victoria)	7,928	1,385	17·5	2·7
Brent	5,116	nil	nil	nil
North East Thames Regional Health Authority				
Barking	6,881	565	8·2	1·1
Basildon	4,783	109	2·3	0·2
Bloomsbury	11,516	176	1·5	0·3
City & Hackney	7,520	136	1·8	0·3
Enfield	2,977	292	9·8	0·6
Hampstead	6,269	26	0·4	0·1
Haringey	3,598	334	9·3	0·6
Islington	4,619	7	0·2	*
Mid Essex	3,389	734	21·7	1·4
Newham	3,385	358	10·6	0·7
Redbridge	3,705	130	3·5	0·2
Tower Hamlets	5,800	271	4·7	0·5
Waltham Forest	6,862	120	1·7	0·2
West Essex	3,016	184	6·1	0·4
Southend	4,442	383	8·6	0·7
North East Essex	5,504	218	4·0	0·4
South East Thames Regional Health Authority				
Bexley	3,665	279	7·6	0·5
Brighton	4,467	90	2·0	0·2
Bromley	5,781	904	15·6	1·7
Camberwell	6,384	56	0·9	0·1
Canterbury/Thanet	5,739	403	7·0	0·8
Dartford/Gravesham	5,253	nil	nil	nil
Eastbourne	3,628	152	4·2	0·3
Greenwich	6,022	nil	nil	nil
Hastings	2,603	67	2·6	0·1
Lewisham/North Southwark	9,312	nil	nil	nil
Maidstone	3,459	496	14·3	1·0
Medway	2,758	326	11·8	0·6
South East Kent	3,306	337	10·2	0·6
Tunbridge Wells	4,781	nil	nil	nil
West Lambeth	8,256	217	2·6	0·4
South West Thames Regional Health Authority				
North West Surrey	3,749	462	12·3	0·9
West Surrey/North East Hampshire	4,024	94	2·3	0·2
East Surrey	4,475	620	13·9	1·2
Mid Surrey	4,869	107	2·2	0·2
South West Surrey	3,104	233	7·5	0·4
Mid Downs	3,467	337	9·7	0·6
Chichester	2,348	389	16·6	0·7
Worthing	2,406	240	9·8	0·5
Kingston/Esher	4,594	564	12·3	1·1
Croydon	6,526	180	2·8	0·3
Richmond/Twickenham Roehampton	3,734	799	21·4	1·5
Wandsworth	8,261	903	10·9	1·7
Merton/Sutton	7,021	1,170	16·6	2·2
Wessex Regional Health Authority				
East Dorset	5,369	626	11·7	1·2
West Dorset	3,699	nil	nil	nil
Portsmouth	6,622	407	6·1	0·8
Southampton	8,205	261	3·1	0·5
Winchester	2,266	75	3·3	0·1
Basingstoke	4,057	36	0·9	0·1
Salisbury	2,390	377	15·8	0·7
Swindon	2,805	73	2·6	0·1
Bath	5,418	150	2·8	0·3
Isle of Wight	1,833	15	0·8	*

Districts	Total expenditure on these services for 1983-84 (£000)	Estimated savings achieved from tendering (£000)	Savings as percentage of district expenditure on these services	Savings as percentage of national savings from tendering (£52·0 million)
Oxford Regional Health Authority				
East Berkshire	4,578	61	1·3	0·1
West Berkshire	6,014	118	1·9	0·2
Aylesbury Vale	3,138	526	16·7	1·0
Milton Keynes	532	98	18·4	0·2
Wycombe	1,913	134	7·0	0·3
Kettering	2,521	140	5·5	0·3
Northampton	4,412	52	1·2	0·1
Oxford	7,706	705	9·1	1·4
West Midlands Regional Health Authority				
Mid Staffordshire	2,746	244	8·9	0·5
South Warwickshire	3,670	146	3·9	0·3
Kidderminster	2,457	90	3·7	0·2
Shropshire	5,169	247	4·8	0·5
North Staffordshire	7,458	136	1·9	0·3
Coventry	4,329	8	0·2	•
Bromsgrove and Redditch	1,595	100	6·3	0·2
Herefordshire	1,877	147	7·8	0·3
Rugby	690	10	1·4	•
North Warwickshire	2,614	74	2·8	0·1
Solihull	2,200	459	20·9	0·9
Wolverhampton	4,467	116	2·6	0·2
Walsall	3,721	72	1·9	0·1
North Birmingham	3,014	105	3·5	0·2
Dudley	3,823	297	7·8	0·6
Sandwell	2,672	nil	nil	nil
East Birmingham	2,384	154	6·5	0·3
Central Birmingham	6,132	810	13·2	1·6
South Birmingham	5,077	334	6·6	0·6
South East Staffordshire	3,029	219	7·2	0·4
Worcester	3,422	21	0·6	•
West Birmingham	5,862	nil	nil	nil
South Western Regional Health Authority				
Cheltenham	2,139	31	1·4	0·1
Gloucester	4,353	86	1·9	0·2
Frenchay	5,009	76	1·5	0·2
Bristol/Weston	5,869	226	3·9	0·4
Southmead	4,510	145	3·2	0·3
Somerset	6,458	588	9·1	1·1
Exeter	6,983	nil	nil	nil
North Devon	1,612	131	8·1	0·3
Torbay	2,579	188	7·3	0·4
Plymouth	5,171	60	1·2	0·1
Cornwall/Isles of Scilly	6,373	770	12·0	1·5
Mersey Regional Health Authority				
Southport/Formby	2,403	155	6·5	0·3
South Sefton	4,598	48	1·0	0·1
St. Helens/Knowsley	4,936	808	16·4	1·5
Wirral	6,050	560	9·2	1·1
Liverpool	11,885	nil	nil	nil
Macclesfield	3,272	398	12·2	0·8
Halton	997	47	4·7	0·1
Warrington	4,749	708	14·9	1·4
Chester	3,678	1,086	29·5	2·1
Crewe	3,683	577	15·7	1·1
North Western Regional Health Authority				
North Manchester	5,597	7	0·1	•
Central Manchester	4,252	323	7·6	0·6
Wigan	3,431	157	4·6	0·3
Stockport	4,241	240	5·7	0·5
Tameside/Glossop	2,222	2	0·1	•
Bolton	3,224	nil	nil	nil
Bury	1,860	429	23·1	0·8
Chorley/South Ribble	1,017	15	1·5	•
Preston	5,694	nil	nil	nil
Lancaster	4,241	41	1·0	0·1
Blackpool	3,973	7	0·2	•
Burnley	5,176	nil	nil	nil

Districts	*Total expenditure on these services for 1983-84* (£000)	*Estimated savings achieved from tendering* (£000)	*Savings as percentage of district expenditure on these services*	*Savings as percentage of national savings from tendering* (£52·0 million)
South Manchester	6,149	19	0·3	*
Trafford	2,273	189	8·3	0·4
Oldham	2,345	13	0·6	*
Salford	6,479	189	2·9	0·4
West Lancashire	1,880	4	0·2	*
Blackburn	5,858	nil	nil	nil
Rochdale	1,927	16	0·8	*
Special Health Authorities				
Bethlem and Maudsley	1,479	87	5·9	0·2
Eastman	137	nil	nil	nil
Hammersmith	4,320	969	22·4	1·9
Hospital for Sick Children	2,590	nil	nil	nil
Moorfields	847	30	3·5	0·1
National Heart and Chest	2,194	50	2·3	0·1
National Hospital for Nervous Children	1,202	nil	nil	nil
Royal Marsden	1,589	206	13·0	0·4

* less than 0·1 per cent.

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has as to *(a)* efficiency savings, and *(b)* savings from competitive tendering achieved by (i) each regional health authority and (ii) each district health authority in each financial year 1979-80 to 1985-86.

Mr. Whitney: I regret that information on savings from competitive tendering is not recorded in the form requested. However, for the latest savings estimates I refer the hon. Member to my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State's reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Southampton, Itchen (Mr. Chope), and to the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) on 23 June at columns *71-84*.

I will reply as soon as possible on efficiency savings.

Medicine Labelling

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will amend the medicine labelling regulations to ensure that non-active ingredients are clearly listed.

Mr. Hayhoe: My Department hopes to begin formal consultations shortly with interested organisations about a package of measures designed to increase the information available to doctors, pharmacists and consumers about non-active ingredients in medicines. This may lead, among other things, to amendments to the Medicines (Labelling) Regulations. A copy of the Department's consultation letter will be placed in the Library as soon as it is issued.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what progress has been made since 1979 towards making information about the ingredients of medicines more widely available.

Mr. Hayhoe: I assume the hon. Member is referring to the availability of such information to patients and consumers. In the case of medicines which can be bought without a prescription, the names of the active ingredients must appear on the label and in any leaflet that is provided. This is a legal requirement and has been since before 1979. Arrangements for the labelling of prescribed medicines are different. In these circumstances it is for the prescribing doctor to decide what information is to be supplied. Usually the name of the medicine is stated on the label, together with instructions for use, but not details of the ingredients.

Limited List Prescribing

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether Her Majesty's Government have any plans to make the limited list compulsory in hospitals.

Mr. Hayhoe: No. The regulations applying the selected list to the family practitioner services do not extend to the hospital service, but health authorities were asked in HC(85)18 to apply the principles of the selected list to the use of drugs in hospitals. The circular said that it was not intended to seek powers to give the list statutory backing for health authorities.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether Her Majesty's Government have any plans to extend the limited list to other therapeutic categories.

Mr. Hayhoe: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Congleton (Mr. Winterton) on 22 May at column *314*.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what reviews or audits have been initiated by his Department to investigate the impact of the introduction of the limited list on *(a)* prescribing patterns, *(b)* patient health and *(c)* the pharmaceutical industry.

Mr. Hayhoe: Prescribing statistics collected by the Department are used to monitor the effects of the selected list scheme. The Advisory Committee on National Health Service Drugs keeps the selected list under review to ensure that the clinical needs of patients continue to be met. No reviews or audits have been initiated by my Department into the scheme's effect on the pharmaceutical industry.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what changes to the limited list have been recommended by the review committee; and which of these have been accepted.

Mr. Hayhoe: All the recommendations of the Advisory Committee on National Health Service Drugs on the products which should and should not be available for prescription under the selected list scheme have been accepted and the changes are included in the following amending regulations; SI 1985 No. 1712, SI 1986 No. 381, SI 1986 No. 916.

Prescribing

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what negotiations are in progress between his Department and the medical profession in relation to voluntary measures on prescribing.

Mr. Hayhoe: Discussions with the medical profession have covered a number of measures which would encourage general medical practitioners to prescribe more effectively and economically. My Department is pressing ahead with plans to provide practitioners with better and more timely information about their prescribing and is considering what other help might be given. In many areas, however, my Department is looking to the profession itself to take the initiative and I intend to review progress at regular intervals.

Review Committee on the Limited List

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what are the terms of reference and the current membership of the review committee on the limited list; and how often it meets.

Mr. Hayhoe: The terms of reference of the Advisory Committee on National Health Service Drugs are:

"To advise the United Kingdom Health Ministers about the composition of Schedules 3A and 3B to the National Health Service (General Medical and Pharmaceutical Services) Regulations 1974 and the corresponding schedules in the Regulations in Scotland and Northern Ireland, (except those items which are in Schedule 3A because the Advisory Committee on Borderline Substances has advised that they are not considered drugs in the circumstances of general practice) in order that drugs to meet all real clinical needs at the lowest possible cost to the NHS are available under the National Health Service in the following categories; mild to moderate pain killers, indigestion remedies, laxatives, cough and cold remedies, vitamins, tonics and benzodiazepine sedatives and tranquillisers.

The arrangements of the committee's meetings are flexible. Currently quarterly meetings are scheduled. The committee's membership is:

Members	
Chairman	
Dr. Edmund Harris	Deputy Chief Medical Officer, Department of Health and Social Security
Hospital Consultants	
Mr. Norman Badham	Consultant ENT Surgeon, Leicester Royal Infirmary
Professor Alasdair Breckenridge	Professor of Clinical Pharmacology, Liverpool
Professor Roderick Cawson	Head of Oral Medicine and Pathology, Guys Hospital, London
Dr. Duncan Colin-Jones	Consultant Physician (Gastroenterology), Portsmouth
Professor Malcolm Hodkinson	Professor of Geriatric Medicine, London
Professor Malcolm Lader	Professor of Psychopharmacology, London
Members	
Dr. James Moore	Consultant Anaesthetist, Belfast
Professor Eric Stroud	Professor of Child Health, London
General Practitioners	
Dr. John Callander	General Practitioner, Scotland
Dr. Stuart Carne	General Practitioner, London
Dr. John Lynch	General Practitioner, North Wales
Dr. David Smith	General Practitioner, Northallerton
Pharmacists	
Mr. David Coleman	Retail Pharmacist, Norwich
Professor David Ganderton	Professor of Pharmaceutics, King's College, London

Artificial Limb and Appliance Centres

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received from the muscular dystrophy group on the McColl report on the services of artificial limb and appliance centres; what reply he has sent; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: I have received from the president of the Muscular Dystrophy Group a petition with about 96,000 signatures, calling for the immediate introduction of dual purpose indoor/outdoor powered wheelchairs. Over 200 members have written to me on the same point following approaches from local branches of the group. The group has also sent me a detailed commentary on the report of the McColl working party.

I have assured those who have raised the matter with me that we are considering urgently the issues raised in the working party's report. We expect to be making a detailed response by the end of the year, and on some issues we may be able to act sooner.

Incontinence Aids and Garments

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received seeking the provision by prescription of incontinence aids and garments for elderly and for disabled people.

Mr. Whitney: In the past three years an average of five inquiries a year have been received. There is no evidence of general dissatisfaction with current arrangements for supply via health authorities.

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will seek to establish the feasibility of combining the present system of contract buying of incontinence aids and garments with provision of such aids and garments on prescription.

Mr. Whitney: We are always concerned to discover the most cost-effective way of providing services. The present system enables health authorities to obtain favourable terms for bulk purchase.

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what he estimates to be the cost of the provision of incontinence aids and garments under the present system operating in England and Wales; what he estimates would be the cost of the provision of such aids and garments by prescription; and upon what basis such estimate is made.

Mr. Whitney: In England and Wales, National Health Service supply of incontinence aids and garments is the responsibility of Health Authorities and is met from within their financial allocations. Figures on the cost of such provision are not kept centrally. The estimated cost of supplying incontinence aids only on prescription would be about £15 million a year. This is a pro-rata estimate based on the 1984 prescribing figures for these items in Scotland.

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will establish an inquiry into the feasibility of providing elderly and disabled patients with incontinence aids and garments on prescription; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: No. The question of transferring responsibility for supply from health authorities to the family practitioner service has been considered. It would mean increases in public expenditure to cover the whole cost of provision under the family practitioner services unless compensating reductions were made to health authority cash limits. A change in the existing supply arrangements cannot be justified at present as a priority over other competing claims for resources. We will continue to keep these arrangements under review.

Mentally Handicapped Patients

Mr. Ashton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what is the current expenditure per patient for the mentally handicapped by the Bassetlaw health authority; and how this compares with the national average;

(2) how many mentally handicapped patients have been sent out of Saxondale and Balderton hospitals, Nottinghamshire, to return to the Bassetlaw area health authority; and what extra money has been made available to take care of them;

(3) if he will now make the funds available fully to staff and maintain Hillside house, Kilton hospital, Worksop to provide short-term care facilities for the mentally handicapped;

(4) why parents in Bassetlaw have been advised that their mentally handicapped children can no longer use the facilities of Hillside house, Kilton hospital, Worksop;

(5) what comparison he has made of the provision for the mentally handicapped in *(a)* Worksop and *(b)* Bassetlaw constituency, Nottinghamshire; and what is the expenditure of other health authorities in Nottinghamshire, South Yorkshire and surrounding areas, respectively.

Mr. Whitney: Responsibility for the provision of local health services to mentally handicapped patients lies with individual regional and district health authorities. The hon. Member may therefore wish to make inquiries of the chairman of the Trent regional health authority.

Dual Purpose Ambulances

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if his Department holds any information on the age and mileage of dual purpose ambulances in England.

Mr. Whitney: No, this information is not held centrally.

Single Payments

Mr. Corbett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will state *(a)* how many single payments have been made under regulation 28 of the Supplementary Benefit (Single Payments) Regulations for each year since November 1981 to the following categories of claimants: (i) pensioners, (ii) unemployed, (iii) sick and disabled, (iv) single parents and (v) others, *(b)* the cost by year and on average for each category, *(c)* how many of these payments have been made to the long-term unemployed, *(d)* how much it is expected to save by its abolition and *(e)* how much under or overestimation should be taken into account in the figures.

Mr. Major: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Mentally Handicapped People

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if, in preparing guidelines on minimum standards of services and provision for people with mental handicap, he will take into account the stamina paper No. 7 published by MENCAP, a copy of which has been sent to him.

Mr. Whitney: MENCAP's stamina paper No. 7 "Care in the Community for People who are Mentally Handicapped" provides guidelines for MENCAP local societies to help them to discuss with statutory authorities how local services can be improved. Our guidance to health and local authorities already emphasises the need to inform and consult parents, and the role of local voluntary organisations. In our consideration of the extent to which further guidance from the Department to authorities would be welcome and useful, we will take full account of stamina paper No. 7. This paper has also been brought to the attention of the national development team for mentally handicapped people, which advises health and social services authorities on their services for mentally handicapped people and their own self-monitoring arrangements.

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if, in preparing guidelines on leisure activities for people with a mental handicap, he will take into account the recent MENCAP report, a copy of which has been sent to him;

(2) if, in preparing guidelines on daytime services for people with a mental handicap, he will take into account MENCAP's publication "Day Services Today and Tomorrow," a copy of which has been sent to him.

Mr. Whitney: The Department's resource guide to day services for mentally handicapped people, now in preparation, will take full account of both documents.

Blood

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will give, for each quarter since 1980, the total number of units of blood supplied to non-National Health Service hospitals by the regional blood transfusion service, covering south London, Surrey, Sussex and Kent;

(2) if he will give, for each year since 1975, the total number of units of blood supplied to non-National Health Service hospitals by the national blood transfusion service.

Mr. Whitney: I shall let the hon. Member have replies as soon as possible.

In-patient Waiting Lists

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information is available to his Department on patients' experience of waiting lists and waiting times for in-patient treatment in other industrialised countries; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: While we have some information, differences between the organisation of health systems in other industrialised countries make comparisons with the situation in the National Health Service not very meaningful.

Registered Homes Tribunal Hearings

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the estimated cost to date of the registered homes tribunal hearings; and what this represents in terms of cost per hearing.

Mr. Whitney: Payments made in the 12 months ending 31 March 1986 in respect of registered homes tribunals hearings amounted to £13,340. This would represent a sum of about £834 per hearing.

New End Hospital, Hampstead

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will provide bridging finance to allow Hampstead health authority to build alternative accommodation for patients from New End hospital before that hospital closes.

Mr. Hayhoe: The allocation of capital to district health authorities is a matter for regional health authorities.

Suicides

Mr. Nellist asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many suicides have occurred in each year since 1974 amongst 16 to 19-year-olds, 20 to 21-year-olds and over 25-year-olds, giving figures for males and females, separately.

Mr. Whitney: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Bolton General Hospital

Mr. David Young asked the Secretary of State for Social Services on what date in 1989 he expects work on phase 1 of Bolton general hospital to begin; and what steps he will take to ensure that this timetable is adhered to by the North-Western regional health authority.

Mr. Whitney: This is for the North-Western regional health authority to say as it remains its responsibility to set and manage an affordable capital programme, which advances the region's strategy. The hon. Member may therefore wish to address his detailed inquiry on dates to the chairman of that authority.

Dental Charges

Mr. Wainwright asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he intends to make available to social security officers and dental surgeries leaflets P11 (Prescriptions) and D11 (Dental Treatment) stating the current charges for these services as uprated on 1 April; if he will give the reasons for the delay in making these leaflets available; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Major: Dental charges have not been increased since April 1985. Leaflet D11 (Dental Treatment) has current prices and has been widely available since then. It will be replaced in July.

The new edition of P11 (Prescription Charges) will be available in July. A poster announcing the new prescription charges has been widely available since they were introduced in April.

The new P11 will give details of the new charges and of the qualifying income levels for exemption from charges. These new exemption levels come into effect with the social security benefit up-rating in July. It would not have been economic to have produced a leaflet only for the period April to July 1986.

The reform of social security benefits will align social security up-ratings with other budgetary change.

Casualties (Helicopter Transportation)

Mr. Key asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what guidance is given to health authorities on the transport of casualties by helicopter; when he last issued a circular on the subject; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: Guidance to health authorities on the transport of all types of patient was issued in 1978—health circular (78)45. Specific guidance on the transport of patients by air was issued in 1975—Health Service Circular (Interim Series) HSC(IS)196; this guidance remains applicable. Copies of these documents are in the Library.

Disabled People

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received concerning discrimination against people with disabilities from Mr. Jack Watson of Hillingdon, Middlesex: what reply he has sent; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: Mr. Watson wrote to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on 22 October 1985 alleging that the BBC was contravening certain sections of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970, the Disabled Persons Act 1981, and the Town and Country Planning Act 1971, and asking that the Secretary of State for Social Services exercise his default powers under section 36 of the National Assistance Act 1948. Mr. Watson's letter was acknowledged on behalf of the Secretary of State on 7 November 1985.

On the information contained in Mr. Watson's letter, it does not appear that my right hon. Friend has the powers, in relation to the issues raised, which Mr. Watson asked that he should exercise. A further reply has now been sent to Mr. Watson explaining this, together with an apology for the delay in writing to him again. The reply also indicates that, if Mr. Watson wishes to pursue the matter and will provide further details of his complaint, consideration will be given to whether there is any action which could appropriately be taken.

Legal Aid

Mr. Terry Fields asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many outstanding applications for finance for legal aid are on file at the Department of Health and Social Security legal aid assessment offices at Preston, Lancashire; what is the average period of time taken to process such claims; if he has plans to increase staff at the office: and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Major: There are 54,845 outstanding applications for finance for legal aid on file at the Department's legal aid assessment office at Preston, Lancashire. Information on the time taken to process such claims is not available in the form requested by the hon. Member, however, 59 per cent. of applications are cleared within six weeks of registration at the office. Staffing levels were increased from 292 to 313 in April 1986. There are no plans for any further increase, but a staffing survey is planned for August 1986.

YTS (Benefits)

Mr. Nellist asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many young people in *(a)* Coventry, *(b)* the west midlands and *(c)* nationally, have had their benefit cut as a result of coming off the YTS prematurely or because they refused a place when offered one.

Mr. Major: Department of Employment statistics show that for the year ending April 1986, altogether 17,804 young people were disqualified from benefit for premature termination of a youth training scheme. I regret that reliable information is not available for Coventry and the west midlands.

Consultants (Trent Region)

Mr. Patchett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many consultants are at present under suspension by the Trent regional health authority; and what is the average length of time they have been suspended.

Mr. Hayhoe: I regret that this information is not available centrally. The hon. Member may wish to contact the chairman of the Trent regional health authority, who may be able to provide the information requested.

Elderly Persons

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if, pursuant to his replies of 2 May, *Official Report*, columns *517-8*, he will provide such information as is available on local authority and health authority services for those aged over 65 years in such form as is available.

Mr. Whitney: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

NHS Consultants

Mr. Patchett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he is satisfied with the length of time taken by regional health authorities to apply the present disciplinary procedures when dealing with consultants employed by the National Health Service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: Health authorities are responsible for deciding whether or not to institute disciplinary proceedings against consultants and they are not required to supply details routinely to the Secretary of State about individual cases. Recent criticisms about the disciplinary procedures for hospital doctors are being considered and, if appropriate, action will follow.

Detention Centre Policy, Liverpool

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will set up an inquiry into the detention of a 10-year-old boy in assessment centres in Liverpool for the past five years.

Mr. Whitney: I am expecting a report from the Liverpool social services department. I will be writing to the hon. Member when it has been considered.

Hospital Beds (Thames Region)

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what has been the average daily number of available beds by sector in each of the districts of the four Thames regions in each year from 1979; and what were the equivalent figures for each of the years 1974 to 1978.

Mr. Whitney: I shall let the hon. Member have such information as can be obtained without incurring disproportionate cost as soon as possible.

London Teaching Hospitals (Bed Closures)

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the long-term bed closures carried out in London teaching hospitals by district health authorities since April 1984.

Mr. Whitney: I am sorry I cannot give the hon. Member the information he seeks. It is not collected centrally, he may wish to write to the chairmen of the Thames regional health authorities, who may be able to provide the information requested.

Expenditure Statistics

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to his reply, of 24 June, *Official Report*, column *153*, to the hon. Member for Brent, South (Mr. Pavitt) if he will give a table setting out, for each year from 1979-80 to 1986-87 and cumulatively to 1985-86 and to 1986-87, expenditure on hospital and community health service giving *(a)* gross spending in cash terms, *(b)* the percentage increase for each year on the previous year as measured by the gross domestic product deflator, *(c)* the percentage increase on the previous year of National Health Service pay and prices in excess of inflation as measured by the gross domestic product deflator, *(d)* the percentage increase on the previous year of demographic pressures over and above inflation as measured by the gross domestic product deflator and *(e)* the additional expenditure on the previous year the Department of Health and Social Security estimated is required, over and above inflation as measured by the gross domestic product deflator, as a contribution to the costs of the process of medical innovation in health care and its costs 1983.

Mr. Hayhoe: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Maudsley Hospital

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what has been the percentage change in the number of patients attending the emergency clinic at the Maudsley hospital in the last 10 years.

Mr. Whitney [*pursuant to his reply*, 12 June 1986, c. *303*]: I am sorry I cannot give the hon. Member information in precisely the form she seeks. The available information is given in the table.

Attendances in the Accident and Emergency Department, Bethlem and Maudsley Hospital

Year	*New out patients* during the year*	*Change from previous year*		*Total attendances during year*	*Change from previous year*	
		Number	*Per. cent.*		*Number*	*Per. cent.*
1974	2,641	—	—	5,300	—	—
1975	2,698	+57	+2·2	5,671	+371	+7·0
1976	2,846	+148	+5·5	5,980	+309	+5·4
1977	2,556	−290	−10·2	5,522	−458	−7·7
1978	2,436	−120	−4·7	5,431	−91	−1·6
1979	2,236	−200	−8·2	4,951	−480	−8·8
1980	2,593	+357	+16·0	5,633	+682	+13·8
1981	3,263	+670	+25·8	5,881	+248	+4·4
1982	3,950	+687	+21·1	5,673	−208	−3·5
1983	3,786	−164	−4·2	5,323	−350	−6·2
1984	4,328	+542	+14·3	6,098	+775	+14·6

* Patients who start more than one series of visits in a year are counted separately on each occasion.

DEFENCE

Planning Decisions

Mr. Maclean asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many local planning decisions he has referred to the Department of the Environment since 1979; how many of these have resulted in public inquiries; and of these public inquiries how many have resulted in favour of the Minister's proposals.

Mr. Freeman: Records are not maintained of local planning decisions referred to the Department of the Environment. However, seven cases can be recalled as having been referred since 1979. Of these, one was dealt with by an informal meeting between the parties and another has only recently been referred. Five have resulted in public inquiries. The decision was in favour of the MOD in one of these and against in another. The outcome of one is awaited and two public inquiries are to be held in July 1986.

Mr. Maclean asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will state since 1979 the total cost to his Department of appeals against decisions of local planning authorities not to give permission to Ministry planning applications.

Mr. Freeman: Records are not maintained which enable the cost of appeals to the Department to be determined. The information could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. James Young

Mr. Anderson asked the Secretary of State for Defence what training was provided by his Department or its agents during June in the Birmingham area for Mr. James Young, a captain in the South African infantry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: I am not aware that Captain Young of the South African infantry has received training at any Ministry of Defence establishment, but if the hon. Member would like to write to me giving further details I shall undertake to investigate the matter again.

Blastproof Structures

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Defence what construction work involving hardened or blastproof structures has been carried out, is being carried out, or is planned at Ouston barracks or Albemarle airfield; and if he will state the nature, purpose and cost of such construction.

Mr. Freeman: A secure vehicle compound and training facility has recently been constructed at Albemarle barracks, Ouston. Also, for safety reasons, asbestos cladding was recently removed from the walls of a bunker which was constructed in the late 1930s and which is used as the tactical area of responsibility headquarters, Northumbria within No. 2 home defence region. The total cost of both projects is about £283,000.

Privatisation

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will now cancel further privatisation plans of his Department including the contractorisation proposals at COD Donnington.

Mr. Freeman: Contracting out of support services, where this is shown to offer a more cost efective alternative to retaining the task in-house, is an important element in the Department's continuing search for efficiency and value for money. We have no intention of cancelling our plans in this area.

Test Ban Treaty

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will make it his policy to invite the submission of evidence from those scientists in the United Kingdom who claim that a comprehensive test ban treaty is adequately verifiable; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will make it his policy to convene a conference of scientific opinion in the United Kingdom on the issue of seismic and other means of verifying a comprehensive test ban; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: The Government are advised by their own experts in seismology and other matters related to the verification of a comprehensive test ban. Work carried out by others in these fields is also monitored. There is, therefore, no need for the Government to invite evidence or convene a conference on these issues. The Government believe, however, that these need to be addressed at the Geneva conference on disarmament, and have proposed a mandate for an ad hoc committee to do so. Regrettably, others have not accepted it.

Military Expenditure (NATO)

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Defence what percentage of United Kingdom military expenditure is attributable, both directly and indirectly, to North Atlantic Treaty Organisation commitments.

Mr. Stanley: It is estimated that about 95 per cent. of the United Kingdom's defence budget is devoted directly or indirectly to NATO tasks.

Royal Navy (Ships)

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many new ships are due to enter the service of the Royal Navy in each of the next three years, indicating the type of each ship.

Mr. Lee: It is not our practice to reveal planned acceptance dates for RN ships. Annex C of vol. 1 of SDE 86 does however indicate those ships planned to enter service in 1986-87. There are currently 25 warships on order.

HMS Tiger

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Defence what plans have been made for the disposal of HMS Tiger.

Mr. Lee: HMS Tiger is to be sold for breaking for the recovery of scrap. Following competitive tendering the highest bid has been accepted, subject to contract, with Terry Bell Shipbrokers acting on behalf of Desguaces Varela of Spain.

TRANSPORT

Tolled Crossings

Mr. Roy Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will now respond to the report of the Transport Committee on tolled crossings (HC 250-1) published on 12 March.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I cannot yet add to the answer given to the hon. Member by my right hon. Friend on Monday 21 May at columns *11-12*.

Motorway Service Areas

Mr. Michael Morris asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many motorway service areas are being considered for the M25 and M11; and when he now expects the first to open.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Our present aim is to establish four service areas on the M25 and one on the M11 at Birchanger. The first of these areas expected to open is at South Mimms on the M25. It is expected that this will be fully operative early in 1987.

Driving Licences

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to recall all current driving licences; for what purpose this is to be done; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I have no plans to recall all current driving licences.

Vehicle Number Plates

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) how many *(a)* unissued and *(b)* spent number plates are currently held in respect of each licensing district; and, of these, how many in each case fall within his Department's definition of cherished;

(2) why some current registration numbers when reached in rotation are not issued; which numbers in which series are so retained; and if he will make a statement on his policy towards the future of these numbers.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Over 100 million possible registration mark combinations are known not to have been issued and 1·3 million marks were assigned to vehicles which are recorded on DVLC's computer record as scrapped or permanently exported. There is no agreed definition of what constitutes a "cherished" mark but since 1983 50,000 possible combinations in the 1 to 20 number range have been withheld each year because there is currently no satisfactory basis for deciding between competing claims.

Registration marks are withheld by the Department if it is considered that they are potentially offensive or are likely to be particularly attractive (primarily those in the 1 to 20 number range). I am now considering the possibility of making attractive registration marks available by means of a sale scheme. Legislation would be required before any such scheme could be introduced.

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Transport if it is the policy of Her Majesty's Government that no large contracts should be placed in connection with the Channel tunnel project until the presenters provide evidence to Her Majesty's Government that the shareholders and lenders have agreed to it; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: Since this is a wholly private sector project, the Government do not consider it necessary to require evidence that shareholders and lenders have agreed to contracts. The concession does not therefore contain a requirement to that effect. The Government's concern is that sufficient funds should be available to finance the works, and clause 5.2 of the concession requires the concessionaires to satisfy the Government on that point.

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Transport why article 8.4 of the draft concession for the Channel tunnel project was withdrawn; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: The Channel tunnel concession went through many drafts before reaching its final form, but it would not be appropriate to reveal details of this commercial negotiation.

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will ascertain from the French Government whether it is their policy that major contracts for the Channel tunnel project should not be placed until evidence is provided that the shareholders and lenders have given their consent; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: Like the British Government, the French Government are a signatory to the Channel tunnel concession, which does not contain such a requirement.

East London River Crossing

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the organisations and individuals who have made representations to him in support of a third Thames crossing at Dartford and the removal of tolls, as an alternative to the construction of the proposed east London river crossing.

Mr. Moore: I will answer this question shortly.

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether his Department intends to provide the inquiry into the proposed east London river crossing with information on the traffic effects of providing a third Thames crossing at Dartford and removing existing tolls as advocated by a number of objectors; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moore: I have undertaken to make an announcement on the proposals for the third Thames crossing at Dartford. The Department will provide such further evidence as may be appropriate in the light of that announcement.

Energy Efficiency

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Transport what help the Government will give to transport authorities and local authorities in introducing more energy-efficient means of public transport.

Mr. David Mitchell: The Government are always willing to encourage ways in which energy efficiency can contribute to overall economic efficiency in their discussions with local authorities and others on major investment projects. The Energy Efficiency Office of the Department of Energy, with my Department's support, is undertaking a study with the industry into energy use by bus and coach operators. This will provide guidance on energy efficiency which will be applicable to both the public and private sector.

Motor Cycle Noise

Mr. Robert Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the outstanding European Economic Community directives on motorcycle noise, currently awaiting approval by the House, indicating which of them will require action by the House to implement them; and if he will state the dates by which each must be implemented.

Mr. Moore: There are no directives outstanding. The current directive (78/1015/EEC) was introduced into UK legislation in 1980 and applies to every motor cycle first used on or after 1 April 1983. Negotiations are now taking place on Commission proposals for an amending directive which will introduce tighter limits. These proposals are the subject of explanatory memoranda Nos. 9148/84 and 6766/85. The limits and implementation dates in the proposals have yet to be agreed.

Offshore Supplies

Mr. Robert Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions he has had with representatives of Britain's offshore supply vessel companies and crews concerning the effect of oil prices on their business; what consideration has been given to reserving offshore oil supply traffic to British vessels; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moore: My Department has regular contacts with the industry's representatives and my noble Friend the Minister responsible for shipping will be meeting a deputation from the British Offshore Support Vessels Association later this week for further discussions about the problems facing the United Kingdom support vessel fleet. Clearly there are a number of options open to us and I will be evaluating these in the light of developments in the negotiations in the European Community and our discussions with the industry.

Associated British Ports (Redundant Land and Property)

Mr. Freeson asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what are the valuation criteria for the disposal of redundant land and property owned by Associated British Ports for inner city and urban renewal purposes in cases where the cost of reinstating the land is very high in relation to its likely developed value;

(2) what is his policy on the disposal of redundant land and property owned by the Associated British Ports for inner city and urban renewal purposes.

Mr. Moore: Associated British Ports is wholly owned by Associated British Ports Holdings plc which was privatised in 1983. The disposal of redundant land and property owned by Associated British Ports is therefore a matter for that undertaking and its parent company. The valuation of any such disposals is a matter for them and the purchaser.

Driving Instructors

Mrs. Peacock asked the Secretary of State for Transport what allocation of time is set aside for driving instructors to speak to or discuss matters with their supervising approved driving instructors when problems occur.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Department's supervising examiners (ADI) arrange their programme of work so that they are normally available in their offices each Friday to speak to instructors. In addition, the supervising examiner will offer to discuss an instructor's performance and any problems at the end of a test of continued fitness and ability.

Mrs. Peacock asked the Secretary of State for Transport who is responsible for trainee driving instructors when their sponsoring approved driving instructor moves to another job.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: There is no specified "sponsoring" approved driving instructor. The Motor Cars (Driving Instruction) Regulations 1977 require only that there must always be at least one approved driving instructor working at the address specified on the trainee licence for every licence holder employed there.

Mrs. Peacock asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will take steps to ensure that the ratio of one driving instructor to one trainee is observed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Department's supervising examiners (ADI) carry out random checks on driving schools to confirm the observance of instructor/trainee ratios.

The Department investigates fully any alleged breaches.

Mrs. Peacock asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many driving instructor trainee licences have been issued since the implementation of the Road Traffic (Driving Instruction) Act 1984; and how many subsequent trainee licences have been issued to the same applicants since that date.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Since sections 2 to 5 of the Act came into operation on 20 May 1985, 2,766 trainee licences have been issued up to 31 May 1986. Of these *(a)* 764 were first licences; *(b)* two were second licences following issue of one in a category *(a)*; *(c)* 1,981 were second licences issued to trainees to whom a first licence had already been issued before implementation of the Act; *(d)* 19 were third licences to trainees in the same position as those in category *(c)*.

Radioactive Materials (Transportation)

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will detail the exact routes and the land or sea which is flown over by aeroplanes carrying radioactive materials.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The national regulations governing transport of radioactive materials by air are based on the technical instructions of the international Civil Aviation Authority which do not depend for their effectiveness on the choice of any particular route. Accordingly the Department does not collect detailed information of the kind requested.

Investment Grants (Shipping)

Sir William Clark asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) which member states of the European Economic Community provide investment grants or other assistance to their shipping companies for the purchase of new ships; what is the size and nature of such grants or assistance in each case; and whether the grant of such aid is conditional on either building such ships in national shipyards or operating them under the national flag;

(2) which member states of the European Economic Community make operational subsidies available to their shipping companies; what is the scale of such assistance; and what conditions are imposed on the availability of such assistance;

(3) which member states of the European Economic Community reserve part of their seaborne trade to their national shipping companies; and what is the nature and extent of such cargo reservation in each case.

Mr. Moore: I will answer these questions shortly.

Sir William Clark asked the Secretary of State for Transport, which member states of the European Economic Community provide investment grants or other assistance to their shipping companies for the purchase of secondhand ships; what is the size and nature of such assistance; and what conditions are imposed on the availability of such assistance.

Mr. Moore: The information is as follows:

France

Interest subsidies are provided for the purchase of second-hand vessels less than 10 years old or in the case of tankers to be used in cabotage trades less than 13 years old. The proportion of the subsidised loan cannot count for more than 60 per cent. of the purchase price including necessary repairs; the scheme applies to loans for a period of up to seven years, and the purchaser of a foreign vessel has to prove that no foreign credits exist.

In order to benefit from the subsidy the vessel must be at least half owned by a French national or be entirely owned by companies having their headquarters in France. The vessel must be at least 150 grt and fly the French flag and all conversions must be carried out in French shipyards.

Italy

A grant of up to 1·88 per cent. is provided for the purchase of a foreign flag ship between three and 10 years old and not exceeding 10,000 grt.

Netherlands

A fleet modernisation scheme in the form of a premium of 2·3 per cent. a year for five years exists for ships less than five years old. Vessels have to be Dutch-owned and flagged but the scheme is not restricted to those built in Dutch shipyards.

Freckleton Bypass

Sir Edward Gardner asked the Secretary of State for Transport if additional funds can be made available to enable Lancashire county council to include the construction of a bypass around the village of Freckleton in its road programme for 1987.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: There are no additional funds available to support local authority road building in 1986-87. The transport supplementary grant (TSG) settlement was announced in December and, as it must do, it distributed all the grant. My right hon. Friend will consider the distribution of TSG for 1987-88 when he has received highway authorities' transport policies and programmes later this year. Councils receive general support for their spending through rate support grant block grant.

EC (Vehicle Tests)

Mr. Hind asked the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has on vehicle testing arrangements in other European Community countries.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Testing arrangements for heavy goods vehicles and large passenger vehicles are governed by the EC road worthiness directive (77/143/EEC), under which these vehicles must be tested annually starting one year after first use. The arrangements for cars and light goods vehicles are set out in the table.

Comparison of car and light goods vehicle testing in EC countries
Countries with (or in process of introducing) testing schemes

	First test after	*Frequency thereafter*	*Additional testing*		*Nature of testing stations*
			After serious accidents	*On change of ownership*	
Belgium	Four years	Annually	Yes	Yes	Independent test centres
Denmark	No annual testing		No	Yes if over five years old	Government test centres
Germany	Three years	Every two years	No	No	Independent and government test centres
Italy	Two years	Every five years	No	No	Government test centres
Luxembourg	Three and a half years	Annually	Yes	Yes	Government test centres
Netherlands	Three years	Annually	Yes	No	Authorised garages
United Kingdom:					
(1) Great Britain	Three years	Annually	No	No	Authorised garages
(2) Northern Ireland	Six years (cars)	Annually	No	No	Government test centres
	One year (light goods vehicles)	Annually	No	No	Government test centres

Other countries:
France: Considering introducing testing for vehicles involved in serious accidents and vehicles over five years old at change of ownership.
Greece: Considering testing of vehicles every two years in government test centres.
Ireland: Considering scheme on British model.
Portugal and Spain: No annual testing—not known if considering anything.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Leicester Crown Court

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Attorney-General what has been the percentage rate of acquittal at Leicester Crown court in cases where the defendants plead not guilty for each of the past 10 years for which figures are available.

The Solicitor-General: The percentage of defendants who were acquitted after pleading not guilty to all counts at Leicester Crown court in the past 10 years is as follows:

	per cent.
1976	35·3
1977	33·7
1978	31·9
1979	44·2
1980	46·8
1981	42·3
1982	41·2
1983	50·4
1984	38·1
1985	43·5

Approximately one half of these acquittals were on the direction of the judge.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 1 July 1986

HOME DEPARTMENT

New Prisons

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department which are the 20 new prisons that are currently planned to be built.

Mr. Mellor: Three new prisons built by the Property Services Agency as part of the prison building programme have already been opened; at Wayland in Norfolk, Stocken in Leicestershire and Thorn Cross in Cheshire. Following work by the Home Office directorate of works, two further prisons were opened in 1985 to relieve acute pressure on the prison system. These were at Lindholme, near Doncaster, and at Morton Hall, in Lincolnshire.

The programme of new PSA prison building further consists of the following 13 establishments which are in construction, in design or planned:

Establishment	*Location*
Full Sutton	Humberside
Littlehey	Cambridgeshire
Mount	Hertfordshire
Swaleside	Kent
Garth	Lancashire
Brinsford	Staffordshire
Whitemoor	Cambridgeshire
Bicester	Oxfordshire
Woolwich	Greater London
Lancaster	Lancashire
Milton Keynes	Buckinghamshire
Doncaster	South Yorkshire
Ashford	Middlesex

As a result of the public expenditure decision announced in January, design work is now also planned to start on two more prisons.

Maintenance Defaulters

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many men have received prison sentences for non-fulfilment of maintenance payments to former marital partners and children following broken marriages in each year since 1979.

Mr. Mellor: Receptions of those committed to custody by magistrates for non-payment of wife or child maintenance are published annually in "Prison Statistics, England and Wales" (table 6.2 of the issue for 1984, Cmnd. 9622). Provisional figures for receptions of males in 1985 are 698 for wife maintenance and 37 for child maintenance. The corresponding figures available for those committed by county courts are given in the table.

Receptions of males committed by county courts to custody in Prison Department establishments in England and Wales for non-payment of wife or child maintenance, 1979 to 1985

	Type of Committal—Numbers	
	*Wife maintenance**	*Child maintenance†*
1979	13	1
1980		
1981		
1982		
1983		
1984	31	1
1985†	5	12

* Including wife and child maintenance.
† Provisional data.
Not available; the information could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Drugs Offences

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many convictions have been imposed by magistrates in Wolverhampton on people for being in possession of drugs in each of the last six years; and if he will list the range of fines, prison sentences and suspended prison sentences imposed for this offence during the same period.

Mr. Mellor: The information requested for the years 1979 to 1984, is given in the table. Corresponding information for 1985 is not yet available.

Persons sentenced at Wolverhampton magistrates' court for the offence of unlawful possession of a controlled drug by type of sentence

Type of sentence and amount	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*
Unsuspended sentences of imprisonment						
Up to and including 1 month	—	1	1	1	—	1
Over 1 month up to and including 3 months	1	—	—	1	—	—
Total	1	1	1	2	—	1
Suspended sentences of imprisonment	—	—	—	—	—	—
Fines						
Up to and including £20	1	—	1	3	3	1
Over £20 up to and including £50	9	6	7	6	20	13
Over £50 up to and including £100	—	1	—	1	2	2
Total	10	6	8	10	25	16
Other sentences or orders	—	3	4	*6	4	5
Total	11	10	13	18	29	22

* Includes one three months detention centre order.

Alvada Kooken

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Hampshire as to the steps being taken to secure the recapture of Alvada Kooken, an inmate of Broadmoor, who absconded whilst on day release in Southsea; what co-ordination with other police forces is being effected in this matter; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: Miss Kooken was recaptured and returned to Broadmoor on 25 June.

Radioactive Substances

Mr. Gould asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will provide a list of the number and type of appliances and their equipment deployed at each fire station in the north-east area command of the London fire brigade which carry equipment specifically for use at incidents involving radioactive substances and details of other specialist appliances deployed elsewhere in the brigade which could be used at such incidents; and what assessment he has made of the adequacy of this level of provision in relation to protection against radioactive hazards.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The list requested is as follows:

Station	*Appliances*
Shoreditch	Pump Ladder, Pump
Kingsland Road	Pump Ladder, Pump, Hydraulic Platform
Stoke Newington	Pump Ladder, Pump
Whitechapel	Pump Ladder, Pump
Stratford	Pump Ladder, Pump
Poplar	Pump Ladder, Pump, Turntable Ladder
Millwall	Pump Ladder, Pump
Shadwell	Pump Ladder
Bethnal Green	Pump Ladder, Pump
Bow	Pump Ladder, Pump
Homerton	Pump Ladder, Pump
Leyton	Pump Ladder
Leytonstone	Pump Ladder, Pump
Chingford	Pump Ladder, Damage Control Tender
Woodford	Pump Ladder
Walthamstow	Pump Ladder, Pump, Hose-Laying Lorry
East Ham	Pump Ladder, Emergency Rescue Tender
Ilford	Pump Ladder, Pump
Hainault	Pump Ladder
Romford	Pump Ladder, Pump
Dagenham	Pump Ladder, Pump, Hydraulic Platform
Hornchurch	Pump Ladder, Pump
Barking	Pump Ladder, Pump, Foam Tender, Fire Investigation Unit
Wennington	Pump Ladder
Silvertown	Pump Ladder, Pump
Plaistow	Pump Ladder, Pump

These appliances carry equipment for use at incidents involving radioactive substances. 26 pump ladders each carry five breathing apparatus sets, a survey meter, six dosimeters, six pairs of protective gloves and two chemical protection suits. 19 pumps each carry four breathing apparatus sets, five dosimeters, five pairs of protective gloves and two chemical protection suits. The emergency rescue tender carries five breathing apparatus sets, five dosimeters, four gas-tight suits, four chemical protection suits, five pairs of protective gloves and personnel decontamination equipment. A survey meter is for contamination monitoring and a dosimeter is an individual absorbed radiation monitor.

Similar numbers of these appliances and the equipment carried are present in each of the other areas of the London fire brigade and can be mobilised to any incident in the brigade area. Scientific advisers are available at all times. Ancillary equipment is held at the brigade's headquarters.

I am advised that the appliances, equipment, expertise and guidance available to the London fire brigade are adequate in the circumstances.

Probation

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many individuals are the subject of a probation order; and what is the estimated annual cost of implementing a probation order.

Mr. Mellor: The information requested is published annually in "Probation Statistics England and Wales" (tables 1.1 and 12.3 of the latest issue, for 1984). The estimated annual cost for each person on probation, which should be treated with reserve as it involves a number of assumptions, was £660 in 1983-84.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has about reconviction rates *(a)* following a probation order and *(b)* for individuals who are subject to probation order.

Mr. Mellor: The latest available information on reconvictions of those given probation orders was published in 1979 in chapter 3 of "Previous convictions, sentence and reconviction" Home Office Research Study No. 53 (tables 3.4 and 3.5). A new study is being made of the reconviction rates of those given probation orders and results are expected to be available by the autumn, which will include separate estimates of the number of persons reconvicted during and following a probation order. Information on terminations of probation orders for conviction of an offence is normally published annually in "Probation Statistics England and Wales" (tables 2.10 and 2.11 of the issue for 1983) and will be included in the issue for 1985 to be published towards the end of this year.

Trespass

Mr. Batiste asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will introduce legislation to introduce into English law the provisions in section 3 of the Trespass (Scotland) Act 1865, making it an offence to encamp on private property without the consent and permission of the owner or legal occupier of such premises.

Mr. Mellor: I would refer my hon. Friend to the reply given to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Solihull (Mr. Taylor) on 20 June 1986, at column 658.

PRIME MINISTER

EC Budget

Q.17 **Mr. Teddy Taylor** asked the Prime Minister if she will raise at the next meeting of the European Council the proposal by the Commission to raise a supplementary budget for 1986 which exceeds the strict budgetary limits agreed at a recent meeting of the Council; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: This subject is about to be discussed by the ECOFIN and budget Councils.

La Belle Discotheque (Bombing)

Q.70 **Mr. Dalyell** asked the Prime Minister if she will now, pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for Linlithgow, *Official Report*, column *287*, 12 June, publish the evidence that Libya was involved in the bombing of the La Belle discotheque in Berlin on 5 April.

The Prime Minister: No.

Clifton, Rugby

Q. 142 **Mr. Pawsey** asked the Prime Minister if she has any plans to make an official visit to Clifton, near Rugby.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Brymbo Steelworks

Q.154 **Dr. Marek** asked the Prime Minister what representations she has received about the implications of recent investment decisions as a result of Phoenix II for the future of Brymbo steelworks; and what action Her Majesty's Government propose to take in consequence.

The Prime Minister: I have received two representations about the recent decision by United Engineering Steel (known as Phoenix II) to place an order for a new continuous caster at its Aldwarke works. Decisions about investment projects at Brymbo and other United Engineering Steel plants are matters for the board of the company.

Sir Robert Armstrong

Mr. Dalyell asked the Prime Minister why she has extended the tenure of office of Sir Robert Armstrong as Cabinet Secretary and head of the Civil Service beyond normal retirement age.

The Prime Minister: I have asked Sir Robert Armstrong to continue in office until not later than September 1988, in order to leave the greatest possible degree of freedom for decisions after the general election about the organisation of functions and distribution of duties at the centre of government.

Engagements

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 1 July.

Mr. Janner asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 1 July.

Mr. Greenway asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 1 July.

Mr. Pike asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 1 July.

The Prime Minister: This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. I was present at Victoria station to meet President von Weizsacker of the Federal Republic of Germany at the start of his state visit to this country. In addition to my duties in this House I shall be having further meetings later today. This evening I shall attend a state banquet at Buckingham palace in honour of President von Weizsacker.

EC (Grants)

Mr. Arnold asked the Prime Minister what steps she takes to monitor the extent to which each Government Department takes up the European Community grants available to it; and what percentage of such grants were taken up in the last year.

The Prime Minister [*pursuant to her reply*, 9 June 1986, c. *40-41*]: I regret that the figure given for the United Kingdom share of agricultural guidance receipts was incorrect. The table shows the percentage share of United Kingdom receipts from the main Community funds.

	Per cent.
Agricultural Guarantee	9·4
Agricultural Guidance	16·1
European Social Fund (ESF)	30·8
European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)	28·9

The latest estimate of total United Kingdom receipts in 1985 (excluding budget funds and abatements) is £1,908 million.

ENERGY

Consultancy and Accounting Contracts

Mr. Mates asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list the contracts, with the subject of the assignment, awarded to management consultancy or accounting firms by his Department in 1985, with the name of the consultants concerned.

Mr. Peter Walker: My Department placed the following contracts with management consultancy and accountancy firms in 1985:

Consultants	*Subject of Consultancy*
CACI International Valstar Ltd. Z. & S. Ltd. Leasco Scott-Pickford Reliability Consultants C. M. Consultants Ltd.	Various contracts for computing advice and support to the Department's Petroleum Engineering Division.
Haydn Webborn Consultancies Ltd.	Selection of Inspection data for training inspector-divers. Production of a glossary of terminology for divers and non-destructive testing inspectors. Provision of training material for divers.
P. A. Consulting Services Ltd.	Study of divers' communication.

Consultants	Subject of Consultancy
P. A. Management Consultants	Study of energy efficiency in local government buildings Monitoring and Targeting energy efficiency in the cement industry.
C. Bow (Development Consultant)	Promotion of voluntary sector insulation projects in S. W. England.
Touche Ross Management Consultants	Provision of a business adviser to the Department in respect of work relating to NCB and BNFL. Provision of a computer program advisor to help in developing the program for the Coal Firing Unit's database. Accountancy and tax advice in respect of the privatisation of the gas industry.
Price Waterhouse	Reporting accountants in respect of the privatisation of the gas industry.
Morton, Dolphin & Kerby	Executive search for the Office of Gas Supply
Atkins R. & D.	Provision of specialist adviser to Sizewell "B" Public Inquiry

Coal Industry

Mr. Mason asked the Secretary of State for Energy (1) in view of the abandonment by the National Coal Board of the coal industry's conciliation scheme as enacted in section 46 of the Coal Industry Nationalisation Act 1946, what steps he is taking to ensure good working relations on safety, health and welfare of persons in the coal industry between the National Coal Board and the National Union of Mineworkers;

(2) whether the National Coal Board has deposited any copies of new agreements with his Department as replacements for the termination by the National Coal Board of the coal industry conciliation scheme as enacted by Parliament in the Coal Industry Nationalisation Act 1946;

(3) whether he was consulted by the National Coal Board about its unilateral termination of its involvement in the coal industry conciliation scheme which has statutory authority from his Department under section 46 of the Coal Industry Nationalisation Act 1946.

Mr. David Hunt: Section 46 of the 1946 Act places a duty on the NCB to consult organisations appearing to it to represent substantial proportions of the persons in its employment. I am satisfied that the board is complying with that duty.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Mr. Brian Gentlemen (Prosecution)

Mr. Dubs asked the Attorney-General if he will refer to the Director of Public Prosecutions the new evidence revealed in the programme "Spying for the Comrades" of 12 April regarding the passing of classified information to a foreign diplomat.

The Solicitor-General: All the information contained in the programme referred to by the hon. Member was available to the officers of the Metropolitan police responsible for investigating the allegations made against Mr. Brian Gentlemen and it was all taken into account by the Director of Public Prosecutions when reaching his decision. He concluded that there was no evidence sufficient to justify the institution of criminal proceedings against Mr. Gentlemen.

ENVIRONMENT

Mobile Labour (Housing)

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his policy towards the provision of housing for people moving to take up work, in the light of the recent SHAC report "A Job to Move", a copy of which has been supplied to him; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: The Government fully recognise the importance of mobility for those moving for work. My Department, in conjunction with the local authorities, has set up national mobility schemes, and continues to support them. I am always keen to look at the possibility of making improvements, and I am examining the SHAC report's recommendations.

Mr. Chope asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will list in the *Official Report* the extent to which housing authorities in England and Wales achieved the target of 1 per cent. of lettings going to the national housing mobility scheme nominees in *(a)* 1984-85 and *(b)* 1985-86; and whether he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: The information is not yet available in the form requested. When it is available, I shall arrange to place it in the Library of the House.

Kirklees

Mrs. Peacock asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the total level of assistance given by his Department spent in the Kirklees metropolitan district council area in each year since 1974, broken down by category of assistance.

Mrs. Rumbold: The total of assistance to the Kirklees metropolitan district council area since 1974 is shown, where available, in the following table.

Assistance to Kirklees Metropolitan District Council area

	£ million
Rate Support Grant (Block Grant)	
1981-82	70·223
1982-83	82·090
1983-84	86·238
1984-85	87·873
1985-86	85·226
1986-87	104·035
Derelict Land Grant	
1978-79	0·082
1979-80	0·356
1980-81	0·368
1981-82	0·368
1982-83	0·336
1983-84	0·264
1984-85	0·450
1985-86	0·458
Urban Programme	
1974-75	0·012
1975-76	0·007
1976-77	0·099
1977-78	0·093
1978-79	0·058
1979-80	0·005
1980-81	0·172
1981-82	0·251
1982-83	1·012
1983-84	0·280
1984-85	0·594
1985-86	0·325
1986-87	0·219
Local Employment Act/Industrial Development Act	
1980-81	0·011
1984-85	0·091
Housing Corporation Grant Approvals	
1981-82	1·502
1982-83	2·852
1983-84	2·005
1984-85	1·558
1985-86	2·900
Housing Association Grant Payments On Local Authority Sponsored Schemes	
1976-77	0·428
1977-78	0·999
1978-79	1·164
1979-80	0·279
1980-81	0·331
1981-82	0·011
1982-83	0·014
1983-84	0·004
Main Housing Subsidy	
1974-75	2·885
1975-76	1·966
1976-77	2·522
1977-78	2·679
1978-79	3·368
1979-80	4·835
1980-81	5·941
1981-82	2·081
Home Insulation Scheme Grant	
1978-79	0·150
1979-80	0·248
1980-81	0·147
1981-82	0·480
1982-83	0·537
1983-84	0·337
1984-85	0·317
1985-86	0·333
1986-87	0·253
Slum Clearance Subsidy	
1974-75	0·130
1975-76	0·171
1976-77	0·216
1977-78	0·231
1978-79	0·245
1979-80	0·230
1980-81	0·317
1981-82	0·355
1982-83	0·343
1983-84	0·323
1984-85	0·351
1985-86	0·360
1986-87	0·311
Improvement Contributions	
1974-75	0·614
1975-76	0·651
1976-77	0·685
1977-78	0·726
1978-79	0·755
1979-80	0·816
1980-81	0·924
1981-82	0·956
1982-83	1·518
1983-84	2·563
1984-85	3·278
1985-86	3·857
1986-87	4·410

Notes:

1. Rate support grant data cover the period since the introduction of Block Grant. Data relate to Kirklees metropolitan district council only and are latest estimates, after holdback where relevant. Care should be taken in comparing 1986-87 with earlier years because of the abolition of West Yorkshire metropolitan county council.

2. Figures for Derelict Land Grant relate to actual expenditure. 1985-86 data are provisional, and figures prior to 1977-78 are not readily available.

3. Urban Programme figures represent annual approvals for expenditure given to Kirklees metropolitan district council.

4. Local Employment Act/Industrial Development Act figures relate to grant payments, which were made only in the years shown. Only a small part of the district is currently eligible.

5. 1985-86 and 1986-87 figures for Home Insulation Scheme Grant, Slum Clearance Subsidy and Improvement Contributions are estimates and will be subject to adjustment when final audit claims are received. Data on Home Insulation Scheme Grant are given from the start of the scheme. Information on Housing Corporation Grant approvals for years prior to 1981-82 is not readily available.

Public Library, Berwick-upon-Tweed

Mr. Beith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has given his consent for the complete or partial demolition of the public library building in Berwick-upon-Tweed under section 277A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1971.

Mr. Tracey: No. I understand that the district council has sold the building. The new owner has applied for a certificate of immunity from listing under section 54A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1971. That application is being considered, and a decision is expected shortly. Whether or not a certificate of immunity is granted, the owner would require the consent of the local planning authority before carrying out any demolition work because the building is in a conservation area.

Local Authority Housing

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list by local authority *(a)* the

number of difficult to let houses, *(b)* the number of houses classified as unfit and *(c)* the number of houses lacking basic amenities; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: Local authorities' housing investment programme returns include their estimates of the numbers of unfit dwellings, of other dwellings which lack basic amenities, and, excluding private housing, of dwellings which are difficult to let. The information relating to April 1985 is listed in the "HIP1 (1985) all items print" which is available in the Library. The numbers reported are not necessarily comparable as authorities' criteria may differ.

House Building

Mr. Robert B. Jones asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what percentage of new housing was built on *(a)* virgin land and *(b)* recycled land in each of the five most recent years for which figures are available.

Sir George Young: Information in the form requested is not available. Figures recently issued for land use changes in England recorded during 1985 show that 22 per cent. of land developed for residential use was previously developed, 23 per cent. was vacant land in urban areas, and 55 per cent. had been mainly in agricultural use.

Rates

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if, further to his answer of 11 May, *Official Report*, column *484*, he will publish in the *Official Report* the percentage increase in rates for 1986-87 over that for 1985-86 for each shire county.

Mrs. Rumbold: The information is as follows:

Counties ranked by percentage increase in precept from 1985-86 to 1986-87—Percentage change in shire county preceptsfrom 1985-86 to 1986-87

	Rank	*Per cent.*
Cumbria	1	36·4
Cambridgeshire	2	32·9
Buckinghamshire	3	30·0
Leicestershire	4	27·0
Somerset	5	26·5
Derbyshire	6	25·9
Wiltshire	6	25·9
Oxfordshire	8	24·8
Lincolnshire	9	22·0
Hertfordshire	10	21·9
Northumberland	11	21·7
Isle of Wight	12	20·0
East Sussex	13	19·9
Warwickshire	13	19·9
Devon	15	19·8
Shropshire	16	19·6
West Sussex	17	19·1
Norfolk	18	19·0
Bedfordshire	19	18·8
Essex	19	18·8
Cornwall	21	18·3
Gloucestershire	22	18·1
Avon	23	17·9
Nottinghamshire	24	17·7
Suffolk	24	17·7
Durham	26	17·3
Lancashire	27	16·1
North Yorkshire	28	15·9
Dorset	29	15·4
Hampshire	30	14·6
Humberside	30	14·6
Berkshire	32	12·9
Kent	33	12·7
Northamptonshire	34	12·5
Surrey	35	12·0
Cleveland	36	11·9
Hereford and Worcester	37	10·9
Staffordshire	38	9·8
Cheshire	39	8·7

Assured Tenancies

Mr. Allan Roberts asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to extend monitoring of the assured tenancy scheme to include questions concerning the renewal and termination of assured tenancies.

Mr. John Patten: I propose to include these questions in the next monitoring exercise.

Mr. Allan Roberts asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will place in the Library a copy of the information, as at 1 April 1986, requested by his Department from approved bodies under the assured tenancy scheme, covering, for each named body *(a)* the number and geographical location of dwellings let, *(b)* the number and geographical location of dwellings under construction, *(c)* the number and geographical location of dwellings planned, *(d)* the rent levels of each letting, *(e)* the address of each approved body, and *(f)* in each case, under *(a)* to *(e)* above, whether the approved body is a financial institution, a building/construction company, a property investment company, a non-incorporated partnership or a housing association.

Mr. John Patten: My Department has prepared a report on the assured tenancies monitoring exercise carried out earlier this year. Copies are being placed in the Library.

Mr. Allan Roberts asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list, by bands of expenditure, the amounts required to bring privately-owned vacant dwelling houses up to a basic standard of fitness for *(a)* Greater London, *(b)* the rest of England, and *(c)* England as a whole; and how he has taken or will take these amounts into consideration when determining the prescribed amounts applicable to qualifying works under the assured tenancy proposals in the Housing and Planning Bill.

Mr. John Patten: I regret that information is not available in the form requested by the hon. Member.

Mr. Allan Roberts asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish the basis on which he will determine the prescribed amounts for qualifying works under the assured tenancy proposals in the Housing and Planning Bill.

Mr. John Patten: I propose to consult publicly before reaching a view on the prescribed amount.

Mr. Allan Roberts asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those bodies which have expressed an interest to his Department concerning an extension of the assured tenancy scheme to improved, repaired or converted dwelling houses; which of these bodies are already approved bodies under the existing

scheme; and if he will indicate for each body whether the interest shown concerns dwelling houses *(a)* at present in the ownership of a local housing authority *(b)* at present privately owned but which at some point have been owned by a local housing authority, or *(c)* in long-term private ownership.

Mr. John Patten: A substantial number of bodies, including building societies and landlords already approved under the assured tenancy scheme, have expressed general interest in our proposals to extend the scope of the scheme.

Mortgage Repossessions

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to how many mortgage repossessions have taken place in each of the years 1979 to 1985 in *(a)* England, *(b)* Scotland and *(c)* Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: I shall answer this question shortly.

Radioactivity

Mr. Warren asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will review the level of radioactivity specified in the guide on the interpretation of the Radioactive Substances Act 1983; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what account was taken in calculating the level of radioactivity specified in the guide on the interpretation of the Radioactive Substances Act 1983 of data published by the Central Electricity Generating Board in relation to radioactivity levels of garden soil, tea, coffee and common fertilisers; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: There are no plans to update the guide to the administration of the Radioactive Substances Act 1960, which was published by Her Majesty's Stationery Office in 1982.

I shall ask the Central Electricity Generating Board to write to my hon. Friend, since the statement to which he refers appears to come from that source.

Dolphinaria and Marine Parks

Mr. Silvester asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether his Department has yet completed its review of dolphinaria and marine parks.

Mr. Waldegrave: I have now studied the report commissioned by my Department last September from Dr. Margaret Klinowska at the University of Cambridge. I am arranging for copies to be placed in the Library.

Dr. Klinowska's report is based on a thorough examination of past and present practices at United Kingdom dolphinaria, and she has taken evidence from over 150 organisations and individuals. I accept her two main conclusions: that dolphinaria can continue to be permitted, provided that there are major improvements in virtually all areas, including accommodation, captive breeding programmes, the co-ordination of research and the quality of education provided by cetacean displays; and that my Department should not permit further imports of cetaceans until these new standards have been met.

My Department will establish a steering group (including a representative of the Nature Conservancy Council) to consider the report's detailed recommendations. The steering group will seek co-operation from the operators of dolphinaria, and from other bodies whose help will be needed, particularly in trying to establish co-ordinated programmes for captive breeding and research.

The operators and other interested bodies will be invited to comment on the detailed recommendations by the end of August, and we will be seeking programmes for each dolphinaria by the end of November to show how and when the required improvements will me made. This will guide the Department in decising whether or not further exemptions for commercial display under article 6 of the EC CITES regulation (3626/82) can be granted after 1 January 1987. I expect the main preparations for implementation to have been completed by the end of this year. Operators will be given a maximum of five years to meet the new basic standards for existing animals, and a further five years after that to make additional improvements.

Housing Corporation

Mr. Couchman asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement about the Housing Corporation's corporate plan.

Mr. John Patten: The Housing Corporation's second corporate plan covering England, Wales and Scotland was published yesterday. It reviews the corporation's programme of investment in housing associations, its administrative functions and operating costs and sets out various options for the future.

I welcome the plan as a valuable contribution to the discussion of important housing issues.

The options in the plan will be considered in the forthcoming public expenditure survey against the background of other pressures on public resources.

The publication of this plan gives me the opportunity to pay tribute to the corporation and to the voluntary housing movement in Great Britain for their work in meeting the needs of those who face special difficulties and in fostering low-cost home ownership.

Council House Sales

Mr. Hind asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will update the table giving information on sales of dwellings by each local authority in England, which was referred to in the answer given to the hon. Member for Basildon (Mr. Amess) on 26 March, *Official Report*, column *495*.

Mr. John Patten: I have today placed in the Library the latest figures, to which my hon. Friend refers, giving information reported by each local authority in England on the progress of council house sales to the end of March 1986.

Radiation

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for the Environment at what level alpha emitters were detected on 5 May; at what locations and by whom; what further investigations have been carried out or are planned as a result; what has been the trend in the level of alpha emitters detected since 5 May; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: The complete monitoring data arising from the Chernobyl incident is being collated and will shortly be published through Her Majesty's Stationery Office. A copy will be deposited in the Library of the House of Commons.

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to the level of caesium 137 detected by the Institute of Terrestrial Ecology at Ennerdale in Cumbria on 5 May; how this figure compares with the normal background readings for caesium 137; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: On 5 May the Institute of Terrestrial Ecology (ITE), during an analysis of radioactivity levels on the Cumbrian Fells, recorded 16,900 Bq of caesium 137 per kilogram of grass on Ennerdale Fells and passed the information to my Department and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. The measurement was included in the collection of monitoring results my Department made available to the public on 15 May.

ITE's analysis was carried out on dried samples, which gives results about five times greater than those obtained on freshly harvested grass, which is the standard method of analysis. This accounts for the apparent discrepancy between the measurements reported by ITE and those from other agencies.

Sellafield

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will publish details of the proposed new authorisation for radioactive liquid discharges from British Nuclear Fuels plc plant at Sellafield.

Mr. Waldegrave [*pursuant to his reply*, 30 April 1986, c. *414*.]: The new authorisation limiting liquid radioactive discharges from Sellafield has been issued jointly by my Department and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and comes into effect today. I have arranged for copies to be placed in the Library of the House.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Accidents in the Home

44. **Mr. Thurnham** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many people were treated by the National Health Services during 1985 as a result of accidents in the home caused by faulty electrical installation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: This information is not available. The data collected at the 20 hospitals in the home accident surveillance system (HASS) include a provisional figures of 108 people who were treated at those hospitals in 1985 having had an electric current accident. This does not necessarily imply fault in either the appliance or the electrical installation involved.

British Books (Canadian Tariff)

Mr. Baldry asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what are the implications of the Canadian Government implementing a 10 per cent. tariff on British books for Her Majesty's Government's negotiating position in connection with the general agreement on tariff and trade.

Mr. Alan Clark: GATT ecourages, but does not require, its signatories to enter into commitments — known as bindings — not to increase tariffs above certain levels. However, books are among the very few manufactured products where Canada's tariff is not bound: Canada may therefore change the tariff as it wishes.

A priority in the round of GATT negotiations will be to press for fuller acceptance of GATT tariff obligations by our trading partners and to seek reductions of higher tariffs.

Beer Froth

Mr. Colvin asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is his definition of the froth on a glass of beer.

Mr. Howard: The term "froth" is not legally defined, but it is used to describe the mixture of gas and liquid which forms above the surface of the liquid when beer is poured into a container.

Weights and Measures

Mr. Colvin asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what plans he has for the implementation of section 43 of the Weights and Measures Act 1985.

Mr. Howard: Consultations on the Department's proposals for changes to the regulations dealing with the construction and testing of beer glasses will not close until 16 July, and the Brewers' Society has yet to make public its proposals for guidance notes to which I referred in my answer of 26 March, at columns 475-76.

As I said then, the Government will wish to see if this joint initiative proves to be successful before considering implementing section 43 of the Weights and Measures Act 1985.

Small Firms

Mr. MacKenzie asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what assessment he has made of the effect on the cash flow of small and medium sized firms falling within the Bolton definition of companies of the four-month moratorium of Government grants to them; if he will now abandon the moratorium; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Morrison: No formal assessment of the effects on firms of the moratorium on payments of old-style regional development grants has been carried out. While the moratorium has the effect of delaying receipt of grant by four months, many applicants will be able, if they wish, to borrow money on the strength of the approval letters which are issued in the normal way but four months before the actual payment. There are no plans at present to lift the moratorium.

Mr. MacKenzie asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many small firms, by Bolton committee definition, he has assisted by regional development grant, selective financial assistance or any other financial assistance in the course of the last 12 months to the latest convenient date; and how much money was involved in each region of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The table sets out the schemes of assistance for which information on support for small

firms is available. Except where indicated the Bolton committee definition of 200 employees has been used. Information on the amount of assistance by region could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Assistance	*Number of firms assisted*	*Amount £ million*	*Period*
Regional Development Grants*	2,085	50·8	1985-86
Regional Selective Assistance	449	23·8	1985-86
Support for Innovation	482	32·6	1985-86
Business Improvement Services			
(1) Direct aid to small firms	4,883	18·9	November 1984 to March 1986
(2) Aid for organisations providing services and facilities for small firms	195	3·8	November 1984 to March 1986
Small Engineering Firms Investment Scheme			
(1) SEFIS I	143	2·7	1985-86
(2) SEFIS II†	401	5·9	1985-86
Business and Technical Advisory Services			
(1) Support for Design	1,600	5·4	1985-86
(2) Support for Productivity	2,800	5·6	1985-86
(3) Support for Quality	400	1·6	1985-86
Small Firms Loan Guarantee Scheme‡	398	12·9	April 1985 to September 1985

* Figures are only available for the new regional development grant scheme which was introduced in November 1984.

† Figures given are for firms with up to 500 employees.

‡ Responsibility for this scheme was transferred to the Department of Employment on 1 October 1985. The figures relate to the number of guarantees given and the total loan value. In addition, in the six months period covered the small firms service handled some 127,000 inquiries and 17,500 counselling sessions.

Note:

The figures given for regional development grant and regional selective assistance are for England only.

General Motors-BL

Mr. Hoyle asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what talks or contacts, formal or informal, have taken place recently between the Government and General Motors; and what discussions there have been in this context about Leyland Vehicles and Land Rover.

Mr. Peter Morrison: There have been no meetings between Ministers and General Motors since my meeting with Mr. Stempel reported to the House on 22 May 1986, at columns 249-50. Working level contacts between officials of my Department and companies in the vehicle industry, including GM, have continued in the normal way.

Mr. Fatchett asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what current discussions are taking place between his Department, General Motors and BL about joint schemes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The Government share the view of the BL board that all options regarding the future of BL's commercial vehicle operations should be reviewed. The chairman of BL has stated publicly that he is exploring the possibilities for collaborative and other arrangements with other manufacturers.

Mr. Fatchett asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what discussions are taking place between his Department, BL and General Motors about possible marketing arrangements involving General Motors and Land Rover.

Mr. Peter Morrison: None.

Mr. Terry Davis asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether any discussions are taking place between his Department, the BL board and General Motors about the future of Freightrover.

Mr. Peter Morrison: No discussions have taken place since my right hon. Friend's statement of April 24 with any party regarding the sale of Freight Rover but, as with other BL businesses, opportunities for collaboration and other arrangements with other manufacturers will continue to be explored.

Austin Rover

Mr. Fatchett asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if there are any discussions involving his Department, BL and other companies about the future of Austin Rover; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Morrison: No discussions are taking place concerning the sale of Austin Rover. Discussions between individual BL businesses, including Austin Rover, and other companies on matters of mutual commercial interest continue to take place in the normal way.

Mr. Terry Davis asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether any discussions are taking place between his Department or the BL board and the Ford Motor Company about the future of Austin Rover.

Mr. Peter Morrison: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry told the House on 6 February that the possibility of the sale of Austin Rover to Ford would not be pursued. The position is unchanged.

Mr. Terry Davis asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether any discussions are taking place between his Department or the BL board and Honda about the future of Austin Rover.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Austin Rover is involved in major collaborative projects with Honda, including the new Rover 800 car, to be launched this month. BL and Honda are therefore frequently in touch about their collaboration and its development.

EC (Product Liability)

Mr. Moynihan asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has reached a decision on implementation in the United Kingdom of the European Community directive on product liability.

Mr. Howard: We propose to implement this directive through primary legislation as soon as the parliamentary timetable permits, together with legislation to implement our proposed general safety duty and other amendments to consumer legislation. We propose to allow at least six months between enactment of the legislation on product liability and its entry into force. The development risks defence and the exemption for primary agricultural products will be retained, but we do not intend to introduce a financial limit on a producer's liability.

Furnishings (Inflammability)

Mr. Rathbone asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has completed his review of regulations concerning the inflammability of furniture and furniture coverings sold in Britain; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard [*pursuant to his reply* 23 May 1986, c. *363*]: I have completed my review of the need for updating the regulations concerning the flammability of upholstered furniture and have concluded that new legislative requirements should include a reference to a code of practice based on the Furniture Industry Research Association's own classification scheme. This will mean that some of the worst upholstery component combinations now on the market will be banned, but it will stop short of requiring all upholstered furniture to meet the match test. The option of meeting the match test directly will be allowed and the cigarette test will of course remain an essential requirement.

In each of the years 1981 to 1984 there were between 3,300 and 3,600 accidental fires which started in upholstered furniture in occupied buildings in the UK. Each year about 150 people died and about 1,000 were injured in those fires. About half the fires were started by cigarettes.

A working group is being set up to devise a code of practice that will serve as a basis for legislation and ensure a worthwhile improvement in the fire resistance of upholstered furniture. My aim is progressive upgrading of the performance in accidental domestic fires of the furniture available on the market. One of the advantages of a code of practice based on the FIRA classification scheme is its flexibility; as new materials and treatments are developed, the requirements of the code can be made stricter.

The same working group will also consider ways of extending the scope of legislation to include loose cushions and cushion covers, loose replacement covers and upholstery materials sold separately from furniture. It will have 18 months in which to complete its task.

The legislative options are either regulations under the Consumer Safety Act or, when the general safety requirement proposed in our White Paper on the Safety of Goods (Cmnd. 9302) is enacted, approval of the code of practice as a sound modern standard of safety.

Jaguar

Mr. Hoyle asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what request his Department has made to BL for the repayment of open market borrowings with some of the receipts from the sale of Jaguar; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Morrison [*pursuant to his reply*, 30 June 1986, c. 373]: My Department has made no such request to BL, but use of the funds from the sale of Jaguar has been the subject of discussion with the company from time to time in the context of BL's overall financial position.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

South Africa

Mr. Eastham asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs which European Economic Community member states now support effective economic measures against South Africa; and what further action the European Economic Community Council intends to take.

Mrs. Chalker: The Twelve are united in a common policy towards South Africa which emphasises the need for the total abolition of apartheid, an urgent start on national dialogue in South Africa and a cessation of violence on all sides. At the request and on behalf of the Twelve, my right hon. and learned Friend intends to visit southern Africa shortly in a further effort to establish conditions in which the necessary negotiations can commence.

Chemical Weapons

Mr. John Fraser asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress was made in the elimination of chemical weapons as a result of a recent visit of Mr. Israelyan to the United Kingdom from the Soviet Union.

Mrs. Chalker: In a detailed exchange of views with Mr. Israelyan on June 18 my hon. Friend, the Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, the Member for Mid-Sussex (Mr. Renton) made plain the need for new Soviet flexibility in the negotiations. We hope that the meeting will contribute to further progress in the CW negotiations.

Bulgaria (Srednogorye Steel Plant)

Mr. Stern asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has received any requests from the Bulgarian Government for advice and assistance in the light of the disaster at the Srednogorye steel plant; and if any British citizens were affected by the disaster.

Mrs. Chalker: We much regret the loss of life in the fire at the copper smelting plant at Srednogorye on 23 June.

No British nationals were involved. We have received no requests for advice or assistance from the Bulgarian authorities, but we are ready to consider any that may be made.

Soviet Union (Weapons)

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) what information he has as to the number of intercontinental ballistic missiles, submarine-launched ballistic missiles and heavy bombers the Soviet Union has removed from operational service since January 1985;

(2) what information he has as to the aggregate number of intercontinental and sea-launched ballistic missiles and heavy bombers the Soviet Union would be obliged to remove from operational service under the terms of a ratified SALT 2 agreement;

(3) what information he has as to the number of intercontinental and sea-launched ballistic missiles, and nuclear missile-carrying submarines the Soviet Union has been obliged to remove from operational service under the terms of SALT 1 and SALT 2.

Mrs. Chalker: It is our understanding that the Soviet Union has withdrawn older strategic systems as new ones are deployed in order to stay within the agreed limits under SALT 1 and 2. The number removed relates directly to the number of new systems deployed.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) what information he has as to the Soviet Union's compliance with the SALT 1 and SALT 2 prohibitions on the construction of new fixed intercontinental ballistic missile silos, the testing of new heavy intercontinental ballistic missiles and the number of re-entry vehicles on existing intercontinental ballistic missiles;

(2) what information he has as to whether the Soviet Union has complied with the ceilings on the number of ballistic missile launchers and the number of MIRVed ballistic missile launchers stipulated in the SALT 1 and SALT 2 treaties;

(3) what information he has as to whether the Soviet Union has tested nuclear weapons with a number of re-entry vehicles in excess of that permitted under the terms of the SALT 1 and SALT 2 treaties.

Mrs. Chalker: The United Kingdom is not a party to either SALT 1 or SALT 2, which are bilateral agreements between the United States and Soviet Union, although SALT 2 was never ratified. We therefore have no formal standing to pronounce on matters concerning their implementation. We are not aware, however, that the United States has claimed that the Soviet Union has violated the provisions relating to these particular issues.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has as to the Soviet Union's provision of prior notification of tests involving multiple missile launchers and extra-territorial flights.

Mrs. Chalker: None. Article XVI of the SALT 2 agreement, to which the United Kingdom is not a party, stipulates the terms under which one party should give prior notification to the other of ICBM launches.

United States of America (Weapons)

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has as to the numbers of intercontinental ballistic missiles, sea-launched ballistic missiles and nuclear missile-carrying submarines the United States has removed from operational service under the SALT 1 and SALT 2 agreements.

Mrs. Chalker: It is our understanding that the United States has withdrawn older strategic systems as new ones are deployed in order to stay within the agreed limits under SALT 1 and 2. Most recently, two Poseidon submarines were removed from service in advance of the latest Ohio class submarine starting sea trials.

African National Congress

Mr. Soames asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on what basis Her Majesty's Government decided to hold talks with the African National Congress at ministerial level; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: The Government have been following with deep concern recent events in South Africa, including the declaration of a state of emergency. We decided that a meeting with the African National Congress at ministerial level offered an opportunity to impress on the ANC leadership our view that a suspension of violence on all sides is essential to help create a climate in which dialogue and negotiations will become possible.

Palestine Liberation Organisation

Mr. Soames asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what are the conditions precedent to Her Majesty's Government being prepared to hold talks at ministerial level with the Palestine Liberation Organisation; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: Meetings with PLO officials have been held at the level of Minister of State without formal pre-conditions. Contacts with the PLO at Cabinet minister level remain difficult while the PLO's policies remain ambiguous on Israel's right to exist within secure and recognised boundaries and on the use of violence.

USSR (Russian Jews)

Mr. Mason asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what are his estimates of the numbers of Russian Jews who have been allowed to emigrate from the Soviet Union so far in the current year.

Mrs. Chalker: The figures available to us for the period 1 January to 31 May 1986 are as follows:

Month	*Number*
January	79
February	86
March	47
April	72
May	49

We expect a figure for June to be available shortly.

Chernobyl Radiation (Compensation)

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a

claim to the Soviet Government for compensation for any losses sustained by British agriculture as a result of contamination caused by the destruction of the reactor at Chernobyl.

Mrs. Chalker: We are studying the question of a possible claim by Her Majesty's Government on their own behalf or on behalf of their nationals. We intend in any case to reserve all our rights in this matter with the Soviet Government.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Schizophrenia

43. **Mr. David Atkinson** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on progress in research into schizophrenia.

Mr. Walden: The Medical Research Council, which receives its grant-in-aid through the Department, is the main Government agency for the promotion of medical research in the United Kingdom. I understand from the MRC, which supports a considerable amount of research in schizophrenia, that good progress is being made in several areas including, computer assisted diagnosis, structural changes in the brain, neurochemical imaging, molecular genetic studies, family therapy and evaluation of psychiatric services. The council has recently set up a Schizophrenia and Allied Conditions Committee to review current research in the field and to identify opportunities for future research.

In addition, the Department of Health and Social Security is funding epidemiological research on morbidity and mortality in schizophrenia at the unit of clinical epidemiology, Oxford, and also intends to support studies on community-based services for people with mental illnesses such as schizophrenia. Two such projects have already started.

Expenditure

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if, further to his reply dated 13 May, *Official Report*, columns *433-34*, he will publish in the *Official Report* the comparable figures for the United Kingdom in each year since 1970, and the proportion contributed by central and local government, respectively, in each case in terms of (i) current prices, (ii) as a percentage of 1979 deflated by the retail prices index and (iii) as a percentage of 1979 deflated by the gross domestic product deflator.

Mr. Dunn: The readily available information shown in the following table relates to net recurrent expenditure in schools incurred by local education authorities in England. Direct expenditure by central Government on maintained schools is negligible.

Local authority net recurrent institutional expenditure per full-time equivalent pupil—England

Financial years	*Unit cost* at out-turn prices*			*Index deflated by the RPI†*			*Index in real terms deflated by the GDP deflator†*		
	£			*(1979-80 = 100)*			*(1979-80 = 100)*		
	Nursery schools	*Primary schools*	*Secondary schools*	*Nursery schools*	*Primary schools*	*Secondary schools*	*Nursery schools*	*Primary schools*	*Secondary schools*
1975-76	600	260	400	121	100	108	123	101	109
1976-77	705	295	445	124	98	104	127	101	107
1977-78	665	320	480	102	93	99	106	96	102
1978-79	710	365	535	101	98	102	102	99	103
1979-80	815	430	610	100	100	100	100	100	100
1980-81	990	545	770	104	109	108	102	107	106
1981-82	1,110	620	870	105	111	110	104	110	109
1982-83	1,140	680	945	101	114	112	100	113	111
1983-84	1,230	730	1,015	104	117	114	103	116	114
1984-85	1,295	765	1,090	104	117	117	105	117	118

* Net recurrent institutional expenditure per full-time equivalent pupil.
† Financial year average.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for the United Kingdom the amount spent by central Government on each level of education each year since 1970 as a percentage of *(a)* central Government expenditure and *(b)* gross domestic product, to two places of decimals.

Mr. Chris Patten: Available information (for selected years) is shown in the following table. Additional information could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Direct expenditure (current and capital) by central Government on education by level, as a percentage of (a) total central Government expenditure, and (b) gross domestic product—United Kingdom*
Level of Education

Financial year	(a) As a percentage of total central Government expenditure				(b) As percentage of gross domestic product			
	Nursey and Primary	Secondary	Further and Adult, Teacher Training, Universities	Other†	Nursery and Primary	Secondary	Further and Adult, Teacher Training, Universities	Other†
1970-71	0·07	0·11	1·91	0·20	0·02	0·04	0·66	0·07
1975-76	0·11	0·17	1·65	0·17	0·05	0·07	0·69	0·07
1979-80	0·09	0·14	1·41	0·15	0·04	0·05	0·53	0·06
1980-81	0·10	0·14	1·45	0·19	0·04	0·06	0·58	0·07
1981-82	0·10	0·14	1·38	0·16	0·04	0·06	0·55	0·07
1982-83	0·09	0·12	1·35	0·15	0·04	0·05	0·56	0·06
1983-84	0·08	0·14	1·39	0·15	0·03	0·06	0·58	0·06

* Excluding central Government contributions to rate support grant.
† Includes special education, and various categories of other "Education" expenditure and "Related" expenditure, for example administration, youth service, physical training, maintenance grants and allowances.

School Examinations

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will give the percentage of passes in GCE O-level and CSE examinations, indicating the subjects and gradings as appropriate.

Mr. Dunn: Information in respect of the GCE and CSE attainments of leavers from English schools is shown in the following table:

School leavers in England, 1984-85
GCE ordinary level and CSE best graded results for selected subjects*
Percentage of leavers

	Best results		
	Higher† grades	Other‡ grades	Total
Total leavers (000's)	—	—	736·2
Any subject (000's)	401·7	262·9	664·6
Any subject	55	36	90
English	40	44	84
Mathematics	31	44	75
Physics	16	18	33
Chemistry	14	13	27
Biological sciences	16	24	40
Craft, design, technology and other science	11	25	36
French	15	18	33
History	14	19	33
Geography	17	23	40
Creative arts	14	18	32
Commercial and domestic studies	10	22	32

* Excluding O-level passes awarded on A-level papers.
† O-level grades A-C, CSE grade 1.
‡ O-level grades D, E. CSE grades 2-5.
Source: School Leavers Sample Survey. Data on examinations subject to sampling error.

Due to rounding the two constituent parts may not always add to the total.

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many children in Lancashire have taken the GCE O-level and CSE examination in the last five years, indicating the subjects taken.

Mr. Dunn: The information requested is shown in the following table:

Leavers from maintained schools in Lancashire

(Thousands)

	Academic year				
	1980-81	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84	1984-85
Total leavers	21·16	21·37	22·52	21·00	20·71
Number attempting O-level or CSE in					
Any subject	18·55	18·94	20·22	19·09	18·98
English	17·60	18·21	19·12	18·03	17·81
Mathematics	16·14	16·92	17·76	16·63	16·14
Physics	6·76	7·33	7·66	7·25	7·63
Chemistry	5·06	5·53	5·86	5·82	6·15
Biology	8·31	8·29	9·35	8·67	8·91
Craft, design, technology and other science	7·25	7·98	8·06	7·62	7·40
French	5·42	5·58	6·40	5·67	6·01
History	6·79	6·96	7·95	6·56	6·91
Geography	8·25	8·79	9·38	8·31	8·41
Creative arts	6·58	6·69	6·76	6·55	6·59
Commercial and domestic studies	7·26	6·17	7·36	7·01	7·35

Source: School Leavers Sample Survey.
Examinations data are subject to sampling error.

Religious Education

Mr. Galley asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps he is taking to ensure that schools implement the provisions of section 25 of the Education Act 1944 relating to religious education.

Mr. Chris Patten: We have already made it clear in the White Paper "Better Schools" (Cmnd. 9469) that we look to local education authorities and to the schools to ensure that the statutory requirements for religious education and collective worship are met. My right hon. Friend also carefully considers any complaints he receives in respect of particular schools that these requirements are not being fulfilled.

Universities (Funding)

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received from the Association of University Teachers about the funding of universities in 1986-87.

Mr. Walden: My right hon. Friend has received two letters from the Association of Universities Teachers about the funding of universities and the pay of academic staff. He hopes to meet representives of the association shortly. I spoke at a meeting of the association's council on 16 May and met members of the association Executiver on 12 June; on both occasions I took note of their concerns about funding and pay.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science, further to the answer to the hon. Member for Edinburgh West, of 17 June, *Official Report*, column *513*, what criteria were used by the University Grants Committee to determine the change to a common funding basis as the single important factor in determining the size of the allocations to universities.

Mr. Walden: I understand that the University Grants Committee did not decide in advance that its adoption of a common funding basis for students in each subject group should be the most important factor influencing changes in the grant allocation to individual universities. That was an outcome of the committee's new resource allocation arrangements, not a predetermined intent.

General Certificate of Secondary Education

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he is satisfied with the progress being made in introducing the syllabi for the GCSE; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: The Secondary Examinations Council has approved 281 GCSE syllabuses, which virtually completes the programme for the approval of syllabuses. The examining groups have already circulated most of the approved versions and they will distribute the remainder as soon as possible.

The draft GCSE syllabuses, in schools since autumn 1985, and the GCSE national criteria, in schools for over a year, should have enabled teachers to make proper preparations for their new courses.

School Leavers (Arithmetical Achievements)

Mr. Lilley asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has any information on the proportion of British school leavers able to perform simple arithmetic sums and on the corresponding proportion of German school-leavers able to perform similar sums.

Mr. Chris Patten: My right hon. Friend is aware of a number of studies which bear on the relative mathematical attainment of pupils in England and West Germany. While there are considerable technical difficulties in making such comparisons, it appears that pupils of average and lower ability in England do less well in routine mathematical tasks than their West German counterparts. The Government are concerned to improve standards of achievement in mathematics for pupils of all abilities. To this end they are supporting a number of measures designed to improve the teaching of mathematics in schools and the appropriateness of that teaching to the needs of pupils and their future employers.

Goods and Services

Mr. Forman asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the latest estimate of the total value of purchases of goods and services made by public education institutions; and what proportions of the total was supplied by the private sector.

Mr. Dunn: The information is not available.

Assisted Places Scheme

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many pupils from each local education authority area have received places on the assisted places scheme in each year since its inception.

Mr. Dunn: Information on the home address of assisted pupils is not collected centrally.

Free Speech

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received from the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals on his proposals to seek to amend the Education Bill *[Lords]* with respect to free speech in institutes of higher education; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Walden: The chairman of the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals wrote to my right hon. Friend on 30 May about the Government's intention to introduce an amendment on free speech to the Education Bill. My right hon. Friend invited the CVCP and other bodies representing higher education institutions to a meeting on 5 June to discuss this. Consultations with these bodies on the possible form of the amendment to be introduced in this House are continuing at official level.

Higher Education

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received from universities and university staff, and in particular those at Salford university, regarding Government policy on higher education and education cuts since 1981; what is his assessment of the ability of universities to recruit and retain staff; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Walden: My right hon. Friend and his predecessor have received several hundred representations from

universities and their staff, including those at Salford university. The Government have acknowledged that present salary levels for academic staff are not always attractive to staff in subjects such as engineering and science where skills are in strong demand elsewhere. Our willingness to consider making extra funds available will depend on the readiness of the universities and university lecturers to agree a new pay structure which provides greater flexibility and helps the recruitment and retention of staff of appropriate quality.

EC Students

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement about payment of fees by students from other European Community countries.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: From 1 September 1986 students who are nationals of other European Community countries and are studying in the United Kingdom on courses designated for mandatory award purposes in England and Wales or which are covered by equivalent awards arrangements in Scotland will have their fees paid by the Government if they satisfy the same or equivalent conditions for eligibility for such assistance as are applied to United Kingdom students. The United Kingdom has an obligation as a member of the Community not to discriminate against nationals of other Community states in access to vocational training. The European Commission has recently taken this matter up with the Government, and we have concluded that it would be right to make this change in the light of its concern.

This will affect some 3,500 students from other EC countries studying here, roughly the same as the number of United Kingdom students studying in those countries. The latter are not generally charged tuition fees by their host countries.

The relevant educational interests are being consulted about the necessary administrative arrangements. Details will be sent to authorities and institutions as soon as the arrangements have been agreed.

EMPLOYMENT

Labour Statistics

Mr. Thurnham asked the Paymaster General how many new jobs have been created in the Bolton area during the last three years for which figures are available.

Mr. Lang: Information about jobs created and jobs lost is not available from the Departments statistics. Net changes in employment can be given but, for areas smaller than regions, only for those dates when censuses of employment are taken.

The latest available information is from June 1978 and the September 1981 census of employment. In that period the number of employees employed in the area covered by the Bolton jobcentre area fell by just over 8,000.

More up-to-date figures for local areas will become available following publication of the 1984 census of employment later this year. Between censuses, employment estimates are based on small scale sample enquiries which do not provide reliable results for areas smaller than regions.

Mr. Pike asked the Paymaster General how many people were employed in 1979, 1983 and the latest date for which figures are available *(a)* in the north-west region, *(b)* in Burnley, *(c)* in Pendle and *(d)* in Hyndburn.

Mr. Lang: The table gives the available information for the north-west region and for the local authority districts of Burnley, Pendle and Hyndburn. For areas smaller than regions, figures can be provided only for those dates when censuses of employment are taken. The table therefore includes the available information from the 1978 and 1981 censuses of employment. More up-to-date figures for local areas will become available following publication of the 1984 census of employment later this year.

	Employees in employment (thousands)			
	North West Region	*Burnley*	*Pendle*	*Hyndburn*
June 1978	2,651·0	45·0	33·0	28·0
September 1979	2,678·0	†	†	†
September 1981	2,454·0	40·0	28·0	25·0
September 1983	2,360·0	†	†	†
December 1985*	2,409·0	†	†	†

* Latest available.
† Not available.

Labour Force Survey (Qualifications)

Mr. Wainwright asked the Paymaster General what the preliminary results of the 1985 labour force survey reveal about the percentage of the work force with no recognised qualification; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: Preliminary labour force survey results for the spring of 1985 estimate that 35 per cent. of economically active persons of working age in Great Britain have no qualifications.

Working Week (Reduction)

Mr. John Fraser asked the Paymaster General what consideration has been given by his Department to the reductions in the working week as a method of dealing with unemployment.

Mr. Lang: Changes in the working week are best arranged between employers and employees. Imposed cuts in hours of work would increase unit labour costs unless there were compensating increases in productivity or decreases in workers' wages.

Restart Programme

Mr. Prescott asked the Paymaster General (1) what liaison exists or is planned under the restart programme between jobcentres and the unemployment benefit service's fraud managers and investigators;

(2) how many claimants interviewed under the restart programme have been referred to benefit authorities as a result of their interviews;

(3) what role is undertaken by the unemployment review officers in the restart programme; and what instructions are given to staff in jobcentres and unemployment benefit offices to report non-attendance by interviewees or refusal of an offer under the restart programme.

Mr. Lang: Counselling interviews under the restart programme are intended to provide positive help and encouragement for long-term unemployed people in trying to re-enter the job market: they are not designed to detect benefit fraud and there are no arrangements for direct liaison between restart counsellors and fraud investigators. However, all jobcentre staff (including those on restart) are under standing instructions that, where they suspect a person may be claiming benefit fraudulently, they should report the matter to the nearest unemployment benefit office. The case will then, if appropriate, be forwarded by benefit office staff to a fraud officer.

Jobcentre staff are instructed that if a person does not attend an interview under the restart programme they are to issue another invitation offering an appointment at a date and time which is within two weeks of the first appointment. If the second appointment is not kept, the fact is reported to the benefit authorities, usually the local DHSS office, which will withdraw supplementary allowance (if in payment) and notify the claimant of the decision and their right of appeal. The DHSS will then notify the relevant unemployment benefit office, which will suspend any unemployment benefit which may be in payment and seek an explanation from the claimant of his or her non-attendance. On the basis of this, a decision will be made either to allow the claim or seek a formal decision from an independent adjudication officer.

If a specific job opportunity is refused at the interview, jobcentre staff follow the normal instructions which apply in jobcentres. These are that staff are expected to report to the unemployment benefit service cases that come to their notice where jobseekers act in a way apparently intended to avoid deliberately the chance of a suitable job or training. Where the claimant is in receipt of unemployment benefit and/or National Insurance credits, the benefit office will suspend payment and ask the claimant to give his or her reasons for refusing employment before the case is referred to an adjudication officer. Where supplementary allowance is in payment, the Department of Health and Social Security will consider continued payment of benefit in the light of the adjudication officer's decision.

Out of 26,374 people who had been interviewed under the restart programme by 20 June, a total of 908 people

had been referred to benefit authorities as a result of their interview or as a result of their response to the invitation to an interview.

Unemployment review officers in DHSS are continuing to help people who have not yet come into the scope of restart, for example by advising them on benefit in and out of work, and helping them to find opportunities for work or training. They will also help people who are asked to see them as a result of the restart interview, if it seems that this would be useful in their individual circumstances.

Community Programme

Mr. Prescott asked the Paymaster General what are the numbers of community programme entrants in the 12 months to October 1985, December 1985, February 1985 and April 1986.

Mr. Lang: The numbers of community programme entrants in the 12 months to October 1985, December 1985, February 1985 and April 1986 are as follows:

	Numbers
October 1985	196,551
December 1985	208,738
February 1985	159,031
April 1986	254,012

Special Employment Measures

Mr. Prescott asked the Paymaster General what estimates there are of the expenditure on all special employment measures including YTS for each year since 1980, for each local authority area in England, Wales and Scotland.

Mr. Lang: No estimates are available of expenditure on the measures by local authority area.

Pension Age (Equalisation)

Mr. Martin asked the Paymaster General what is the current practice of each nationalised industry as to the general retirement ages of *(a)* men and *(b)* women, respectively; and if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's plans, and the time scale, for equalisation.

Mr. Lang: The Government do not collect information about the practice of nationalised industries regarding retirement ages for employees: this is a matter for the individual industries. The Government have tabled amendments to the Sex Discrimination Bill currently before Parliament to give women the right to work to the same age as their male colleagues. We intend this to come into operation 12 months after the Bill receives Royal Assent.

Small Firms

Mr. MacKenzie asked the Paymaster General (1) how many small firms, by Bolton committee definition, went out of business in each region of the United Kingdom during the course of the last 12 months;

(2) how many small firms, by Bolton committee definition, presently exist in each region of the United Kingdom;

(3) how many small firms, by Bolton committee definition, were set up in each region of the United Kingdom during the course of the last 12 months to the latest convenient date.

Mr. Trippier: I regret that the information requested is not available.

Mr. MacKenzie asked the Paymaster General if he will publish in the *Official Report* the full list of Government schemes which exist to assist small firms; when each scheme started; and when it is due to finish.

Mr. Trippier: Following are those national schemes currently in existence which were specifically introduced to be of direct benefit to small firms. There are many other measures which small firms can usefully take advantage of including some that are specific to particular areas of the United Kingdom.

Information and advice on any Government scheme is readily available through a wide range of advisory bodies including the Government's small firms service and the local enterprise agency network.

Loan Guarantee Scheme

Under this scheme, introduced in 1981, over 16,630 guarantees have been issued in respect of over £540 million in bank loans. The scheme has proved to have a considerable job creation potential both in numbers and cost effectiveness. The life of the scheme was extended in the 1986 budget for three years and the premium rate halved to 2·5 per cent. to make it more popular. Appraisal and monitoring requirements have been introduced and better financial management encouraged to improve the survival rate of scheme borrowers.

Business Expansion Scheme

This scheme was introduced in April 1983 to enlarge and improve upon the business start up scheme (introduced in 1981). In this year's Budget, BES was extended indefinitely and the scheme's coverage was also changed to aim it better at genuine risk investment.

Training for Enterprise

The Manpower Services Commission first introduced this on-going scheme in 1977. It has subsequently been expanded considerably and the number of people expected to benefit in 1986-87 is over 46,000 compared with 32 in 1977.

Enterprise Allowance Scheme

The Manpower Services Commission first introduced this scheme in 1982. It has since been expanded to provide 65,000 places in 1985-86 and 86,000 places in 1986-87. The 13 week qualifying period of unemployment has been reduced to eight weeks whilst greater emphasis is now being given to counselling and training for applicants.

Business and Technical Advisory Services

The Department of Trade and Industry launched this package of schemes in April 1985. This is an on-going programme aimed at providing subsidised consultancy to small and medium-sized firms.

Small Firms Merit Award for Research and Technology (SMART)

SMART was announced in April this year. This competitive scheme is being introduced on a one year trial basis in the areas of biotechnology and instrumentation and aims to encourage small firms and potential entrepreneurs to bring forward highly innovative ideas that cannot attract existing sources of funding.

Retail Prices Index

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Paymaster General if he will list the components of the retail prices index; what criteria are used to determine which items should be included; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: The retail prices index covers practically the whole range of goods and services which consumers buy. Separate indices for over a hundred components are published each month in Tables 6.2 and 6.4 of *Employment Gazette*, a copy of which is available in the Library. I understand that the structure of the index is one of the matters addressed in the report of the Retail Prices Index Advisory Committee which was submitted today to my right hon. and noble Friend and which will be published shortly. The Government will make a statement when the report's recommendations have been fully considered.

Retail Prices Index Advisory Committee

Mr. Chapman asked the Paymaster General whether the Retail Prices Index Advisory Committee has submitted its report.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The Committee's report has been submitted to my right hon. and noble Friend today. It makes a number of recommendations for improving the way in which the retail prices index is constructed and presented. It will be published as soon as possible. The Government's decision on the recommendations will be announced in due course.

SCOTLAND

Universities of Glasgow and Strathclyde

45. **Mr. MacKenzie** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he or the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State propose to visit the universities of Glasgow or Strathclyde.

Mr. Rifkind: Neither my hon. Friend nor I have plans to visit either university in the near future.

Industry (Employment)

Mr. MacKenzie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) how many people were employed in the steel making industry in Scotland in 1979; and what is the latest comparable figure;

(2) how many people were employed in the shipbuilding and ship repair industry in Scotland in 1979; and what is the latest available figure;

(3) how many people were employed in the electrical appliance industry in Scotland in 1979; and what is the latest comparable figure;

(4) how many people were employed in the production of Scotch whisky in 1979; and what is the latest comparable figure;

(5) how many people were employed in the textile industry in Scotland in 1979; and what is the latest comparable figure.

Mr. Rifkind: The estimated employment in these industries is set out in the table:

	1980 Standard Industrial Classification Activity Headings	*Estimated employment*	
		1979	*1983*
Iron and steel manufacturing	2210, 2220, 2234, 2235	22,700	11,200
Shipbuilding and repairing	3610	30,600	24,800
Domestic type electrical appliance industry	3460	4,100	2,100
Spirit distilling and compounding	4240	23,400	16,600
Textile industry	4310-4399	50,100	31,000

Source: Annual Census of Production

Coal Mining Industry

Mr. MacKenzie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people were employed in the coal mining industry in Scotland in 1979; and what is the latest available figure.

Mr. Rifkind: The National Coal Board estimates that its number of employees in March 1979 was 25,000 and in March 1986 was 10,000. Estimates for other employers in coal mining are not available for these dates.

In patients (Post-operative Infection)

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the rate of in patient post-operative infection in *(a)* Scotland and *(b)* Northern Ireland in the latest year for which figures are available; and what information is available on comparable figures in other European countries.

Mr. John MacKay: None of the information sought is held centrally in Scotland.

Albyn House Association

Mr. Bruce asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received about the end of Scottish Office funding for Albyn House Association as of September in the current year; and which organisations have submitted objections.

Mr. John MacKay: My right hon. and learned Friend has received representations commending the work of the Albyn House Association and urging the Government to extend the financial support which they undertook to provide for three years to September 1986. These have come from hon. Members, from private individuals and from the following organisations:

Banff and Buchan District Council
Cunninghame District Council
Gordon District Council
Stirling District Council
Aberdeen Crime Prevention Panel
Aberdeen Youth Information Centre
Action on Alcohol Abuse
Albyn House Association Ltd
Alcohol Concern
Association of Directors of Social Work
Dundee Liaison Committee on Homelessness
Glasgow Council of Alcohol
Grampian Drugs Advisory Committee
Grampian Health Board
Intermediate Treatment Resources Centre
Law Society of Scotland
Scottish Council for the Single Homeless
Scottish Police Federation (Grampian Branch)
Out of Court
University of Glasgow (Department of Social Administration and Social Work)

Job Vacancies

Mr. MacKenzie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many job vacancies were notified in May 1979; and what is the latest comparable figure.

Mr. Rifkind: Information on job vacancies is available in the House of Commons Library. Figures are not comparable between the two years because of changes in the basis of statistical compilation. The number of vacancies notified to jobcentres is estimated to be only one-third of existing vacancies overall.

Labour Statistics

Mr. MacKenzie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people were unemployed in Scotland in 1979; and how this figure compares with the latest figures on a comparable basis.

Mr. Rifkind: A consistent set of unemployment figures since 1979 is available only from the seasonally adjusted series. On this basis, in May 1986 there were 339,600 unemployed people in Scotland compared to 150,400 in May 1979.

Mr. MacKenzie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many young people aged 16 to 18 years were registered as unemployed at May 1979; and what is the latest comparable figure.

Mr. Rifkind: Information on unemployment by age category is available in the House of Commons Library on a quarterly basis. A comparison between the latest and the May 1979 figures is not, however, possible because of changes in the intervening years in the way the statistics have been compiled.

Job Creation

Mr. MacKenzie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make an estimate of jobs created in Scotland as a direct or indirect result of work done in the North sea oil and gasfields.

Mr. Rifkind: It is estimated that at end-1985 between 89,000 and 104,000 jobs in Scotland were due directly or indirectly to North sea oil and gas activity.

Small Firms

Mr. MacKenzie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many small firms were given financial assistance by the Highlands and Islands Development Board in the course of the last 12 months to the latest convenient date; and how much money was involved.

Mr. Rifkind: The bulk of the board's economic assistance is given to firms with 100 employees or fewer. Information on the number of such firms assisted is not available, but in the financial year 1985-86 a total of 1,597 applications for assistance were approved. Some of these approvals would not result in assistance being paid in 1985-86 and others would be withdrawn for various reasons. A total of £18 million was paid in 1985-86 by way of grants, loans and purchase of equity.

Expenditure Statistics

Mr. MacKenzie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for the last year for which figures are available the sums spent on *(a)* roads and road improvement, *(b)* sewerage, *(c)* new houses, housing repairs, *(d)* house modernisation, *(e)* educational building and *(f)* new work on harbours and repairs, in Scotland.

Mr. Rifkind: The estimated figures for 1985-86 for public expenditure within the Scotland programme are as follow:

	£ million*
Road and road improvements	429
Sewerage	103
New houses	131
House improvements†	421
Educational Building	64
New work on harbours and repairs	7

* The figures represent estimated outturn of capital and, where appropriate, current expenditure from the Scotland programme by central government, local authorities and other public bodies. The figures do not include expenditure within Scotland on these services in other departments' programmes.

† Figures are not available for expenditure on housing repairs and modernisation separately. The figure in the table for "house improvements" comprises gross capital expenditure on all types of improvement work.

Mental Health (Scotland) Act 1984

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what progress is being made with the preparation of the code of practice to be issued under the Mental Health (Scotland) Act 1984; if he plans any change in the present position relating to guardianship; and what arrangements will be made for interested bodies to comment on a draft of the code.

Mr. John MacKay: Consideration is being given to the preparation of a Code of Practice for the guidance of medical practitioners and others on the detention and discharge of patients under the Mental Health (Scotland) Act 1984, and the medical treatment of such patients. the Scottish Division of the Royal College of Psychiatrists recently expressed the view that the Scottish code should be acceptable to all those working in the psychiatric field, and it is our intention to consult interested bodies on the provisions of the code, as indeed the 1984 Act requires. My right hon. and learned Friend has no plans to make any changes in the provisions of the 1984 Act relating to guardianship.

Education (Planning)

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what recent representations he has received concerning the future of planning schools in Scotland and of planning education in Edinburgh; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Allan Stewart: By the end of June representations about proposals from a working party which has reviewed planing education throughout the United Kingdom had been received from 20 right hon. and hon. Members, 23 organisations and over 60 individuals. My right hon. and learned Friend is considering the views which have been expressed, and decisions will be taken in due course.

Employment Structure (Stirling)

Mr. Michael Forsyth asked the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to the answer of 24 June, *Official Report*, column *91*, concerning the structure of

employment in Stirling, if he will publish in the *Official Report* the data used as surrogates for employment structure and the conclusions of the qualitative analysis.

Mr. John MacKay: Detailed information is not available in a form suitable for publication. My right hon. and noble Friend the Minister of State will be writing shortly to my hon. Friend about the comparative assessment which was carried out. I shall arrange for a copy of the reply to be placed in the Library of the House.

Edinburgh District Council (Rate Reduction)

Mr. Corrie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what action he proposes to take in relation to the proposal by Edinburgh district council to reduce its rate by 2p.

Mr. Rifkind: I have today written to Edinburgh district council agreeing to their proposal to reduce their rate for 1986-87 by 2p to 14·7p and make corresponding reductions in their budget. I am glad that Edinburgh district council has revised their expenditure plans which were in my view excessive and unreasonable and I am sure that ratepayers will be grateful for the reduction in their rate bills.

TRANSPORT

Humber Bridge (Debt)

Mr. Roy Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Transport if the proposed discussions with the Humber bridge authorities concerning the level of debt on the bridge have taken place; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: A helpful and constructive meeting at official level was held on 30 June. Further discussions on the financial position of the Humber bridge are planned for next month.

Motor Vehicles (Records)

Mr. Garrett asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will introduce legislation to provide for records to be kept of all motor vehicles destroyed for scrap.

Mr. Michael Spicer: There is already a statutory requirement to notify the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Centre when a vehicle is scrapped. The vehicle's record is then adjusted accordingly.

M63 (Road Works)

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the alternative routes provided to avoid the M63 widening road works; and what arrangements have been made for the control of traffic on that section of the M63.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: A number of alternative routes for both local and long distance traffic are signposted and given extensive publicity by the media. An explanatory leaflet is available to motorists. The police operate a closed circuit television surveillance system and electronic variable message signs to monitor and control traffic on the approach roads to the works.

Motorway Services

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Transport what minimum 24 hours a day facilities motorway service stations are expected to provide on each carriageway direction.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: All motorway service areas are required to provide at least the following basic facilities 24 hours a day:

(1) cold food, together with hot and cold drinks;
(2) petrol, diesel, oil and air supplies;
(3) free parking for up to two hours;
(4) free toilets and wash basins;
(5) coin-operated telephones.

Double-sided sites with a bridge or subway between the two halves may reduce the provision of services during the night when demand is low. In such cases, refreshments, toilets and telephones may be provided on only one side of the motorway.

Three motorway service areas in north Lancashire and Cumbria on the M6 are designed to serve traffic on one side only of the motorway.

Gatwick-Heathrow Helicopter Link

Mr. Robert Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many individuals raised objections to the Gatwick-Heathrow helicopter airlink; and how many people live in the flight path of this route.

Mr. Moore: The Civil Aviation Authority received 2,225 objections to British Caledonian's application for a licence to continue the helicopter service, of which 949 were within the statutory period allowed for objections. My Department also received over 8,000 representations against the service, including about 7,000 names in the form of a petition.

The local authorities estimated about 35,000 people were affected by the route which the helicopter operated and that some 112,500 people would be affected by the new routes on which British Caledonian proposed to fly.

About 40,000 people living in the former GLC area should be added to these estimates. Although the CAA had some reservations about the methodology of the estimates, the authority considered they gave an indication of the numbers who might be affected by the helicopter service.

Government Freight Agency

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will publish the name of the Government freight agency; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moore: The position of Government freight agent is held by the company Hogg Robinson (GFA) Ltd.

Goods and Services

Mr. Forman asked the Secretary of State for Transport what is the latest estimate of the total value of purchases of goods and services made by public transport utilities; and what proportion of the total was supplied by the private sector.

Mr. Moore: This information is not held by my Department, and could not readily be obtained except at disproportionate cost.

Merchant Navy

Sir David Price asked the Secretary of State for Transport what was the size of the British registered merchant navy in 1979, measured by numbers of ships and by deadweight tonnage; and what are the equivalent figures for 1986.

Mr. Moore: At end April 1986, the latest period for which figures are available, the United Kingdom registered merchant fleet of vessels of 500 gross tons and over consisted of 656 ships with a total of 16·5 million deadweight tons. This compares with 1,382 ships of 43·8 million deadweight tons at end April 1979. These figures exclude Government-owned vessels, offshore supply vessels, tugs, fishing vessels and other non-trading vessels.

LRT (Rail Journeys)

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the answer of 23 June, *Official Report*, column 9, what proportion of the 37 per cent. increase in rail passenger journeys on London Regional Transport since 1981 is estimated to have been taken by holders of travelcards, holders of season tickets and cash tickets, respectively.

Mr. David Mitchell: Information of this kind is a matter for London Regional Transport. I suggest the hon. Member writes to the chairman.

EC (Vehicle Roadworthiness)

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Transport what progress has been made in the proposal by the EEC Commission to require a uniform roadworthiness test for private cars; and what would be the consequences of such a directive for British car owners.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The EEC Commission's proposal to amend directive 77/143, which was forwarded to the Council of the European Communities on 2 May 1986, has yet to be discussed by member states.

The effect of the proposal, as presently framed, would be an increase in the scope and, consequently, the cost of the current MOT test.

East London River Crossing

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the organisations and individuals who have made representations to him in support of a third Thames crossing at Dartford and the removal of tolls, as an alternative to the construction of the proposed east London river crossing.

Mr. Moore [*pursuant to his reply*, 30 June 1986]: Our records show that we have received 357 in respect of the east London river crossing making representations that a third crossing at Dartford, or the removal of tolls, or both, would be an alternative. In view of the length of the list, I am arranging for it to be sent to the hon. Member.

British Nuclear Fuels plc (Plutonium)

Mr. Hoyle asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether British Nuclear Fuels plc has decided to discontinue flights from Liverpool; which further airport will be used for the transport of plutonium to Dounreay; and if he will introduce legislation to provide that such use of an airport be subject to the approval of the local authority.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I am not aware of any such decision. The choice of airports for any future consignments would reflect convenience and suitability. I see no need for the legislative provision suggested.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Community Care

15. **Mrs. Clwyd** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what progress has been made in developing arrangements for the transfer of funds from health authorities to local authorities for community care initiatives in line with the recommendations of the Social Services Committee report on community care.

Mr. Hayhoe: The flexible financial arrangements already in place under the care in the community initiative enable health authorities to transfer funds to local authorities and voluntary organisations for as long as necessary to enable long-stay hospital patients to move into community care. Most regional health authorities have established funding mechanisms including bridging finance to promote the development of community care. I am keeping these arrangements under review, in consultation with regional health authorities.

Mr. Terry Lewis asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what plans he has for monitoring the effectiveness of the care in the community policy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: The Government are committed to helping vulnerable people to live as independently as possible. The care in the community initiative is a means to this end. Implementation is the responsibility of the health and local authorities working together. Progress in developing care in the community is considered at annual accountability reviews of regional and district health authorities.

Pensioners (Residential Homes)

16. **Mr. Wigley** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received on his Department's consultative paper on his payment of pensions to pensioners at local authority residential homes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Major: My right hon. Friend has recieved representations from seven organisations, including the Social Security Advisory Committee, the Association of Metropolitan Authorities, the Association of County Councils, the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, the Associations of Directors of Social Work and of Services, and the Social Care Association. Their comments are being considered.

Board and Lodging

17. **Mr. Haynes** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to publish new limits for payments for board and lodging.

Mr. Newton: I refer the hon. Member to my statement on 18 June at column 1056.

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) which of his Department's local offices attending seminars on board and lodging in the autumn of 1985 had no commercial establishments in their area known to be within the board and lodging limits;

(2) which of his Department's local offices attending seminars in the autumn of 1985 on board and lodging reported that they were not aware of any landlords in their area who had reduced their charges.

Mr. Newton: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services from which 26 local offices the social security policy inspectorate drew its sample of ordinary board and lodging when examining the effects of the board and lodging regulations.

Mr. Newton: The following local offices were visited by the social security policy inspectorate during the course of the ordinary board inquiry:

Aberdeen (North), Aberdeen (South), Anglesey, Barrow-in-Furness, Birmingham (Ravenhurst), Birmingham (Sparkhill), Bristol (West), Buxton, Cheltenham, Chesterfield, Coventry (East), Crystal Palace, Dumfries, Gravesend, High Wycombe, Hull (East), Irvine, Leeds (North), Leeds (South), Manchester (Failsworth), Manchester (Openshaw), Nuneaton, Port Talbot, Romford, Shrewsbury, Weymouth.

20. **Mr. Chope** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will seek to introduce a voucher system for the direct payment of supplementary benefit for board and lodging accommodation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: Vouchers or other means of direct payment to landlords are already used in certain cases where the claimant has proved himself unable to manage his own money or, at the start of a claim, where it is necessary to secure the accommodation. We have no present plans to extend these provisions.

Battery-powered Wheelchairs

18. **Mr. Flannery** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what further representations he has received concerning provision of battery-powered wheelchairs in the aftermath of the McColl report.

Mr. Newton: A number of organisations have written in support of the working party's recommendations for wider provision of powered wheelchairs. There has been very little support for the working party's suggestion that such an improvement might be financed by abating increases in mobility allowance.

Maternity Units (Rural Areas)

19. **Mr. Latham** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what further guidance he intends to give to district health authorities about the role of maternity units in small hospitals in rural areas.

Mr. Whitney: We have no plans to issue further advice on the organisation of maternity services.

Social Security Bill

21. **Mr. Gerald Howarth** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received concerning the effect of the Social Security Bill on disabled people.

Mr. Newton: We have received a considerable number of such representations, to which we are giving continued consideration, having regard also to proceedings on the Bill in another place, where my noble Friend Lady Trumpington stated the Government's intention to take further steps to protect severely disabled people receiving extensive help from the present domestic assistance addition and to undertake further discussion with bodies representing disabled people on new arrangements for helping with similar needs after 1988.

35. **Mr. Baldry** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what review machinery he intends to establish to monitor the workings of the provisions of the Social Services Bill after enactment.

Mr. Newton: We will decide on the best arrangements to ensure effective monitoring of the workings of the proposed new arrangements when our detailed plans for their implementation are further advanced.

Poverty

22. **Mr. Tony Lloyd** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has as to the definition of poverty used by the international organisations concerned with social questions of which the United Kingdom is a member.

Mr. Whitney: For the purposes of their action to combat poverty the Council of the European Community defined "the poor" as persons, families and groups of persons whose resources (material, cultural and social) are so limited as to exclude them from the minimum acceptable way of life in the member states in which they live.

London Ambulance Service

23. **Mr. Dubs** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received about the London Ambulance Service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: As the hon. Member will know, over the past few months I have received a number of representations from right hon. and hon. Members, and members of the public about the London ambulance service's non-emergency service. Since then, as my right hon. Friend the Minister for Health told the hon. Member for Vauxhall on 23 May at column *385* the situation continues to improve following the recent recruitment drive.

Non-United Kingdom European Community Citizens

24. **Mr. Patrick Thompson** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many non-United Kingdom European Community citizens have drawn social security benefits during a visit lasting less than six months in the period April to October 1985.

Mr. Major: I assume my hon. Friend is referring to claims for supplementary benefit, of which there were approximately 1,000 in the first seven months of 1985. More recent figures are not yet available and records are not kept of the period a claimant to benefit has spent in this country prior to making his claim.

Disabled People (Appliances and Equipment)

25. **Mr. Ashley** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what recent representations he has received regarding the McColl report on appliances and equipment for the disabled.

Mr. Newton: I invited interested bodies to comment on the recommendations in the McColl report by 30 April, and to date there have been about 50 responses.

Benefit Claimants (Availability for Work)

26. **Mr. Nicholls** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he is satisfied with the operation of section 5(1) *(a)* and *(b)* of the Supplementary Benefits Act 1976 concerning availability of benefit claimants for work; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Major: The term "available for employment" contained in section 5 of the Supplementary Benefits Act 1976 has the same meaning as for unemployment benefit purposes. It is the responsibility of Department of Employment to test the availability of unemployed claimants for both benefits when new claims are made. In addition, those drawing benefits sign a declaration regularly that they remain available for work. The present availability test has been the subject of criticism by the Public Accounts Committee and other evidence which casts doubt on its adequacy comes from the labour force survey. As a result, the Department of Employment in conjunction with the DHSS has reviewed the arrangements and a pilot exercise of a strengthened availability test started on 16 June in 12 unemployment benefit offices.

Cancer Treatment Services

27. **Mr. Teddy Taylor** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will initiate a study into cancer treatment services in the light of the consideration being given by the North-East Thames regional health authority to the centralisation of such services; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: An expert working group of the standing sub-committee on cancer of my Department's Standing Medical Advisory Committee has already considered the organisation of acute hospital services for the diagnosis and treatment of cancer. The main aim of the report was to offer practical guidance on the effective use of resources to achieve maximum benefit for cancer patients. It was distributed to all health authorities in October 1984 under cover of health notice HN(84)23, which asked them to bring the report to the attention of all staff concerned with the care of cancer patients and to consider its implications in the future planning and organisation of services for cancer. A copy is in the Library. Another expert working group of the standing sub-committee on cancer is preparing a report on primary care services for cancer patients.

Nurses (Pay and Conditions)

28. **Mr. Beith** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he will next be meeting representatives of the Royal College of Nursing to discuss the pay and conditions of nurses.

Mr. Hayhoe: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and I met the General Secretary of the Royal College of Nursing on 25 June 1986. No further meetings with the Royal College are planned at the moment, although my right hon. Friend and I are always ready to meet its representatives.

Chiropody Services

29. **Mr. Sims** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he is satisfied with the current level of chiropody services.

Mr. Hayhoe: While there are now about 20 per cent. more whole time equivalent chiropodists in the National Health Service than in 1979 and they are treating more patients and providing more treatments than ever before further progress is desirable and is being made.

Housing Benefit

30. **Mr. Raynsford** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will estimate *(a)* the number of recipients of housing benefit who will receive less benefit than would otherwise have been their entitlement as a result of the Government's decision to change the basis for uprating the needs allowance in July and *(b)* the saving which Her Majesty's Government will make in a full year as a result.

Mr. Major: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to him on 12 May at column *381*. I have also written to him about the detailed points he raised in the debate on the uprating orders on 11 June, at columns 361-65.

Unborn Children (Tests)

31. **Mrs. Roe** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will introduce legislation to prohibit the disclosure, other than to doctors, of information relating to the sex of an unborn child obtained as a result of clinical tests on pregnant women; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: I have no plans to do so.

Teaching Hospitals

32. **Mr. Kirkwood** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received about the effects on teaching hospitals of the present resources allocation formula.

Mr. Hayhoe: I have received a number of recent representations on the national resources allocation formula, some of which make reference to the position of teaching hospitals. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and I are shortly to meet a group of London hospital consultants to discuss their concerns on this matter. The current review of the RAWP formula is considering whether improvements can be made in the way in which the extra service costs associated with medical teaching are taken into account.

Wrightington Hospital, Lancashire (Children's Ward)

33. **Mr. Robert Atkins** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to be able to announce his decision on the proposed closure of the children's ward at Wrightington hospital, Lancashire.

Mr. Whitney: We are considering the regional health authority's proposals, in the light of the representations made by the recent deputation led by my hon. Friend.

Private Homes and Hospitals (Inspections)

36. **Mrs. Renée Short** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will take steps to collect information as to the number of inspectors of private homes and hostels for former patients of hospitals for the mentally ill and handicapped now living in the community.

Mr. Whitney: As the staff of registration authorities engaged on inspections duties are not necessarily confined to one kind of accommodation, it would not be practicable to collect information along the lines suggested.

Single Payments

37. **Mr. Barnett** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the current average length of time for a decision on an application for a single payment.

Mr. Major: I regret that this information is not available. However, claims for single payments are determined as soon as possible after all the information required has been collected, urgent claims being given priority.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many Department of Health and Social Security single payments were made in Lincolnshire in 1984 and 1985.

Mr. Major: Six local offices serve Lincolnshire but their boundaries are not conterminous with that of the county. The single payments they made during years ended early in April are shown in the following table:

Office	*1984-85*	**1985-86*
Boston	2,641	3,944
Grantham	2,753	4,536
Lincoln (Newland)	4,902	6,931
Lincoln (Orchard Street)	8,944	13,254
Skegness	1,155	1,619
Grimsby	11,375	14,871
Totals	31,770	45,155

*Provisional figures.

Mr. Victor Paige (Successor)

38. **Mr. Kennedy** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to name a successor to Mr. Victor Paige.

Mr. Fowler: An appointment will be made as soon as practicable. The work of the National Health Service Management Board is continuing under its acting chairman, Mr. Len Peach.

Students (Benefits)

39. **Mrs. Beckett** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he intends to publish his proposals for students' benefit entitlement.

Mr. Newton: The relevant regulations, together with the report of the Social Security Advisory Committee and the Government's response to that report, were laid before the House on 18 June.

Child Abuse

41. **Mrs. Virginia Bottomley** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what response he has received to the guidelines on the professional conduct of child abuse cases recently published by his Department.

Mr. Whitney: We are pleased to report that initial responses by organisations active in the child care field to the draft circular and guide to arrangements for inter-agency co-operation for the protection of children issued on 6 May have been favourable. Consultation ends on 30 September and the Department is already receiving written comments. We hope as many organisations as possible will respond.

Abortions

42. **Mr. Amess** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many abortions have been carried out under the National Health Service and privately in the United Kingdom in each of the last five years.

Mr. Hayhoe: The numbers of notifications of legal abortions carried out in National Health Service (NHS) premises and non-NHS premises under the Abortion Act 1967 in the United Kingdom for 1981-85 are shown in the table. The Abortion Act does not apply in Northern Ireland.

Numbers of notifications of legal abortions by type of premises, residents and non-residents, United Kingdom, 1981-85

Type of premises	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985**
National Health Service	70,087	70,719	71,074	73,815	74,153
Non-National Health Service†	101,400	100,751	99,546	105,285	106,830

* Provisional figures.
† These figures include operations carried out in the private sector on NHS patients.

Family Credit

34. **Mr. Cabom** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to be able to report on the consultation on family credit.

40. **Mr. McCrindle** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he is yet in a position to announce the result of his review of the method of payment of family credit.

Mr. Newton: I refer my hon. Friend and the hon. Member to my right hon. Friend's reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) and the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) earlier today.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Freeson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish the housing benefit returns for each of the past three years for the London boroughs of Brent, Barnet and Camden.

Mr. Major: On the basis of information provided by the London boroughs of Brent, Barnet and Camden in connection with their subsidy claims, it is estimated that the average number of recipients of rent rebate, rent allowance and rate rebates is:—

	1984-85	*1985-86*	*1986-87*
Brent			
Rent rebates	13,500	13,500	10,200
Rent allowances	8,000	8,100	9,700
Rate rebates	39,800	39,900	33,500
Barnet			
Rent rebates	12,300	12,000	11,500
Rent allowances	7,500	7,700	7,400
Rate rebates	30,700	30,400	29,200
Camden			
Rent rebates	17,800	17,800	17,800
Rent allowances	9,100	9,800	9,600
Rate rebates	29,500	30,400	30,000

Supplementary Benefit

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people were in receipt of supplementary benefit in *(a)* the north-west region and *(b)* Burnley in 1979 and each subsequent year.

Mr. Major: North-western region was formed in 1983 by the amalgamation of the former north-west (Manchester) and north-west (Merseyside) regions with parts of the former northern region. The table shows the number of people receiving supplementary benefit in *(a)* Burnley and *(b)* those offices which now form north-western region.

Figures given show the position at 6 May 1986, the latest available, and at comparable dates for each of the years since 1979.

	Burnley	*Region*
1979	10,239	454,955
1980	10,156	458,474
1981	11,984	534,489
1982	14,345	628,573
1983	15,351	672,937
1984	16,167	713,229
1985	17,062	745,329
1986	16,579	762,492

Source: 100 per cent. count of cases in action.

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what information he has about how long supplementary benefit boarders who are re-classified as non-householders are able to remain in the same accommodation whilst being paid as non-householders; and if he will make a statement;

(2) how many supplementary benefit claimants identified in the London south regional surveys as having ceased to claim supplementary benefit after having their benefit reassessed so that they were no longer classified as boarders had again claimed supplementary benefit within *(a)* one week of having been so reassessed, *(b)* three weeks of having been reassessed, *(c)* five weeks of having been reassessed and *(d)* eight weeks of having been so re-assessed;

(3) how many supplementary benefit boarders who were identified in *(a)* the survey conducted by his Department's London south region and *(b)* the survey conducted by his Department's Scotland region as having remained in the same accommodation after having been reassessed as a non-householder were still claiming as non-householders in that accommodation *(a)* one week after they began to be paid at the non-householder rate, *(b)* three weeks after they began to be paid at this rate and *(c)* six weeks after they began to be paid at this rate.

Mr. Newton: I regret that the information obtained from the London south and Scottish survey cannot be broken down in the way the hon. Member has requested. Both surveys looked at cases after the expiry of their time limits on payment as a boarder. The London south survey was conducted some eight to fourteen weeks after the April 1985 changes and the Scottish survey 15 to 19 weeks after. Parallel surveys held in three social security regions —Midlands, the South West, and London south—in the spring this year reached similar conclusions.

Child Benefit

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will state the total number of families receiving child benefit at the present time and in 1979, respectively.

Mr. Major On 4 June 1986, 6·85 million families were receiving child benefit. The comparable figure for 31 May 1979 was 7·23 million.

Claimant Statistics

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give details, on the same basis as his answer of 20 March, *Official Report*, column *287*, of the breakdown of social security claimants for 1979 and 1985, or at the latest date available, into the categories *(a)* pensioners aged 80 years and over, *(b)* pensioners aged 60 to 79 years, *(c)* sick and disabled, *(d)* one-parent families, *(e)* low-paid families, *(f)* unemployed families, *(g)* single people, *(h)* childless couples and (i) widows and others; and if he will show the total number of recipients in 1979 and 1985.

Mr. Major The following table gives national details of people in receipt of supplementary benefit in December 1979 and 1984 (the latest figures available) in the categories requested:—

(Thousands)

	**1979*	**1984*
Pensioners aged 80 years and over	384	476
Pensioners aged 60 to 79 years	1,339	1,200
Sick and Disabled	207	278
One parent families	322	518
Unemployed families	146	491
Single people	2,294	3,523
Childless couples	401	563
Widows	19	19
Others	32	189
Total Recipients	2,855	4,609

The number of low paid families in receipt of Family Income Supplement in December 1979 was 81,000 and in December 1984 203,000+.
*Annual Statistical Enquiry. The figures for 1984 are still provisional + 10 per cent. annual sample.

In-patients (Post-operative Infection)

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many of those in-patients who suffered from post-operative infection in each regional health authority area in 1983 died as a result of the infection.

Mr. Whitney: I am sorry I cannot give the hon. Member the information he seeks. It is not available from the sample information held centrally.

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what compensation was paid by each regional health authority area in those in-patients who had post-operative infection in 1983;

(2) how many in-patients in maternity units suffered from post-operative infection in each regional health authority area in 1983 and each subsequent year.

Mr. Whitney: I regret that this information is not recorded centrally.

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what is the major cause of post-operative infection;

(2) what steps he is taking to reduce the incidence of in-patient post-operative infection;

(3) if he will make a statement on the problem of in-patient post-operative infection.

Mr. Whitney: Information on hospital acquired infection (HAI) is contained in the public health laboratory service prevalance study (1981). A copy is in the Library. This indicates that the issue is a complex one. It is not possible to isolate major causes, nor is all HAI preventable. It is, however, for health authorities to ensure that adequate systems are in place for the monitoring and control of infection in hospitals, from whatever source that infection arises. We hope to issue fresh guidance on these issues later in the year.

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for Social Services why the south-western region had more cases of in-patient post-operative infection in 1983 than other regions.

Mr. Whitney: The Department is investigating the apparent higher incidence in the region and I will let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Social Services which hospital in each regional health authority area has the largest number of in-patient post-operative infections in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Whitney: I am sorry I cannot give the hon. Member the information he seeks. It is not available from the sample information held centrally.

Hospital Waiting Lists

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for the Social Services what information is collected centrally on waiting lists for medical operations.

Mr. Whitney: Information on in-patient waiting lists is collected by the Department twice a year, on 31 March and 30 September, by specialty and district health authority and annually on 31 December by specialty and hospital. A bound volume of the district waiting list returns is placed in the Library with copies of the national and regional summaries.

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for the Social Services if he will list the number of patients who have had to wait over three months for each kind of surgery for each year from 1979.

Mr. Whitney: I am sorry I cannot give the hon. Member the information he seeks. The information is not available centrally in the form requested except at disproportionate cost but estimated mean and median waiting times for all medical procedures are given in "Hospital In-Patient Enquiry" volumes, of which there are copies in the Library.

Single Payments

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for the Social Services what was the number of single payments and their value, by Department of Health and Social Security region, for 1981 and in each subsequent year to the latest convenient date.

Mr. Major: The information requested is as follows:

Column 1 *Region*	*Column 2* *Number of awards (Nearest 000s)*	*Column 3* *Amount (Nearest £0·1 million)*
1981		
Northern	75	3·3
Yorks and Humberside	91	3·9
East Mids and East Anglia	72	3·6
London North	58	3·6
London South	61	3·7
London West	45	2·9
South West	42	2·2
Wales	68	3·1
West Mids	77	3·9
North West Manchester	63	2·9
Merseyside	71	3·3
Scotland	113	9·0
National	834	45·4
1982		
National	1,596	88·3

Sources: 100 per cent. count.
Notes:
1. Columns may not total due to rounding.
2. During 1982 the regions were reorganised from 12 to 7 and comparable figures on a regional basis could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Region	1983		1984		1985		1986 (Provisional to 6 May 1986)	
	Number of awards (Nearest 000s)	Amount (Nearest £0·1 million)	Awards Number	Amount £	Awards Number	Amount £	Awards Number	Amount £
North Eastern	376	24·9	574	39·9	862	59·8	378	26·9
Midlands	293	20·4	452	31·3	656	45·3	306	21·4
London North	187	16·2	268	23·0	402	31·8	193	15·4
London South	166	12·5	206	17·8	303	25·0	165	13·3
Wales and South West	217	14·4	302	21·4	451	30·0	227	14·2
North West	310	20·3	501	34·0	691	49·0	313	21·9
Scotland	324	32·8	545	48·8	768	67·3	353	29·1
National	1,873	141·6	2,849	216·3	4,133	308·2	1,934	142·2

Source: 100-per cent. count—Management Information System.
Note: Columns may not total due to rounding.

Departmental Telephone Calls

Mr. Heddle asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what arrangements he proposes to make to ensure that members of the public who telephone his Department's office at 4-10 Regency street, London SW1, will in future receive a prompt and efficient response.

Mr. Major: Complaints have been made recently about the telephone service at the Regency street office. Management have investigated and found faults on the switchboard. British Telecom has undertaken the necessary repairs and a normal, satisfactory service has now been restored.

Joint Planning (Report)

Mr. Irving asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he will publish the report of the joint working group on joint planning on the second report from the Social Services Committee 1984-85 session.

Mr. Hayhoe: The report of the joint working group on joint planning was published on 28 November 1985 under the title "Progress in Partnership". The production of that report completed the task of the working group. It had the benefit of the Social Services Committee's report on community care in carrying out its work but it was not part of its task to comment on that report.

NHS (Land Sales)

Mr. Irving asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what land forming part of a mental-illness hospital has been sold to date; and if the proceeds of such sales have been dedicated to the benefit of mentally-ill people.

Mr. Whitney: I regret that separate information in respect of sales of land forming part of mental illness hospitals is not collected centrally. However, I can say that we expect resources received from the disposal of redundant mental hospitals to be used to develop better community based services for mentally ill and mentally handicapped persons of the districts previously served.

Community Psychiatric Nurses

Mr. Irving asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what actions have *(a)* regional health authorities and *(b)* the English National Board taken to meet the education and training requirements of community psychiatric nurses.

Mr. Hayhoe: There are a number of recent developments in community psychiatric nurse training. First, the English National Board's new (1982) syllabus for basic registered mental nurse training is being increasingly adopted and will be compulsory by 1987. This syllabus places considerably greater emphasis on community care than the old syllabus and should equip those RMNs who work in the community without additional post-basic training (as some do) to deliver care more effectively. Second, the English National Board has devised a post-basic curriculum, available to all health authorities, for community psychiatric nurses. To date, 10 institutions offer this nine-month course and 945 community psychiatric nurses have gained their qualifications since the courses were first set up in 1979. Third, the board has allocated £150,000 in the current financial year to develop the educational provision for community psychiatric and mental handicap nursing.

The role of regional (and district) health authorities is to determine, through the planning process, their future requirements for RMNs and CPNs and make appropriate training provision. Regional strategic plans suggest a considerable expansion of CPN training to meet planning targets for the mid 1990s.

Pharmaceutical Committee, Avon

Mr. Michael Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services on what basis the Avon local pharmaceutical committee, at a meeting on 21 March, appointed members to the proposed new committee to deal with dispensing contracts before the authority to do so conferred by the National Health Service (Amendment) Bill had been agreed to by Parliament; if he will issue guidance to local pharmaceutical committees to the effect that they should not take any action in anticipation of Parliament's approval of the new legislative framework for pharmacists' contracts; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: I am advised that on 21 March the Avon local pharmaceutical committee, in anticipation of the introduction of new arrangements for allocating National Health Service pharmacy contracts, agreed nominations by the pharmacy practices sub-committee, which will be

established under the proposed new arrangements, and submitted them to the Family Practitioner Committee Administrator, who has noted them.

A pharmacy practices sub-committee has not been established in Avon and no appointments have been decided. Commencement of the new arrangements will depend on the successful passage through Parliament of the National Health Service (Amendment) Bill. Family practitioner committees are fully aware of the current arrangements and there is no need to issue guidance at this stage.

Conductive Education

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for the Social Services if he will estimate how many disabled persons are known to his Department to have undertaken courses in conductive education.

Mr. Newton: I regret that information is not available centrally to enable us to make any reliable estimate of the number of disabled persons who have undertaken such courses.

Intermediate Treatment Projects

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley asked the Secretary of State for the Social Services what is the amount of public funds allocated to intermediate treatment projects at the latest date for which information is available; and how this compares with the relevant figure five years previously.

Mr. Whitney: The actual (or estimated) public expenditure in respect of intermediate treatment (IT) in England in the financial years 1980-81 and 1985-86 is as follows:

	1980-81 (£000)	*1985-86 (£000)*
*Gross Expenditure by Local Authorities**	6,170	†17,535
Expenditure by DHSS		
(a) The IT Initiative	‡Nil	3,560
(b) The IT Fund	256	500
(c) Grants to Voluntary Organisations in connection with IT development projects	404	380

* *Source:* Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy —Personal Social Services Statistics (Actuals or Estimates).
† Estimate.
‡ Started 1983.

Invalidity Care Allowance

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for the Social Services if he will state how many additional women in Wales it is estimated will now be eligible to receive invalidity care allowance following the recently announced change in Government policy on this matter.

Mr. Newton: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to him on 15 May at column *531*.

Friendly Societies (Personal Pensions)

Mr. Higgins asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether it is his intention to seek to restrict friendly societies from writing personal pension business.

Mr. Major: In principle, we see no reason to prevent registered friendly societies from providing personal pensions contracted-out from the state earnings-related pension scheme, provided that the schemes they offer meet the investor protection standards which will apply to all such schemes.

Prescriptions

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many prescriptions have been dispensed each year since 1981; what proportion of them were paid for; what proportion of them were dispensed free of charge; and at what cost.

Mr. Hayhoe: The information requested is as follows:

Prescriptions dispensed by chemists and appliance contractors in England:

	Number of prescriptions (million)	*Of which dispensed free of charge (per cent.)*	*Total Net Ingredient Cost (£ million*)*	*Net Ingredient Cost of items dispensed free of charge (£ million†)*	*Total cost (£ million‖)*
1981	300	75	834	550	1,026
1982	311	77	977	655	1,181
1983	315	78	1,096	756	1,308
1984	321	79	1,181	815	1,409
1985	319	81	1,250	‡888	1,518

* "Net Ingredient Cost" is the basic cost of the drug or appliance.
† The percentages are estimates derived from a 1 in 20 sample of prescriptions.
‡ Based on January to November 1985 data.
‖ "Total Cost" is the total cost of all prescriptions dispensed after deducting discount and adding on cost allowance, fees, container allowance and oxygen to the "net ingredient cost".

Community Care

Mr. Allan Roberts asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what progress has been made to develop arrangements for the transfer from health authorities to local authorities of community care initiatives in line with the recommendations of the Social Services Committee report on community care.

Mr. Whitney: Progress in developing community care is being made in many areas through joint initiatives

between health and local authorities. Bridging finance made available through regional funding mechanisms is supporting their efforts and 28 pilot projects are being funded centrally under the care in the community initiative, each for three financial years. The development of jointly planned initiatives continues to be encouraged in many ways. Arrangements for monitoring the achievement of all service priorities are an integral part of the National Health Service planning and accountability process. Whenever it proves necessary this issue would be raised at annual accountability reviews of particular regional and district health authorities.

Health (Resources)

Sir David Price asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what has been the increase in resources devoted to health and the personal social services for each year since 1979, measured in real terms; and how much of that increase has been on improved pay and working conditions for the staffs concerned.

Mr. Whitney: The table gives the information requested for revenue spending on the hospital and community health services (HCHS) and local authority personal social services (LAPSS).

Percentage

	1979-80	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*
HCHS							
(1) real terms increase in resources	2·5	11·0	0·3	0·3	0·6	1·4	−0·4
(2) real terms increase in pay	2·4	7·6	−2·0	−0·8	0·4	1·0	−0·4
LAPSS							
(1) Real terms increase in resources	4·1	3·7	0·8	2·6	3·3	1·8	n/a
(2) real terms increase in pay	2·0	1·5	1·9	0·2	0·7	−0·4	n/a

Notes:
(1) These lines show the increase in resources available to each programme in real terms.
(2) These lines show the real terms cost to each programme of meeting pay increases.

Erith Hospital

Mr. Evennett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what recent representations he has received on the future of Erith hospital.

Mr. Whitney: In May 1986 a petition of 5,000 signatures was presented to Ministers against the decision of the Bexley health authority to postpone the geriatric development plan for Erith hospital.

Skoal Bandits

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on his negotiations with U.S. Tobacco Inc. concerning the display of a health warning on its product Skoal Bandits and on advertising for that product; and when he expects to bring an agreement on this subject into effect.

Mr. Whitney: Negotiations are proceeding. I should expect a new agreement to come into immediate effect.

Dr. Issac Brave (Nursing Homes)

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many former patients of Rainhill hospital, St. Helens, have been transferred to nursing homes owned or formerly owned by Dr. Issac Brave in 1986 to date, 1985, 1984 and 1983.

Mr. Hayhoe [*pursuant to his reply*, 27 June 1986, c. *356*.]: I regret that this information is not collected centrally. The hon. Member may wish to contact the chairman of St. Helens and Knowsley health authority who may be able to provide the information requested.

Hospital and Community Health Service (Expenditure)

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to his reply of 24 June, *Official Report*, column *153*, to the hon. Member for Brent, South (Mr. Pavitt) if he will give a table setting out, for each year from 1979-80 to 1986-87 and cumulatively to 1985-86 and to 1986-87, expenditure on hospital and community health service giving *(a)* gross spending in cash terms, *(b)* the percentage increase for each year on the previous year as measured by the gross domestic product deflator, *(c)* the percentage increase on the previous year of National Health Service pay and prices in excess of inflation as measured by the gross domestic product deflator, *(d)* the percentage increase on the previous year of demographic pressures over and above inflation as measured by the gross domestic product deflator and *(e)* the additional expenditure on the previous year the Department of Health and Social Security estimated is required, over and above inflation as measured by the gross domestic product deflator, as a contribution to the costs of the process of medical innovation in health care and its costs 1983.

Mr. Hayhoe [*pursuant to his reply*, 30 June 1986]: The figures for year on year changes requested at *(b)*, *(c)* and *(d)* were given in my reply to the hon. Member on 11 June at columns *219-22*. The following tables set out the additional information now sought. The figures for demographic pressure and medical progress represent the extent to which services need to grow to meet them. Service growth is produced by a combination of higher cash spending and improved efficiency. Health authorities cash savings have cumulated to nearly £500 million a year (5 per cent.) by the end of the period. In addition, more patients are being treated within existing resources.

	Gross revenue spending £ million	*Medical progress Per cent.*
1979-80	5,279	0·5
1980-81	6,963	0·5
1981-82	7,681	0·5
1982-83	8,244	0·5

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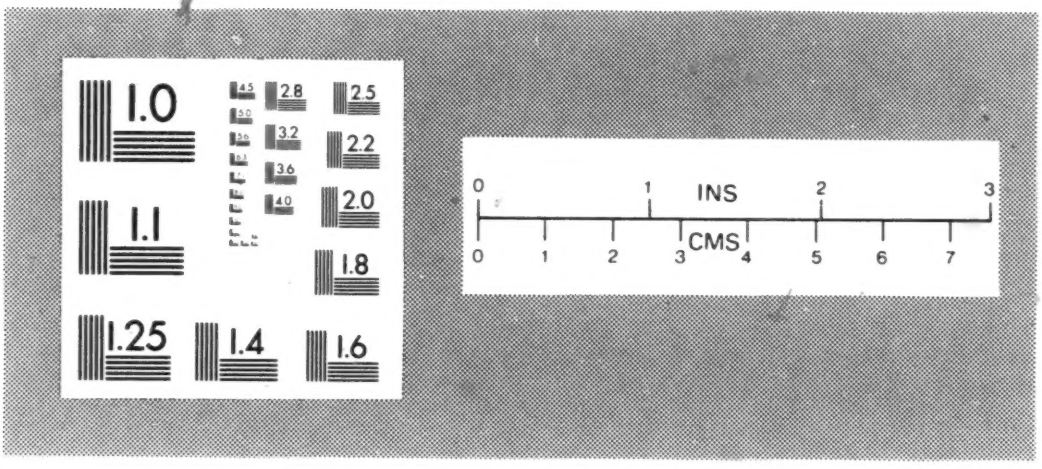

	Gross revenue spending £ million	Medical progress Per cent.
1983-84	8,667	0·5
1984-85	9,161	0·5
*1985-86	9,678	0·5
†1986-87	10,423	0·5

* Figures for 1985-86 are provisional.
† Figures for 1986-87 are provisional and will be affected by revenue to capital transfers. The increase in pay and prices cannot yet be forecast.

	Gross revenue spending £ million	*Real terms increase Per cent.	†NHS pay and prices Per cent.	Demographic pressure Per cent.	Medical progress Per cent.
Cumulative increase 1979-80 to 1985-86	119·7	16·5	10·3	5·2	3·6
Cumulative increase 1979-80 to 1986-87	136·6	20·7	n.a.	6·3	4·1

* Spending measured against the GDP deflator.
† Increase in hospital and community health service pay and prices compared with general inflation.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Cable and Wireless

Mr. Chapman asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement about the Government's special share in Cable and Wireless.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Cable and Wireless plc will be proposing to shareholders, at the company's forthcoming annual general meeting, an amendment to the articles of association which requires the consent of the Government as holder of the special share in the company. The proposed amendment is to enable appropriate Stock Exchange nominee organisations in other countries (which perform a similar function to SEPON Ltd. in the UK) to be exempted from the requirement in the articles that no person, alone or with his associates, shall be entitled to hold more than 15 per cent. of the shares of the company.

The proposed amendment would not alter the requirement in the articles that no person, alone or with associates, can exercise (or control the exercise of) more than 15 per cent. of the votes at general meetings of the company. The Government have agreed to the proposed amendment to the articles.

Pound Sterling

Mr. MacKenzie asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table taking 1964 as a base year showing the spending power of the pound sterling in the United Kingdom from 1964 and in each subsequent year to the latest convenient date.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Figures for the purchasing power of the pound sterling for all years from 1948 to 1984 are published on page 114 of the 1986 edition of *Economic Trends* annual supplement. A figure for 1985 is given on page 42 of the May 1986 edition of *Economic Trends*. Both these publications are available in the House of Commons Library. The published figures are based on 1980 as equal to 100. Figures based on 1964 as equal to 100 can be obtained by dividing the published figures by 4·73.

Expenditure Statistics

Mr. MacKenzie asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for the last year for which figures are available the sums spent on *(a)* roads and road improvement, *(b)* sewerage, *(c)* new housing, housing repairs and house modernisation, *(d)* hospital and health service building works, *(e)* education building and *(f)* new work on harbours and repairs, within the United Kingdom.

Mr. MacGregor: The information is as follows:

Estimated figures for public expenditure in the United Kingdom for 1985-86*

	£ million
(a) Roads and road improvement	3,074
(b) Sewerage†	548
(c) New housing, housing repairs and house modernisation‡	3,991
(d) Hospital and health service building work	878
(e) Education building	615
(f) New works on harbours and repairs	20

* The figures represent estimated outturn of capital, and where appropriate current, expenditure by central government, local authorities and other public bodies.
† Expenditure on sewerage in England and Wales is not direct public expenditure. Work is carried out by the Water Authorities and it is only their external finance that is included in public expenditure.
‡ Current expenditure on local authority housing is not included. In addition to the above figures local authorities are currently spending over £1 billion a year from the housing revenue account on repairs and maintenance.

Tobacco Duty

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will seek to impose tobacco duty on smokeless tobacco products, including the product known as Skoal Bandits.

Mr. Brooke: I have no plans to do so, but the taxation of these products is being kept under close review.

Personal Taxation

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer, further to his answer of 13 June, *Official Report*, column *332*, when the hon. Member for Kensington can expect to receive replies to the two questions tabled for answer that day.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I regret the delay in answering these questions; they are being answered today.

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would be the changes in the yield of income tax, higher rate tax and employee's contributions

to national insurance in 1986-87 if the combined rates were consolidated at 40 per cent. of taxable incomes with the tax allowances remaining as at present.

Mr. Norman Lamont [*pursuant to his reply*, 13 June 1986, c. *332*]: The yields from employees in 1986-87 would be as follows:

	£ billion
Existing regime	
basic rate income tax	30·5
higher rate income tax	1·5
employees' NIC	11·6
total	43·6
Combined 40 per cent. rate for income tax and NIC	42·0
Decrease in yield	1·6

The effects of applying a 40 per cent. combined rate to other taxpayers, including the self-employed and the elderly, are not included in the figures above.

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams asked the Chancellor of Exchequer if he will publish a table showing his estimate for the current financial year of the numbers of people who will be liable to pay income tax, higher rate tax and employee's contributions to national insurance, divided into the main categories on the basis of the combined rates of deduction from income for which they will be liable.

Mr. Norman Lamont [*pursuant to his reply*, 13 June 1986, c. *332*]: The table gives estimates of employees liable to income tax and national insurance contributions (NIC) in 1986-87 by the combined marginal rate of tax and NIC. Estimates are derived from projections of the 1983-84 "Survey of Personal Incomes" which does not contain details of NIC. These have been imputed from earnings levels on the simplifying assumption that all employees are contracted into the earnings related part of the National Insurance scheme and do not pay the reduced rate for married women optants. Other estimates could only be produced at disproportionate cost.

Employees liable to income tax and NIC by marginal rate

Combined Tax and NIC Marginal rate	*Number of employees*	*Income Taxable Income**	*Earnings of individual*
Per cent.	*'000s*	*£ pa*	*£ pw*
5	500	0	38·50-60
7	100	0	60-90
9	200	0	90-285
29	500	1-17,200	Under 38·50
34	1,300	1-17,200	38·50-60
36	2,400	1-17,200	60-90
38	12,400	1-17,200	90-285
29†	1,000	1-17,200	above 285
40‡	400	17,201-20,200	all ranges
45‡	300	20,201-25,400	all ranges
50‡	100	25,401-33,300	all ranges
55‡	100	33,301-41,200	all ranges
60‡	100	above 41,200	all ranges
All	19,400		

* For married couples taxable income is the combined income of the husband and wife except where there is a wife's earnings election, when the wife's earnings are treated separately as her taxable income.

† Above the upper earnings limit (£285 per week) for National Insurance contributions, the marginal rate of NIC is zero.

‡ For higher rate taxpayers the marginal rate of NIC is zero, except for a few cases where the wife's earnings are below the upper earnings limit or much of the income comes from investments.

CIVIL SERVICE

Departmental Duties (Emergency Cover)

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Minister for the Civil Service what steps are taken to provide emergency cover in Government Departments on those days in addition to statutory holidays and annual leave entitlement which civil servants are permitted to take as leave; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

WALES

Planning Revocation Orders

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will state in each case how much compensation was paid in relation to the six planning revocation orders, under sections 45 and 46 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1971 which have been approved by him since 1979; and if he will classify the compensation as to whether it was paid by the local planning authority or by his Department in each instance.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The payment of compensation under section 164 of the 1971 Act is the responsibility of the local planning authority, with reference to the Lands Tribunal in cases of dispute. Local planning authorities are required, under section 166(5) of the Act to notify the Secretary of State only where the compensation payment includes compensation for depreciation exceeding £20. In only one of the cases referred to has such notification been given when the compensation amounted to £3,100.

Housing Officers (Training)

Mr. Roy Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will establish a training unit for housing officers similar to the body already functioning in Scotland.

Mr. Mark Robinson: We are encouraging the Institute of Housing to develop proposals for an in-service housing management training unit for Wales. We look forward to considering the proposals with the local authorities and the housing association movement.

Welsh Language

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales what information he has about the number of adult classes in each county of Wales for those learning the Welsh language.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The centrally available information, which relates only to those courses provided by university extra-mural departments and the Workers' Educational Association, is as follows:

Number of Welsh language learning courses provided by Responsible Bodies 1984-85*

	Number
Clwyd	7
Dyfed	82
Gwent	19
Gwynedd	113

	Number
Mid Glamorgan	25
Powys	3
South Glamorgan	54
West Glamorgan	63

* University extra-mural departments and Workers' Educational Association.

Other Welsh language learning courses are provided at local authority adult education centres and at colleges of further and higher education, but such courses are not separately identified in central returns.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales if any permanent liaison with the European bureau for lesser spoken languages has been established by his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Yes. An official of the Welsh Office attends meetings of the United Kingdom co-ordinating committee as an observer.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will take steps to improve the availability and use of the Welsh language in medical care in Wales; and if he will update the directive, "The Health Service and the Welsh Language".

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The use of the Welsh language in the provision of health services is a matter for health authorities and family practitioner committees to consider in the light of local circumstances. Guidance issued in 1975 advises on action they may take to assist the use of Welsh in the Health Service in Wales. It remains departmental policy. It is recognised that the precise way in which this advice is implemented will vary considerably according to the use made of the language locally. I am not aware of any new circumstances which would warrant a revision of the guidance.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales what proportion of the printing and publishing work in the Welsh language commissioned by his Department is done by firms or organisations outside Wales.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: No detailed records are maintained by the Department of specifically Welsh or bilingual work, but it is believed that during 1985-86 no printing or publishing work solely in the Welsh language commissioned by the Welsh Office was undertaken outside Wales, although a small amount of bilingual work of a specialist character was so undertaken. Overall it is estimated that less than half of 1 per cent. of the total printing and publishing work commissioned by the Welsh Office in 1985-86 was undertaken outside Wales.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales what approaches have been made to the Commission of the EEC in relation to permitting the Welsh language to be used for labelling food and drink in Wales.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: None. The legislation does not specify a language for labelling purposes, but it is necessary for the customer to be able to understand the labels easily. It is a matter for the trading standards authorities to decide whether this requirement is met in individual cases. However, the European Community regulations governing the labelling of wine direct that the information on the label must be shown in an official language of the European Community.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will issue guidelines to local education authorities in Wales to the effect that education facilities for mentally handicapped children have regard to their home language; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave him on 8 May 1986, at column 201.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give a breakdown of the uses and projects to which the money made available for the support and development of the Welsh language since 1979 has been put.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The information is given in the following table:

Category	1979-80 £	1980-81 £	1981-82 £	1982-83 £	1983-84 £	1984-85 £	1985-86 £	1986-87 £
Publishing—Welsh Books Grant (via University of Wales Press Board)	91,000	109,000	—	—	—	—	—	—
Publishing—Welsh Books Council	55,000	68,000	285,000	300,000	318,000	335,000	345,000	360,000
Publishing—Schools Book Club (via Welsh Books Council)	—	—	—	10,000	21,500	—	17,500	20,000
Publishing—Schools Book Club (Exhibitions Officer)	—	—	—	—	5,000	5,000	—	—
Publishing—Welsh National Centre for Children's Literature	—	—	—	—	13,000	14,000	16,000	17,500
Publishing—Urdd Gobaith Cymru (Magazines)	15,000	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin (Groups)	25,000	30,000	165,000	180,000	190,000	200,000	210,000	245,000
Royal National Eisteddfod of Wales	70,000	120,000	157,000	170,000	180,000	150,000	232,000	250,000
Bwrdd Ffilmiau Cymraeg	20,000	24,000	67,000	34,100	80,000	7,000	—	—
Nant Gwrtheyrn	—	—	5,000	—	15,000	—	—	8,000
Celtic Film Festival	—	—	2,000	—	—	—	—	—
Papurau Bro (via Regional Arts Associations)	—	—	—	15,750	18,000	21,350	21,000	24,000
Yr Academi Gymreig	—	—	—	500	21,600	30,000	21,500	11,400
Welsh Joint Education Committee National	—	—	—	12,000	—	—	—	—
Language Unit/Word Processor	—	—	—	7,000	—	—	—	—
University College of Wales Aberystwyth Resource Centre	—	—	—	15,000	—	—	—	—
Clwyd Science Survey	—	—	—	250	—	—	—	—

Category	*1979-80* £	*1980-81* £	*1981-82* £	*1982-83* £	*1983-84* £	*1984-85* £	*1985-86* £	*1986-87* £
School Broadcasting Council for Wales	—	—	—	10,000				
Young Farmers Clubs	—	—	—	—	3,340	3,500	4,000	5,000
Place Names Advisory Committee (Honoraria)	—	—	—	—	600	600	600	600
Welsh Language Information Technology Pilot Project	—	—	—	—	5,000	—	3,750	—
Cwmni Theatr Cymru	—	—	—	—	25,000	25,000	—	—
Welsh National Opera	—	—	—	—	500	374	—	—
Merched y Wawr	—	—	—	—	—	10,000	11,500	12,500
Y Cymro	—	—	—	—	—	300	—	—
Sunday Schools Council	—	—	—	—	—	—	13,000	14,500
Women's Institute	—	—	—	—	—	—	7,000	7,500
400th Anniversary of Translation of Bible into Welsh	—	—	—	—	—	—	5,000	10,000
Bangor and Gwynedd Samaritans	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	200
BBC Sioe Siarad	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	6,000
Welsh Schools Basketball Association	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	500
St. John Ambulance	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	5,000
Welsh Scout Council	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2,000
Urdd Gobaith Cymru—Llangrannog	—	—	140,000	145,230	—	—	—	—
Urdd Gobaith Cymru—Glanllyn	—	—	—	—	80,000	180,000	196,000	80,000
Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin (Headquarters)	70,000	87,000	94,000	98,000	102,000	110,350	119,400	115,800
Urdd Gobaith Cymru (Headquarters)	35,134	41,597	53,260	55,497	56,496	57,626	62,236	62,485
International Youth Year	—	—	—	—	—	2,670	—	—
Urdd Gobaith Cymru (Capital)	32,939	6,352	5,022	—	—	—	—	—
Grants for Welsh Language Education (section 21, Education Act 1980)	—	515,000	794,000	866,000	1,034,000	1,004,701	1,317,657	1,439,000

A detailed breakdown by projects of grants under section 21 of the Education Act 1980 could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Health Education Council

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales how much money has been granted to the Health Education Council in Wales for each year since 1980-81; and what proportion of the council's publicity is published in Welsh or in a bilingual format.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The contribution of the Welsh Office to the Government's grant-in-aid to the Health Education Council in the period since 1980-81 was as follows:

	£ 000s
1980-81	147
1981-82	290
1982-83	315
1983-84	486
1984-85	503
1985-86	511

Additionally, the council's pilot project, Heartbeat Wales, received from the Welsh office £20,000 in 1984-85 and £130,000 in 1985-86. The estimated grant for 1986-87, subject to parliamentary approval, is £527,000. Two hundred thousand pounds is being made available to Heartbeat Wales.

It is not possible to say what proportion of the council's health education materials is published in Welsh. However, the HEC made available £25,000 in 1985-86 for the production of Welsh language materials on the advice of the Welsh language panel of the Health Education Advisory Committee for Wales. It is anticipated that a similar budget will be made available this financial year.

Health Authorities (Bilingual Staff)

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales what proportion of staff in each of the area health authorities in Wales is bilingual.

Mr. Mark Robinson: This information is not held centrally.

Road Signs

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales what has been the annual cost of providing bilingual road signs on trunk roads in Wales since 1981.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The cost of providing bilingual road signs is not distinguished from other highway expenditure, but a notional assessment is made as a proportion of the total cost of trunk road improvement schemes. Using the formula adopted since 1983, the assessed costs, at outturn prices, are as follows:

	£
1981-82	332,500
1982-83	385,000
1983-84	476,000
1984-85	325,500
1985-86	308,000

The greater part of this expenditure would have been incurred in erecting English-only signs.

Health Authorities (Language Policies)

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he has issued any guidelines to Welsh health authorities concerning their language policies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mark Robinson: No. Guidance was issued to Welsh health authorities in March 1975 advising them on the action they might take to assist those who wish to use the Welsh language in their relations with the health service. This guidance remains departmental policy.

Less-favoured Areas

Mr. Livsey asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he has any further plans to extend the less-favoured areas in Wales.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: It is not within my power to extend the less-favoured areas in Wales. The EC Council of Ministers approved a redefinition of the LFAs in England and Wales in February 1984 and representations against exclusion from the redefined areas were invited. Some 2,000 such representations have been received in Wales and these are now being examined. If any of the areas subject to representations meet the criteria laid down for designation as LFA, a case for further adjustment of the United Kingdom's LFA line will be put to the European Commission for consideration.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Royal Ulster Constabulary

Mr. Proctor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, pursuant to his answer of 24 June, *Official Report*, columns *120-1*, to the hon. Member for Billericay, if he will specify the number of factors which the Royal Ulster Constabulary Chief Constable has to take into account when deciding whether or not a request to visit a Royal Ulster Constabulary station should be refused.

Mr. Scott: I understand that the main factors which the Chief Constable considers are *(a)* the current operational commitments of the force, *(b)* the nature and purpose of the visit and *(c)* the number of requests for visits at any given time.

Mr. Proctor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, pursuant to his answer of 24 June, *Official Report*, columns *120-2*, to the hon. Member for Billericay, how many requests to visit Royal Ulster Constabulary stations concerning guests of his Department were *(a)* made by his Department and *(b)* refused by the Royal Ulster Constabulary Chief Constable in the years to the end of May 1986 and to the end of May 1985.

Mr. Scott: It is not my practice to give details of my correspondence with the Chief Constable.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Radiation

Mr. Foulkes asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the information available to him as to the emergency reference levels for iodine 131 in milk, caesium 137 in milk and caesium 137 on grass employed in each of the 12 member states of the European Economic Community; and if he will make a statment.

Mrs. Fenner: We have not been officially notified of emergency reference levels of dose or of the derived emergency reference levels for iodine 131 or caesium 137 in milk, or caesium 137 on grass, employed elsewhere in the European Community. Our officials have requested the Commission to let us have this information, if available, from member states.

Mr. John asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food in how many instances readings of 1,000 becquerels per kilogram or higher have been found in vegetables following the Chernobyl disaster; and what action his Department took in consequence.

Mr. Jopling: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Sewage Sludge

Dr. Roger Thomas asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what information he has on the concentration of list II substances in waste disposed of by Thames water authority at sea from *(a)* Crossness sewage works and *(b)* Beckton sewage works;

(2) what information he has as to the concentration of list I substances in waste disposed of by Thames water authority at sea from *(a)* Crossness sewage works and *(b)* Beckton sewage works:

Mr. Gummer: The most recent data available for substances listed in annex I and annex II of the Oslo Convention for the Prevention of Marine Pollution by Dumping from Ships and Aircraft are set out below:

	Crossness	*Beckton*	
Annex I substances			
Mercury	3	5·5	mg/kg dry solids
Cadmium	15	22	mg/kg dry solids
Organohalogens:			
(a) Gamma HCH	<0·01	<0·01	mg/litre (wet)
(c) Total DDT	<0·005	<0·005	mg/litre (wet)
(c) PCB'S	<0·006	0·008	mg/litre (wet)
(d) Dieldrin	<0·01	<0·001	mg/litre (wet)
Organosilicons	Nil	Nil	
Annex II substances			
Arsenic	13	16	mg/kg dry solids
Lead	990	897	mg/kg dry solids
Copper	570	921	mg/kg dry solids
Nickel	70	139	mg/kg dry solids
Zinc	1,370	3,800	mg/kg dry solids
Chromium	200	450	mg/kg dry solids

The negligible levels of the other substances listed in annex II do not warrant regular analysis.

Dr. Roger Thomas asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) how often sewage sludge dumped from ships is sampled for analysis; and on how many occasions that samples have been taken in the past years they have exceeded the permitted levels for the concentration of *(a)* list I substances and *(b)* list II substances;

(2) what is the frequency of analysis for list II substances in sewage sludge destined for sea disposal; and what have been the results of such analyses for each year since 1982;

(3) what is the frequency of analyses for list I substances in sewage sludge destined for sea disposal; and what have been the results of such analyses for each year since 1982.

Mr. Gummer: Applicants for licences for the sea disposal of sewage sludge are generally required to submit analytical data on an annual basis. Recurrent check analyses of samples of sewage sludge are carried out by officials of my Department in order to verify this data. The Oslo convention on the prevention of marine pollution by dumping from ships and aircraft recommends that analyses of sewage sludge are carried out routinely before a licence is issued in respect of those metals (except arsenic) listed in annexes I and II of the convention, and on a selective basis in the case of organochlorine compounds. These recommendations are fully met.

The Oslo convention does not specify permitted concentration levels for annex I and II substances in sewage sludges disposed of at sea.

Information on the results of analyses for annex I and II substances in sewage sludges disposed of at sea since 1982 could only be reproduced at disproportionate cost. However, summary information on the concentrations of a number of annex I and II substances present in sewage sludges licensed for sea disposal can be found in the annual reports of the Oslo commission, copies of which have been placed in the Library of the House.

Food Labelling

Mr. Coombs asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the organisations and individuals who have commented on his draft guidelines on fat labelling; and if he will publish these comments.

Mrs. Fenner: Proposals for regulations to require foods to be labelled with their fat content and proposals for guidelines for a system of voluntary nutrition labelling were published on 13 February. A total of 143 organisations and individuals have commented on our proposals and these are listed. These comments were not made in the knowledge that they might be published and it is not therefore appropriate for me to do so.

Agricultural and Food Research Council
Association of Cereal Food Manufacturers Ltd.
Association of Public Analysts
Association of Public Analysts Scotland
Automatic Vending Association of Britain

British Association of Canned and Preserved Food Importers and Distributers Ltd.
Bakers Food & Allied Workers Union
Bacon & Meat Manufacturers Association
Ballymoney Borough Council
Berkshire, Royal County of
Birmingham, City of
Bolton Health Authority
Boots Company plc
Bovril Ltd.
Dr. Jeremy Bray MP
Brewers Society
British Association for the Study of Community Dentistry
British Dental Association
British Dietetic Association
British Egg Association
British Egg Industry Council
British Hotels Restaurants and Caterers Association
British Medical Association
British Nutrition Foundation
British Paedodontic Society
British Retailers Association
British Sheep Dairying Association
Brooke Bond Oxo Ltd.
Butter Information Council Ltd.
British Poultry Federation

Cocoa Chocolate & Confectionery Alliance
Cake & Biscuit Alliance
Clinical Research Centre
Coffee Trade Federation
College of Health
Colmans of Norwich
Cookstown District Council
Co-operative Union Ltd. (Parliamentary Committee)
Coronary Prevention Group
Mrs. D. Cross
Consumers' Association

Dairy Crest Foods
Dairy Trade Federation
Dautech
Del Monte Foods Ltd.
A. Dyson

Faculty of Community Medicine of the Royal Colleges of Physicians of the United Kingdom
FDF Services
Federation of Bakers
Federation of Fresh Meat Wholesalers
Food and Drink Federation
Food and Health Forum
Food Policy News
Four Square
Food Research Institute

Miss R. Gammon
Mr. and Mrs. Gardner
Dr. Garton
General Consumer Council for Northern Ireland
General Foods Ltd
General Municipal & Boilermakers & Allied Trade Unions

Hotel Catering & Institutional Management Association
Health Education Advisory Committee for Wales
Health Education Council
Hinchinbrooke Hospital
Holmfirth & District Butchers Association
Hyperactive Childrens Support Group

Ice Cream Alliance Ltd
Institute of Food Science & Technology of the United Kingdom

Mrs. A Jones

Local Authorities Co-ordinating Body on Trading Standards (LACOTS)
Mrs. M. Laughton
Leatherhead Food RA
Ledbury Preserves
Leeds City Council
Leeds Polytechnic
Leeds Western Health Authority
London Food Commission

Margarine and Shortening Manufacturers Association
Maternity Alliance
McCarrison Society
McDonalds
Meat and Livestock Commission
Milk Marketing Board
Milk Marketing Board for Northern Ireland
Milton Keynes Health Authority
Dr. R. Moody

National Association of School Meals Organisers
National Association of Health Authorities in England and Wales
National Association of Teachers of Home Economics Ltd.
National Consumer Council
National Federation of Meat Traders
National Peanut Council of America
National Union of Townswomen's Guilds
National Federation of Women's Institutes
Nestle Company Ltd.
National Farmers Union

Pritchitt Foods
Proctor and Gamble Ltd.

Quaker Oats Ltd.

J. Raper
Retail consortium
RHM Research Ltd.
RHM Foods
Riverside (East) Health Education
Riverside Health Authority
Christopher Robbins
Roche
Rotherham Health Authority
Royal Society of Health
Royal College of Nursing
Ruddock and Sherratt

Scottish Association of Master Bakers
Scottish Federation of Meat Traders Association
Scottish Milk Marketing Board
Slagter's—OG Konserveslaboratonium
Miss Paula Smith
Smithfield Market Tenants Association
Soluble Coffee Manufacturers Association
South West Surrey Health Authority
R. G. Stilson
Sugar Bureau
Sutcliffe Catering Group Ltd.

Trade Union Congress (TUC)
Trusthouse Forte

Ulster Farmers Union
United Kingdom Association of Frozen Food Producers
United Kingdom Federation of Business and Professional Women
United Kingdom Home Economis Federation
United Kingdom Provision Trade Federation
University of Cambridge and Medical Research Council
University of Glasgow—Institute of Physiology
University of Newcastle upon Tyne
University of Reading

Waitrose
Wandsworth Food Forum
Wandsworth Health Authority
Welsh Consumer Council
Western Health and Social Services Board
Whitbread (Retail Division)
Wimpy International Ltd.
Womens Farmers Union

Zoological Society of London

Sheepmeat (Caesium Levels)

Mr. Wigley asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on what date he first discussed with the Commission of the EC the possibility of introducing a ban on the movement of lambs in certain parts of the United Kingdom; and whether at that time he obtained its agreement to the payment of compensation to farmers affected by such a ban.

Mr. Jopling: Imposition of controls on the movement and slaughter of lambs, is a matter for decision by the United Kingdom Government. As I indicated in my statement to the House on 20 June, if however it should prove to be necessary, the Government will be prepared to discuss cases of compensation for severe loss in particular circumstances to specific farmers.

Mr. Wigley asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food why the draft statement concerning the ban on the movement of lambs which was circulated by his Department to local officials to discuss with farming interests at local level, differed in a material respect, in relation to compensation provisions from the statement which he made in the House on Friday 20 June.

Mr. Jopling: I am not aware that any draft statement concerning restrictions on the movement of lambs was circulated by my Department for discussion with farming interests at local level.

Mr. Wigley asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will state under what sub-head of public expenditure compensation will be paid to farmers affected by severe losses arising from the ban on the movement of lambs.

Mr. Jopling: If it is decided that compensation payments should be made, parliamentary approval of the necessary financial provision will be sought in the normal way through the Supplementary Estimates procedure.

Retail Food Developments

Mr. John asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what involvement his Department has in the siting and size of new retail food developments.

Mrs. Fenner: None directly. However, my Department is required to be consulted by the local planning authority, pursuant to article 15 of the Town and Country Planning General Development Order 1977, on proposed developments likely to affect 10 acres or more of agricultural land in England.

Radioactivity

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what agencies have conducted radioactive monitoring on behalf of his Department in each year since it assumed responsibility for this function.

Mr. Jopling [*pursuant to the reply*, 26 June 1986, c. *307*]: Operators of nuclear sites in the United Kingdom are required as a condition of the authorisation granted under the Radioactive Substances Act 1960 to carry out comprehensive monitoring of radioactivity in both discharges and in the environment. My Department undertakes an indpendent programme of monitoring of radioactivity in the marine and terrestial environment around nuclear installations. In addition, a number of other agencies, including the National Radiological Protection Board, the Institute of Terrestial Ecology and the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority, undertake ad hoc monitoring studies on behalf of the Department.

Veal

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information and statistics he has about the numbers of farmers continuing to operate veal crate systems despite the voluntary code of practice on the matter.

Mrs. Fenner [*pursuant to her reply*, 3 June, 1986 c. *487*]: According to the results of the recent survey carried out by the state veterinary service, there are six holdings where farmers continue to operate veal crate systems.

DEFENCE

Nuclear Weapons

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many people are currently employed by his Department for the purpose of checking for aging and obsolescence in the reliability of the United Kingdom's stockpile of nuclear weapons.

Mr. Lee: It has been the policy of successive Governments not to reveal details of those engaged on the defence nuclear programme.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Defence what has been his Department's expenditure on checking for aging and obsolescence in the reliability of Her Majesty's stockpile of nuclear weapons in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Lee: It has been the policy of successive Governments not to reveal details of the cost of the defence nuclear programme.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Defence what advice he has received from the Department of Defence of the United States of America on the technical problems connected with checking for aging and obsolescence in the reliability of the United Kingdom's stockpile of nuclear weapons.

Mr. Lee: Details of exchanges between the United Kingdom and the United States Governments on nuclear issues are classified and cannot be revealed.

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Defence if any of the safety devices on nuclear weapons are operated by nuclear fission; what testing of conventional safety devices on such weapons takes place and at what intervals; if any such testing takes place in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: Details of the design and operation of nuclear warheads cannot be revealed on the grounds of national security.

Radar Facilities (Fylingdales)

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is his latest estimate of the date of the initial operational capability for the joint United Kingdom/United States of America modernisation programme for the United States radar facilities at Fylingdales in Yorkshire.

Mr. Stanley: We hope that the modernisation programme for the joint ballistic missile early warning system at RAF Fylingdales will be completed by late 1990 or early 1991. No firm date for initial operating capability has yet been fixed.

Rifle Ranges

Mr. MacKenzie asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he has completed his study of the use of Army or reserve forces rifle ranges in or near to densely populated areas; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: We have no study specifically addressing the use of Army or reserve forces rifle ranges in or near to densely populated areas. However, we continue to place the greatest importance on maintaining the safety of our ranges and, within the context of our essential military training requirements, to pay close attention to relations with the general public.

Army Training Team

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the role of the British Army training team in Khartoum.

Mr. Stanley: The role of the British Army training team in Sudan, currently comprising two men, is to assist with training and instruction at the Sudanese command and staff college at Omdurman.

Virgin Airways

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will state the value of the contract to Virgin Airways for transport to the Falkland Islands.

Mr. Stanley: For reasons of commercial confidentiality, it is not the practice to disclose the cost of individual contracts. The contract to Virgin Atlantic Airways was awarded as the result of competitive tendering.

Northern Ireland (Security Forces)

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the numbers of soldiers killed in Northern Ireland by regiment in each year since 1968.

Mr. Freeman [*pursuant to his reply*, 23 June 1986, c. 26]: The information requested is set out in the table for each year since 1969, when troops were deployed on duties in support of the civil power. Information in the form requested for 1968 could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

	1969	1970	1971	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	Total
Life Guards					1														(1)
Blues and Royals					1						2								(3)
Royal Horse Artillery			1			1													(2)
Royal Scots Dragoon Guards				1															(1)
4th/7th Royal Dragoon Guards				1															(1)
5th Royal Inniskilling Dragoon Guards					1														(1)
9th/12th Royal Lancers									1		1					1			(3)
Royal Hussars						1													(1)
14th/20th King's Hussars			1	1															(2)
15th/19th The King's Royal Hussars							1												(1)
16th/5th The Queen's Royal Lancers			1		1														(2)
17th/21st Lancers					2														(2)
Royal Tank Regiment			1							1									(2)
1st Parachute Squadron Royal Armoured Corps			1																(1)
Royal Artillery			8	11	6	3	1	4	2	1	5			1		1			(43)
Royal Engineers				3	2	1	1	2											(9)
Royal Signals			1		1						1			1					(4)
Grenadier Guards									1	3		1			1				(6)
Coldstream Guards				1	4	1													(6)
Scots Guards			5	4	1					1									(11)
Irish Guards									1										(1)
Welsh Guards				1	1						1								(3)
Royal Scots								3											(3)
Queen's Regiment			2	1							1				1	1			(6)
King's Own Royal Border Regiment					1					1		2					1		(5)
Royal Regiment of Fusiliers			1	3	1	1	5	1					1			3			(16)
King's Regiment				7							3								(10)
Royal Anglian Regiment			2	8	1						2			1			1	1	(16)
Devonshire and Dorset Regiment				3		1									1				(5)
Light Infantry			1	3				6	3					1	1				(15)
Prince of Wales's Own Regiment of Yorkshire					1		1												(2)
Green Howards			5		1	1	1												(8)
Royal Highland Fusiliers			3						1			1							(5)
Cheshire Regiment						1								8					(9)
Royal Welch Fusiliers				2	1	1		1			1								(6)
Royal Regiment of Wales				5															(5)
King's Own Scottish Borderers				3															(3)
Royal Irish Rangers				1															(1)
Gloucestershire Regiment			1	2	2														(5)
Worcestershire and Sherwood Foresters Regiment				1										2					(3)
Queen's Lancashire Regiment				1	4														(5)
Duke of Wellington's Regiment				3		2						1							(6)
Royal Hampshire Regiment					1			1						1					(3)
Staffordshire Regiment				1		1							1			1			(4)
Black Watch			1							1									(2)
Duke of Edinburgh's Royal Regiment					2	2													(4)
Queen's Own Highlanders					1						3								(4)
Gordon Highlanders				3	1				1										(5)
Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders				6								1							(7)
Parachute Regiment			2	2	4	2		2		2	17	1				1			(33)
Royal Green Jackets			3	7		1			1	2		1	5	3				1	(24)
Ulster Defence Regiment			5	26	8	7	6	15	14	7	10	9	13	7	10	10	4	5	(156)
Royal Corps of Transport				5	2	1			1					1					(10)
Royal Army Ordnance Corps			2	7	3	3	2		1				1						(19)
Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers				3			1							1					(5)
Royal Military Police			1		1		1									1			(4)
Royal Army Pay Corps				1															(1)
Royal Army Veterinary Corps					1														(1)
Royal Army Dental Corps					1														(1)
Royal Pioneer Corps						1							1						(2)

	1969	*1970*	*1971*	*1972*	*1973*	*1974*	*1975*	*1976*	*1977*	*1978*	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*Total*
Intelligence Corps									1										(1)
Army Physical Training Corps											1								(1)
Army Catering Corps														2	1				(3)
Royal Marines				2	2	3			1	2									(10)
TOTAL																			(540)

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 2 July 1986

PRIME MINISTER

Dr. Kurt Waldheim

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Prime Minister if, pursuant to her answer of 3 June, *Official Report*, column *447*, she will make a statement on the progress of the search of military records of the Ministry of Defence in connection with Dr. Kurt Waldeheim's wartime activities if she can yet state when the search is expected to be completed; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: As yet, I have nothing further to add to the answer I gave the right hon. Member on 3 June, at column *447*.

European Court

Mr. Foulkes asked the Prime Minister if she will list the occasions since June 1979 when the United Kingdom has been found guilty in a case before *(a)* the European Court of Human Rights and *(b)* the European Court of Justice; and what was the subsequent action taken by the United Kingdom in each case.

The Prime Minister [*pursuant to her reply*, 27 June 1986, c. *327*]: The information requested by the hon. Member is as follows:

(a) Since June 1979 the European Court of Human Rights has found against the United Kingdom on eight occasions. New primary legislation, or amendments to existing regulations or administrative practice, have been introduced consequent upon seven of these judgments. The cases, together with the date of the judgment and the subsequent action taken by the Government are as follows:

Young, James and Webster (13 August 1981): Employment Act 1980, effective 15 August 1980, re-enacted and strengthened by Employment Act 1982 — effective 1 December 1982;

Dudgeon (22 October 1981): Homosexual Offences (Northern Ireland) Order 1982 — effective 9 December 1982;

"X" (5 November 1981): Mental Health Act 1983—effective September 1983;

Silver and others (25 March 1983): Control of prisoners' correspondence. Amendment to Prison Regulations — effective in England and Wales 1 December 1981, Scotland 1 August 1983 and Northern Ireland 1 February 1985;

Campbell and Fell (28 June 1984): Changes in the practice relating to Prison disciplinary tribunals — by means of a letter of 12 July 1984 to Chairmen of Boards of Visitors copied to Prison Governors;

Malone (2 August 1984): Interception of Communications Act 1985 — effective 10 April 1986;

Abdulaziz, Cabales and Balkandali (27 May 1985): Changes to Immigration Rules on admission of husbands and wives—effective 26 August 1985;

As regards action on the one remaining case, Campbell and Cosans (25 February 1982), the hon. Member will be aware that the possibility of legislation relating to corporal punishment in schools is the subject of discussion in Committee on the Education Bill.

(b) Since June 1979, the European Court of Justice (ECJ) has found against the United Kingdom in 11 cases brought by the European Commission under article 169 of the EEC treaty, and in one case brought by another member state (France) under article 170 of the treaty. Details, including follow-up action, are as follows:

ECJ case number	*Subject*	*Follow-up action*
141/78†	Fisheries conservation legislation	Subordinate legislation amended.
170/78 170A/78*	Wine and Beer: Tax arrangements	Legislation amended by the Finance Act 1984.
32/79 804/79	Sea Fisheries: Conservation Measures	Community regime introduced in September 1980. Revised national arrangements introduced for control of herring fishing in the Irish Sea.
61/81	Equal pay for men and women	Legislation amended by the Equal Pay (Amendment) Regulations 1983 (SI 1983 No. 1794).
124/81	Imports of UHT Milk	Legislation amended by the Importation of Milk Act 1983 and regulations thereunder.
40/82 40A/82*	Newcastle disease in Poultry	Administrative changes made.
165/82	Equal Treatment for men and women	Amending legislation before Parliament in the Sex Discrimination Bill (HL).
207/83	Origin-Marking of retail goods	Legislation amended by the Trades Description (Origin Marking) (Miscellaneous Goods) (Revocation) Order 1986 (1986/193).
100/84	Anglo/Polish Fishing	Administrative changes made.

* The notification "A" is used to denote two judgments given in each case.

† Proceedings under article 170 of the EEC treaty.

In addition, under article 177 of the EEC treaty national courts may ask the European Court of Justice to give preliminary rulings in order to clarify questions of Community law. Once the European Court of Justice has answered the questions of the national court the matter returns to that court for decisions. Some preliminary European Court of Justice rulings in cases referred to it by United Kingdom courts have a bearing on United Kingdom law, which may on occasions require amendment as a result. Recent examples are the court's judgments in 152/84 Marshall *v.* S W Hampshire Area Health Authority, and 150/85 Drake *v.* Chief Adjudication Officer.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Ships and Ship and Engine Repairs (Orders)

Mr. MacKenzie asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many orders for ships and ship and engine repairs involving public money have been placed abroad since 1979; and what was the total sums involved.

Mr. Peter Morrison: No orders for ships involving public money have been placed abroad since 1979. The only expenditure incurred abroad in respect of ship and engine repairs relates to running repairs. The amount is believed to be modest in total, but full records of this incidental expenditure have not been kept.

Asbestos

Dame Judith Hart asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will seek to ensure that the British Standards Institute audit of British standards to identify and eliminate references of asbestos is carried out urgently; and when he expects it to be completed.

Mr. Pattie: The British Standards Institution has commenced the audit. It anticipates that about three months will be required to scan the portfolio of some 10,000 standards in order to identify those where action is required. Prior to the completion of this initial investigation it is not possible to predict when the audit will be completed. I share BSI's desire to complete this activity as soon as possible.

National Accreditation Council

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will seek to abolish the National Accreditation Council.

Mr. Pattie: The National Accreditation Council for Certification Bodies is performing its functions well. A number of certification bodies are currently being assessed prior to accreditation and the first, Lloyds Register Quality Assurance Ltd. was accredited last March. The Government therefore have no intention of abolishing the council.

British Standards

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry why Government Departments are withdrawing participation from the formulation of British Standards.

Mr. Pattie: The Government remain firmly committed to raising the efficiency and competitiveness of United Kingdom industry through their support for and development of a strong national standards system as stated in the 1982 White Paper "Standards, Quality and International Competitiveness" (Cmnd. 8621). Government Departments therefore continue to participate fully in the work of the British Standards Institution. There will, however, be occasions when changing priorities lead to changes in membership of particular standards committees, and these are a matter for the Departments directly concerned.

Nationalised Industries

Mr. Cash asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what progress has been made in implementing the rolling programme of references of nationalised industries to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission; and if he will announce a further programme of references.

Mr. Channon: During 1985 reports were published on the revenue collection systems of four area electricity boards, the British Railways Board: Property Activities, the North of Scotland Hydro-Electric Board and the British Airports Authority. The report on the water supply services in the Southern water authority's area was published on 16 April 1986 and I hope to publish the report on the South of Scotland Electricity Board during the summer.

The commission is currently investigating the British Steel Corporation and the Post Office's procurement activities.

I decided that in view of current proposals for modernising the Post Office's counters service it would have been inappropriate to proceed with the counters reference planned in 1985.

I am anxious that our commitment to a worthwhile programme of efficiency audits of the public sector should continue. I hope shortly to announce the terms of reference for an inquiry into the British Waterways Board. As soon as the commission completes its outstanding work on the existing inquiries I propose to make references covering the remainder of 1986 including a re-reference of British Rail's network south-east, and an aspect of the Central Electricity Generating Board.

ENVIRONMENT

River Severn (Radioactive Emissions)

Mr. Roy Hughes asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what monitoring takes place of the discharge of radioactive waste into the River Severn from nearby nuclear power stations; and if he will arrange through the Central Electricity Generating Board for the level of emission to be published.

Mr. Waldegrave: The CEGB power stations at Berkeley, Oldbury and Hinckley Point discharge liquid radioactive waste into the River Severn or its estuary. Monitoring of the discharges is carried out by the CEGB in accordance with the discharge authorisations granted under the Radioactive Substances Act 1960 by the Secretary of State for the Environment and the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. Duplicate samples supplied to the radiochemical inspectorate of my Department are sent for independent analysis to ensure that the operators' analyses are being performed correctly.

Levels of emissions from all nuclear power stations in England are published regularly by the Central Electricity Generating Board and in the additional tables of the "Digest of Environmental Protection and Water Statistics" published by my Department.

Water Abstraction

Mr. Onslow asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he takes to monitor the levels of water abstraction for agricultural purposes from rivers in England and Wales.

Mr. John Patten: It is for water authorities to monitor water resources and to license abstractions (other than

their own), which are controlled under the Water Resources Act 1963. Most agricultural abstractions are however exempt from licensing.

Polar Bears

Mr. Hardy asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received about the keeping of polar bears in captivity; and if he will make it his policy that this practice should be discouraged at least where breeding is unlikely to be achieved.

Mrs. Rumbold: I have received representations only from my hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Drake (Miss Fookes) and I would refer the hon. Member to my answer of Tuesday 15 April 1986, at column 335, and to my subsequent letter to my hon. Friend the Member for Drake on 30 April, which I have placed in the Library.

The decision to keep polar bears in captivity is one for the individual zoo operators to make; conditions regulating their keeping may be imposed via licences issued by local authorities under the Zoo Licensing Act 1981, to ensure adequate standards.

Home Improvements

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many responses he has now received in favour of the proposals in the Green Paper on home improvements.

Mr. John Patten: My Department received a total of 430 responses to the Green Paper on home improvement. Over half these expressed no overall judgment on the merits of the proposals. Of the remainder, almost a quarter were generally favourable.

Wildlife Inspectors

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many wildlife inspectors are employed in his Department; how many of these are qualified ringers; and if he will give the figures for the last six years.

Mr. Ridley: There are currently 105 wildlife inspectors, of whom 53 are qualified ringers. The Wildlife Inspectorate was established following the introduction on 28 September 1982 of part I of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. By April 1985, 230 inspectors had been appointed, of whom 61 were qualified ringers. In the light of the inspectorate's operating experience, this number was then reduced to 112, of whom 58 were qualified ringers.

Urban Programme

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will begin consultation with local authorities and the voluntary sector about the bidding process for 1987-88 traditional urban programming.

Sir George Young: Arrangements for urban programme support to local authorities in 1987-88 will be announced soon.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Broadwater Farm Estate, Tottenham

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will take steps to arrange for the report commissioned by the Metropolitan police on police actions during the events at the Broadwater Farm Estate, Tottenham in 1985, to be circulated to all police stations in the Metropolitan police area; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd [*pursuant to the reply*, 24 June 1986, c. *125*]: The Commissioner is today publishing a report which includes details of the outcome of the reiew. I have arranged for copies to be placed in the Library. The Commissioner is arranging for copies to be circulated to all divisional stations.

I welcome the report. It provides a useful and frank account of what happened at Brixton and Tottenham, describes some of the work being done with the community to prevent crime and disorder and sets out the action taken, following the review, to improve the capacity and preparedness of the Metropolitan police to tackle disorder if and when it arises.

The report chronicles the events at Brixton and Tottenham following two tragic incidents - the shooting of Mrs. Groce and the death of Mrs. Jarrett. It gives a full and chilling picture of the ferocious attack which the police faced in the front line against the violence of the mob. At Brixton, the police faced a barrage of stones, bottles and petrol bombs and under the cloak of mob rule many crimes of serious personal violence against members of the public, looting and damage to property were committed. A press photographer suffered injuries from which he later died. At Tottenham, the police took the full brunt of a murderous attack during which firearms were used against them in addition to petrol bombs and other missiles and weapons. At height of the rioting PC Keith Blakelock was killed.

The report rightly emphasises the positive efforts which the Metropolitan police have made both before and after the riots to develop the good working relationships with the local community, which are an essential basis for tackling crime and disorder. These efforts include close consultation with community-police consultative groups, helping to set up neighbourhood watch schemes, victim support schemes and working with other agencies in tackling the particular problems of inner city housing estates. In addition, action has been taken to ensure that officers are trained in the skills necessary to understand and cope with the problems of the community they serve.

This commitment to positive and constructive policing policies remains and is being developed. At the same time, the Commissioner has taken action to improve the capacity and preparedness of the Metropolitan police to deal with extreme disorder, in the light of the lessons learnt from the rioting last autumn. Selected officers at senior and middle management level have received further intensive training, radio communications are being improved and better information gathering systems and command structures are being introduced. The new territorial support groups will also help in providing an early response to disorder.

In my statement to the House on 21 October last year, at columns 30-32, I said that the Metropolitan police were obtaining more shields and defensive equipment. As a result of the review the Commissioner has asked for my authority to purchase a number of items of equipment. I have given approval for the purchase of 700 additional radios, 24 ballistically protected vehicles, (which, in the light of the experience of Tottenham, are necessary to

provide protection against firearms and petrol bombs) and 80 protected personnel carriers. This equipment will be made available as soon as possible.

At Tottenham the police lines were assaulted with long poles and other similar weapons. Shields and short truncheons proved ineffective in dealing with attacks of this kind, and the only available alternative was the use of plastic baton rounds or CS. The Commissioner has therefore sought my authority to acquire long truncheons to enable police officers on foot to protect themselves and respond effectively to such attacks. I have given authority for the purchase of 1,500 long truncheons for this purpose. These will be deployed only in a situation of extreme disorder, where other methods have failed or are unlikely to succeed, on the authority of an officer of at least commander rank and used under the direction and control of the senior officer in charge at the scene.

I share the Commissioner's hope that the availability of long truncheons as an intermediate option in dealing with serious disorder may prevent a situation escalating to a point where the use of plastic baton rounds or CS is necessary. But I have made it clear to the Commissioner that if, in the event of further extreme disorder, he concludes that there is no alternative to the use of plastic baton rounds or CS he will have my full support. The strict conditions governing the use of plastic baton rounds or CS were set out in my reply of 19 May to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Lancashire West, (Mr. Hind) at columns 15-16.

The Commissioner's report is a thorough and wide-ranging review which seeks to move forward from the dreadful events of Brixton and Tottenham and ensure that the lessons are learnt and acted upon. The report clearly has implications for other chief officers of police and it is being widely disseminated within the police service.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Radioactive Substances

Mr. Gould asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if British Rail, the Central Electricity Generating Board and other relevant bodies are required to inform the London fire brigade of proposed movements of trains carrying nuclear waste materials on the Greater London rail network.

Mr. Giles Shaw: No, but comprehensive guidance has been issued to all chief fire officers on emergency procedures and sources of expert advice.

Mr. Gould asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if Geiger counters are currently provided to the London fire brigade for use at incidents involving radioactive substances.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The London and all other fire brigades have a range of equipment for the detection of radiation and for the personal protection and decontamination of firefighters at incidents involving radioactive substances. This includes personal dosimeters, radiac survey meters and decontamination meters.

Young Offenders

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many young people are subject to detention centre orders; and what is the estimated average weekly cost of a detention centre order;

(2) how many people are subject to youth custody; and what is the average annual cost of a youth custody order.

Mr. Mellor: According to the records held centrally, on 30 April 1986 there were about 1,200 detention centre trainees and about 7,800 youth custody trainees in Prison Department establishments in England and Wales. Estimates of average costs are all available only for types of penal establishments, and not for types of sentence. Detailed information on average weekly costs of penal establishments was published in the "Report on the work of the Prison Department 1984/85," (Cmnd. 9699) (table 7 and appendix No. 2, table D).

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what information he has about reconviction rates following a detention centre order;

(2) what information he has about reconviction rates following a youth custody order.

Mr. Mellor: The regularly available information of young offenders reconvicted within two years of discharge from Prison Department establishments is published annually in "Prison Statistics, England and Wales". (Information about those discharged in 1981 is given in tables 8.4 and 8.5 of the latest issue, for 1984, Cmnd. 9622). Figures for youth custody trainees are not yet available.

KG Smoke Dispersals

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the hon. Member for Hampstead and Highgate will receive a detailed response to the letters sent to his noble Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State on 15 April and 3 June about KG smoke dispersals.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I very much regret the delay. My hon. Friend will receive a reply from my noble Friend very shortly.

Mr. Norman William Davis

Mr. Terry Davis asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Hodge Hill on 18 June, *Official Report*, whether he has now taken a decision on the recommendation of the Parole Board regarding Mr. Norman William Davis.

Mr. Mellor: My right hon. Friend has considered the Parole Board's recommendation. Mr. Davis will be informed of the outcome as soon as possible.

Plastic Bullets

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will state which of the Welsh police forces have supplies of plastic bullets.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Plastic baton rounds are held only by the North Wales police.

Drink-Driving

Mr. Beaumont-Dark asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will introduce legislation to prohibit the practice of backtracking from breath tests for the purpose of seeking to assess whether a driver was at any particular previous time likely to have been in breach of the drink-driving provisions of the Road Traffic Acts; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The Road Traffic Act 1972 provides for the courts to give due weight to the results of evidential breath test, blood or urine tests in drink drive cases. It is for the court to decide in a particular case what other evidence is to be admitted, and the importance to be attached to it. I see no need to seek to restrict the discretion of the courts in this matter.

Metropolitan Police

Mr. Michael Cocks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the proposed reorganisation of the current divisional structure of the Metropolitan police.

Mr. Giles Shaw: In accordance with the plans for reorganising the force which the Commissioner announced in November 1984, the district command structure has been abolished with effect from 30 June. No changes are to be made to the divisional structure.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Young Persons (Full-time Education)

Mr. Wainwright asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the latest estimate of the number and percentage of young people who remain in full-time education until the age of 18 years *(a)* in England and *(b)* in each of the principal English regions; and how this number compares with that for 1980 and 1984.

Mr. Dunn: The table shows the numbers and percentages of 16 and 17-year-olds who remained in full-time education at maintained schools and further education establishments in the academic years 1984-85 and 1980-81 by region in England. Data for the current academic year (1985-86) will be available in the autumn.

England

	16-year-olds in full-time education				*17-year-olds in full-time education*			
	1980-81		*1984-85*		*1980-81*		*1984-85*	
	Student numbers (000s)	*Percentage of age group**	*Student numbers (000s)*	*Percentage of age group**	*Student numbers (000s)*	*Percentage of age group†*	*Student numbers (000s)*	*Percentage of age group†*
North	18	35	19	40	10	21	12	25
Yorkshire and Humberside	30	38	32	41	18	23	20	27
North West	41	39	42	42	26	25	30	30
East Midlands	24	39	25	42	14	24	17	29
West Midlands	35	42	35	43	21	25	24	29
East Anglia	11	40	11	43	6	24	7	28
Greater London	45	48	43	51	27	29	28	32
Other South East	72	48	73	51	45	31	50	34
South West	27	44	28	47	17	28	19	31
England	303	42	309	46	185	26	209	30

* The number of 16-year-olds have been expressed as a percentage of the total number of 15-year-olds in maintained secondary schools one year earlier.

† The number of 17-year-olds have been expressed as a percentage of the total number of 15-year-olds in maintained secondary schools two years earlier.

PhDs (Part-time Study)

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how he is notified of proposed increases in fees for students studying for PhDs on a part-time basis; if he will list the increases by university; and what estimate he has of the effect of fee increases on completion rates.

Mr. Walden: Universities do not notify the Department or the University Grants Committee of their fee levels for part-time students.

Science and Engineering Teachers

Mr. Batiste asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is his policy for attracting more science and engineering teachers into the teaching profession.

Mr. Chris Patten: Good science and technology teachers are vital for the future of an advanced industrial nation. Appropriate remuneration is important in securing an adequate supply of teachers of suitable quality, but a range of other measures will still be necessary. We are working on these with our partners in the education service and in industry. We are publishing a consultative document and I shall send a copy to my hon. Friend.

Teachers (Pay and Conditions)

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the progress of the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service talks on teachers' pay and conditions of service.

Mr. Chris Patten: I understand that the four working parties set up to look at teachers' pay and structure, appraisal and training, duties and responsibilities and future negotiating machinery have now completed their work. These reports are to be received at a meeting between the two sides at ACAS on Wednesday 9 July.

Universities (Funding)

Mr. Warren asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will state the amount of money in current sterling values paid by Her Majesty's Government and local education authorities per head of the student population to universities in the financial year 1979-80 and in the present financial year.

Mr. Walden: The sum of the University Grants Committee's recurrent, equipment and capital grants to universities and universities' receipts in fees for home students (nearly all of which are paid by local education authorities) per full-time home student was, at 1986-87 prices, £6,323 in 1979-80 and £6,234 in 1986-87.

University and Polytechnic Departments

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many university departments and polytechnic departments have closed since 1979.

Mr. Walden: Information on the closure of university and polytechnic departments is not collected centrally; nor is information on the opening of new departments. Some such changes arise from reorganisation within institutions.

School Closures

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many objections to the closure of schools, out of the total number, have been successful in each year since 1979.

Mr. Dunn: Since 1979, 125 out of a total of 1,618 proposed school closures have been rejected by the Secretary of State. The Secretary of State considered these cases on their individual merits and reached his decisions on the basis of all the relevant factors, including any arguments raised by objectors.

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many schools have closed in England since 1979.

Mr. Dunn: Between 1979 and 31 May 1986, 1,493 schools have been approved for closure.

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the average time it has taken for him to reach a decision on the closure of a school in the last five years.

Mr. Dunn: Information is not available in exactly the form requested. The average time taken to decide all proposals falling to the Secretary of State in the period August 1980 to December 1985 was 6·5 months, including the two-month period for statutory objections to be made, and the further month for proposers' transmission of any such objections to the Secretary of State.

Teachers of the Deaf

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what has been his response to recent representations regarding the future of training teachers of the deaf.

Mr. Chris Patten: Ministers have received a number of letters, including one from the hon. Member on the future organisation of training to teach the deaf. I shall be replying to these representations shortly.

Royal Greenwich Observatory

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he will be replying to the letter sent to his predecessor by the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe, on 19 May concerning the relocation of the royal Greenwich observatory; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I replied to the right hon. Member today.

Technical and Vocational Education Initiative

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement about the development of the curriculum under the technical and vocational education initiative.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: As explained in the White Paper "Working Together: Education and Training" published today, the Government have decided that the technical and vocational education initiative should be extended from the pilot to a national scheme from autumn 1987, to be administered by the Manpower Services Commission working in close consultation with the Education Departments.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales and I are issuing guidance to local education authorities about the curricular criteria for the TVEI extension, which will be as follows:

1. Authorities will be required to submit development plans which are designed to show how they will make available to students in the 14-18 age range in their areas programmes of full-time studies, drawing on the experience of the TVEI pilot projects. Within the development plan which each authority submits, the proposals for the curriculum for students to whom the extension applies will be assessed for their consistency with the Government's policies for the curriculum as expressed in "Better Schools" as regards England and Wales and the Munn Report and Action Plan as regards Scotland.

2. Aspects which will be particularly taken into account for this purpose are set out below. They refer especially to what is proposed to be offered to those affected in the 14-16 age range. Due allowance will be made for the different situation of greater specialisation post-16 where studies may prepare directly for a specific vocational area, as defined in paragraph 49 of "Better Schools".

3. The individual programmes made available to students through the structure and application of common cores and option choices should be broad and balanced. They should be related to experience and aim to stretch all pupils to the full potential of their abilities. Students should be enabled to acquire a proper balance of knowledge, understanding, attitudes and skills including practical applications. The aim of the curriculum should be to develop the potential of all students as a preparation for adult life, including employment and the responsibilities of citizenship. This involves attention to the content of programmes, to the learning and teaching approaches used and to progression and continuity within courses and from year to year, particularly where what is done post-16 needs to start from what has been learnt before. It also involves the provision as far as practicable of programme patterns and choices which allow equal opportunity to boys and girls, to students from ethnic minorities and to students with special needs.

4. *Breadth* and *balance* cannot be achieved without an appropriate representation in each student's programme of technical and practical elements. The development plan should seek to secure that representation. Subject to that the balance should vary according to student needs, but all programmes for the 14 to 16 phase should reflect or make clear progress towards the situation set out in para 69-71 of "Better Schools" and for Scotland in "Curriculum design at S3 and S4: Guidelines for Headteachers" issued by the Consultative Committee on the Curriculum in December 1983. Programmes should include English, mathematics, science, elements drawn from the humanities and the arts, practical and technological work, and access to modern languages, or in Scotland the modes of study set out in the Munn Report. Due regard should be paid the statutory requirements for religious education. There should also be provision for individual and social development including personal counselling and guidance. Post-16 it is desirable that account should continue to be taken of breadth in order to foster the student's versatility and to keep open as wide as practicable a choice of career options.

5. *Relevance* should be sought by making programmes include a suitable emphasis on personal and social skills, initiative, and problem solving. Relevance may be improved by pre-vocational studies in appropriate cases and by relating what is taught in a broad sense to potential career opportunities locally and nationally; good careers education and guidance is essential. But relevance should not be sought before 16 through premature vocational specialisation. There should be appropriate planned work experience from age 15 onwards bearing in mind the provisions of the Education (Work Experience) Act 1973, and the Education (Scotland) Act 1980.

6. To secure *differentiation*, programmes should cater effectively for variations in abilities and aptitudes of all students. All students need to find themselves systematically challenged but not to find that the tasks set are beyond them.

7. Wherever possible the course of full or part-time education or training should lead to nationally recognised qualifications

approved by the Secondary Examinations Council or the proposed new National Council for Vocational Qualifications, or in Scotland the qualifications of SCOTVEC and/or the Scottish Examination Board. These will include GCSE, A and AS levels, BTEC, RSA, CGLI and CPVE, or in Scotland SCE Standard Ordinary, Higher and Certificate of Sixth Year Studies and National Certificate Modules.

8. Arrangements should be made for regular assessment. Where practicable students should on leaving school be issued by the authority with a record of achievement describing qualifications gained in their programmes and recording significant elements and attainments which are not readily deducible from the qualifications, for example work experience and personal success.

Expenditure

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if, further to his answer of 13 May, *Official Report*, columns 433-34, he will publish in the *Official Report* details of the basket of goods he used for comparing the purchasing power of expenditure on education, including figures on the standard of living of teachers.

Mr. Dunn: My answer of 13 May, revised on 12 June, at column 278, made use of purchasing power parities estimated by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. For comparing expenditures measured in national currencies, these are preferable to exchange rates in that they allow for differences in national price levels and so permit "real" comparisons. A summary of the theory underlying PPPs, together with some recent data, were given in "Purchasing Power Parities and Real Expenditures in the OECD", a copy of which is in the Library.

As is the case with consumer price indices which are used to adjust for changes in price levels over time, PPPs can be calculated based on different "baskets" of goods and services. The basket used for Japan and the United States of America for the purchasing power parities covered the whole of gross domestic product, consisting of private consumption, Government consumption and capital formation: details are given in the OECD publication cited. That for other countries covered consumer expenditure only. The individual parities for the various goods and services entering into GDP are aggregated according to overall national consumption patterns, and so do not relate specifically to the standard of living of teachers.

Higher Education

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) what *(a)* number and *(b)* percentage of people aged between 16 and 21 years in (i) Scotland, (ii) England, (iii) Wales and (iv) Northern Ireland are in higher education in the United Kingdom for each year from 1979 to date;

(2) what *(a)* percentage and *(b)* numbers of young people in (i) Scotland, (ii) England, (iii) Wales and (iv) Northern Ireland went on to higher and further education for each year from 1979 to date.

Mr. Walden [*pursuant to his reply*, 17 June 1986, c. *515*]: The information is shown in the following table. Figures for further and public sector higher education in Wales and of Scotland are the responsibility of my right hon. Friends the Secretary of State for Wales and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland. Figures for further and higher education, including universities in Northern Ireland, are the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

Students aged 16 to 20 in full-time further and higher education as a percentage of the population aged 16 to 20

	1979	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*
England*						
Population aged 16 to 20 (000's)	3,681	3,788	3,873	3,922	3,941	3,894
University (000's)	128·8	132·5	133·7	131·3	127·8	126·0
Per cent. university	3·5	3·5	3·5	3·3	3·2	3·2
PSHE (000's)	82·7	85·3	94·8	107·6	116·1	119·4
Total higher education (000's)	211·5	217·8	228·4	239·0	243·8	245·5
Per cent. higher education	5·7	5·7	5·9	6·1	6·2	6·3
NAFE (000's)	228·5	244·1	282·1	315·1	302·2	295·0
Total further and higher education (000's)	440·1	462·0	510·5	554·0	546·0	540·4
Per cent. further and higher education	12·0	12·2	13·2	14·1	13·9	13·9
Wales*						
Population aged 16 to 20 (000's)	216	223	231	236	239	236
University (000's)	11·1	11·6	11·2	11·2	10·6	10·8
Per cent. university	5·2	5·2	4·8	4·7	4·4	4·6
Scotland*						
Population aged 16 to 20 (000's)	440	445	457	457	454	453
University (000's)	26·7	27·6	28·0	27·8	27·4	27·0
Per cent. university	6·1	6·2	6·1	6·1	6·0	6·0

* Country of study for student numbers causing some distortion to the percentages where there are noticeable cross-border flows.

WALES

Radiation

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will state the locations in Wales of facilities available to the public to monitor radioactivity in samples of food.

Mr. Mark Robinson: General facilities for members of the public to monitor radioactivity are not provided by the Government. A programme of monitoring a wide range of crops and meat has been undertaken by the Government on a national basis since the Chernobyl accident in order to ensure the safety of public food supplies.

Sheep

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales what is his estimate of the number of lambs whose movements have been restricted by his recently announced Government ban, in each of the districts of Arfon, Dwyfor, Meirionnydd, Aberconwy, Ynys Môn, Colwyn and Glyndwr, respectively.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The estimated number of lambs whose movements have been restricted in the districts requested is as follows:

	Thousands
Arfon	80
Dwyfor	51
Meirionnydd	208
Aberconwy	128
Ynys Môn	156
Colwyn	154
Glyndwr	132

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish a table indicating the average price of lambs sold in markets in Wales during the periods *(a)* 8-14 June, *(b)* 15-21 June and *(c)* 22-28 June.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The average market price of lambs sold in markets in Wales in the periods requested are as follows:

Week commencing	*Price per kg liveweight pence*
9 June	234·59
16 June	190·45
23 June*	150·00

* Estimate.

Welsh Language

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales what are his responsibilities in relation to the Welsh language and its use.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The position was made abundantly clear by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State in his speech to representatives of Gwynedd county council on 15 April 1980.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales what is the total amount of direct Government support for the Welsh language; and if he will express the figures on a per capita basis, and as a whole under each expenditure heading, for each year since 1979.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The information is given in the following table:

	1979-80 £	*1980-81* £	*1981-82* £	*1982-83* £	*1983-84* £	*1984-85* £	*1985-86* £	*1986-87* £
Education Act 1980: Section 21 allocations	—	515,000	794,000	866,000	1,034,000	1,004,701	1,317,657	1,439,300
Development of Rural Wales Act 1976: Section 26 allocations	237,210	378,000	821,000	900,330	976,740	982,124	1,103,850	1,079,700
Voluntary Social Services Grant to MYM	70,000	87,000	94,000	98,000	102,000	110,350	119,400	115,800
Urdd HQ grant	68,073	47,949	58,282	55,497	56,496	60,296	62,236	62,485
Education research related to the Welsh language	143,788	150,432	123,531	137,084	147,000	200,000	276,000	380,000
Provision of Welsh element in bilingual roadsigns on motorways and trunk roads	190,000	245,000	280,000	300,000	350,000	173,760	132,648	*156,163
Total Direct Government support	709,071	1,423,381	2,170,813	2,356,911	2,666,236	2,531,231	3,011,791	3,233,448
Per Capita	£0·26	£0·52	£0·79	£0·86	£0·97	£0·92	£1·10	£1·18

* estimated.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish a table showing the Welsh-speaking population of the counties of Gwent, South Glamorgan, Mid Glamorgan and West Glamorgan at the last census.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: This information is already published in the 1981 census report "Welsh Language in Wales" CEN81WL, a copy of which is in the Library.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales what steps he takes to ensure that the linguistic position in Wales is taken into consideration when appointments to his Department are made.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The guiding principle with appointments to posts in all parts of the Civil Service is that the best available candidate should be selected, an where the duties of a post either require proficiency in Welsh or are such that proficiency would be an advantage,

this is reflected in the selection process. Recruitment to clerical posts in the Department's local officers is undertaken locally and in the more Welsh speaking areas it is normally found in practice that a reasonable proportion of those appointed to them will be Welsh speakers.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many senior civil servants in his Department are Welsh speaking; and what proportion this represents.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Of the 126 senior civil servants (grades 1 to 6) 56 (44 per cent.) are Welsh speakers.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales what information he has about the number and total sales value of children's books published in the Welsh language during the most recent 12-month period.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Through my annual discussions with the Welsh Books Council I am kept fully informed on all aspects of publishing in the Welsh language. The hon. Gentleman should approach the council direct for information which might be of commercial interest.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales what steps have been taken since May 1979 by his Department to encourage non-Welsh speaking persons in Wales to try to learn the language.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Direct Government support for the Welsh language since 1979 amounts to £18 million. This money has been used to support a wide variety of practical projects, including some to encourage non-Welsh speakers to learn the language.

Speech Therapists

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales what steps have been taken to ensure that the number of qualified speech therapists employed by each of the area health authorities in Wales conforms with the standard set out in the report of the committee chaired by Sir Randolph Quirk; how many of those currently employed are bilingual in Welsh and English; and what were the corresponding figures for each year since 1979.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Following the publication of the Quirk report, a working party on speech therapy in Wales reported in December 1979. Since 1979 whole-time speech therapists employed by district health authorities in Wales increased from 65·6 to 117·6 at September 1985. This suggests that the standards recommended in the Quirk report will be attained well before the target date of 1992. Information on the current number of bilingual staff employed by health authorities is not held centrally.

Translation Unit

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many persons are now employed full-time and part-time at the translation unit of his Department; and how this compares with the position in 1979.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: We employ four full-time members of staff in the Welsh Office translation unit, compared with five in 1979. No part-time staff are employed, but we make use of translation agencies from time to time.

Housing

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list in the *Official Report* his sources of evidence for his acceptance in Welsh Office circular 30/86 that there is a genuine demand for sites for houses for executives and his concern that failure to meet it will inhibit attempts to secure new commercial and industrial enterprises.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The evidence derives from representations and statements to that effect by representatives of industry and housebuilders, supported by the views of the Land Authority for Wales and by professional advice in the Welsh Office. It has been corroborated in the responses to the consultation exercise undertaken on the issue received from a number of bodies, including the Confederation of British Industry (Wales), Winvest, Welsh Development Agency and Mid Wales Development.

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list in the *Official Report* those organisations, including local authorities, that he consulted before issuing Welsh Office circular 30/86 about housing for executives.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The information is as follows:

Confederation of British Industry (Wales)
Winvest
Welsh Development Agency
Institute of Directors
National Federation of Chambers of Commerce (Wales)
Land Authority for Wales
House Builders' Federation
Building Societies Association
Federation of Master Builders
Royal Institute of British Architects
Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors
Incorporated Society of Valuers and Auctioneers
College of Estate Management, Polytechnic of Wales
National Housing and Town Planning Council
National Farmers' Union
Farmers Union of Wales
Country Landowners' Association
Development Board for Rural Wales
Countryside Commission
Council for the Protection of Rural Wales
Nature Conservancy Council
Royal Town Planning Institute
Town and Country Planning Association
Welsh Counties Committee
Welsh Office of the Assocation of District Planning Authorities
Welsh District Planning Officers Society
Wales Association of Community and Town Councils

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Wales what additional resources he is to make available to planning authorities to carry out the review specified in Welsh Office circular 30/86 about housing for executives.

Mr. Mark Robinson: I am satisfied that the local planning authorities will be able to undertake the review in conjunction with their existing programmes of work.

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list in the *Official Report* those research studies his Department has undertaken preceding the issuing of Welsh Office circular 30/86 that have direct relevance to that circular.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The evidence was not collected on the basis of research studies, but through the long-established process of public consultation.

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish in the *Official Report* those individuals and organisations who have drawn his attention to the possible disincentive to business people who might otherwise be prepared to invest and develop in Wales brought about by the absence of an adequate pool of houses attractive to and suitable for senior managers and senior technical staff referred to in Welsh Office circular 30/86.

Mr. Mark Robinson: My right hon. Friend had his attention drawn to this matter by a number of individuals and organisations concerned with inward investment of business and industry. Their views have been supported in the responses from the Land Authority for Wales, Confederation of British Industry (Wales), Welsh Development Agency and Winvest, to the consultation exercise undertaken on the issue.

TRANSPORT

Trunk Road Programme

Mr. Hayes asked the Secretary of State for Transport what is the current statement of policy objectives for the trunk road programme.

Mr. Moore: The current statement of policy objectives for the trunk road programme in England is in paragraphs 11 and 12 of the report, "National Roads England — 1985". This updates the previous statement of policy objectives given in the White Paper "Policy for Roads in England: 1983" (Cmnd. 9059).

Copies of "National Roads in England — 1985" were placed in the Library at the time of publication.

Motorway Services

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he is considering the provision of any additional motorway services on the existing motorway network in the north-west.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We are considering the provision of a motorway service area at Hapsford, at junction 14 of the M56 north of Chester.

London Midland Region (Performance Management Team)

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 25 June, on what basis he has concluded that the results so far of the performance management team for the London Midland region to be encouraging.

Mr. David Mitchell: Details of this sort are a matter for the board, but I understand that its view was based on improved punctuality figures.

A65 Addingham Bypass

Mr. Waller asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects the public inquiry into the proposed A65 Addingham bypass to take place.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Probably in the late autumn.

Roads (Lighting)

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to publish the revised method of assessing the need for road lighting.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We hope to announce a new policy on road lighting and to publish related guidance on assessment aspects before the summer recess.

M42

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Transport what stretches of the M42 have been identified as being prone to fog.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The table lists the relevant findings of a study undertaken for the Department by the Meteorological Office.

Sites around the M42 motorway between M5 and junction 5 north of Tamworth likely to experience 25 or more days with fog (visibility 1,000 m) at 09.00 h GMT per year and approximate average annual number of days with fog at 09.00 GMT +/− 5 days

Site	*Number of days*
Kingsbury Water Park	35
Junction 2 area	33
Junction 3 area	30
Austrey Meadows	27
River Anker Crossing	26
Junction 1 area	25

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Transport what stretches of the M42 have had lighting installed along them.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: All junctions, including motorway to motorway interchanges, are being provided with lighting.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Transport if cable ducting has been installed during the construction of the M42.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Transverse ducting has been provided at regular intervals.

Road Accident Statistics

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Transport what was the total of *(a)* accidents and *(b)* fatalities on motorways *(x)* in daytime and *(y)* at night in 1985 and in 1986 to date.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I shall write to my hon. Friend.

Boeing 737 Fire (Manchester)

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to receive a further report from the Civil Aviation Authority into the Boeing 737 fire at Manchester international airport on 22 August 1985; and if he can yet make a further statement.

Mr. Moore: The accident to the Boeing 737 at Manchester airport on 22 August 1985 is the subject of an inspector's investigation by the accidents investigation branch of my Department. The Chief Inspector of Accidents anticipates submitting his report to Ministers at the end of the year. This accident is an extremely complex one and it would be improper of me to try to anticipate the findings of the inspector's report.

Investment Grants (Shipping)

Sir William Clark asked the Secretary of State for Transport which member states of the European Economic Community make operational subsidies available to their shipping companies; what is the scale of such assistance; and what conditions are imposed on the availability of such assistance.

Mr. Moore [*pursuant to his reply*, 30 June 1986, c. *443*]: Up-to-date information is not available, but in general direct operating subsidies in the Community are confined to support for services to outlying communities.

Sir William Clark asked the Secretary of State for Transport which member states of the European Economic Community reserve part of their seaborne trade to their national shipping companies; and what is the nature and extent of such cargo reservation in each case.

Mr. Moore [*pursuant to his reply*, 30 June 1986, c. *443*]: France, Greece, Italy, Portugal and Spain all reserve their cabotage trades to their national flagged vessels. Denmark and the Federal Republic of Germany have similar restrictions but in practice waive them for United Kingdom flagged vessels. Spain reserves various cargoes, in particular oil, cereals and tobacco to national flagged vessels. France reserves the carriage of 66 per cent. of her crude oil imports and 40 per cent. of her coal imports to French flag vessels. France, Spain and Portugal also reserve "Government" cargoes to national flagged vessels. Belgium, France, Federal Republic of Germany, Italy, Portugal and Spain have bilateral cargo-sharing agreements of various kinds with certain developing countries.

Sir William Clark asked the Secretary of State for Transport which member states of the European Economic Community provide investment grants or other assistance to their shipping companies for the purchase of new ships; what is the size and nature of such grants or assistance in each case; and whether the grant of such aid is conditional on either building such ships in national shipyards or operating them under the national flag.

Mr. Moore [*pursuant to his reply*, 30 June 1986, c. *443*]: The available information is as follows:

Country	*Grants*			*Financing*			*Tax or Fiscal Exemption*		
	Description	*Volume 1985*	*1986*	*Description*	*Volume 1985*	*1986*	*Description*	*Volume 1985*	*1986*
Germany	12·5 per cent. of construction value for new ships and conversion for home owners (not legally bound to national yards) (eight year German flag obligation)	219·33 m DM (for total construction and conversion costs of 1,733 m DM)	Increased to 20 per cent. for conversion	Interest free loans (six years) to home owners based on initial costs and present linear book value of fleet under German flag, not more than 14 years old	80 mio DM	continuing	Specific fiscal offsetting of new building losses at a maximum of 150 per cent. of capital share	n.a.	continuing
Denmark	none			*a)* 14 years (four year grace period 8 per cent. loans to home owners) (construction at EEC yards)	Coverage of difference to par: 614 mio DKR (out of total financed value of 3605·7 mio DKR)	Also in certain foreign currencies		n.a.	
Portugal				Credit facilities for owners for constructions in Portugal. Credit on 80 per cent. of contract price. Duration ten years interest rate OECD terms					
Belgium				Credit facilities Credit on 70 per cent. of contract price. Interest rate 4-5 per cent. for 15 years with one year moratorium. Credit is available to Belgian ship-owners for building in any country but the vessel under the Belgian flag					
United Kingdom				Home Ship-building Credit Guarantee Scheme conforms with OECD understanding on export credit	United Kingdom £207 m	continuing			
France	Intensity 0-15 per cent. legally bound to national shipyards	n.a.	n.a.	nil					

Country	Grants: Description	Grants: Volume 1985	Grants: 1986	Financing: Description	Financing: Volume 1985	Financing: 1986	Tax or Fiscal Exemption: Description	Tax or Fiscal Exemption: Volume 1985	Tax or Fiscal Exemption: 1986
Italy	Laws 361/82 and 842/85 Half-yearly subventions during 12 years *a)* 2·75 per cent. of the contract price *b)* 3·20 per cent. of the contract price for tankers under 5.000 DWT and for other vessels under 3.000 DWT The grants are available for Italian shipowners for vessels built in community yards and the vessels must sail under Italian flag			Internal credit scheme Interest rebate for national owners in order to reach the OECD export credit terms	n.a.	n.a.	Exemption of custom duties, exemption of VAT on material for shipbuilding		
Netherlands	Subsidy to owners granted wherever the country of building 19·5 per cent. of the contract price								
Greece				Loans on 30 per cent. of the contract price to Greek and foreign owners. The loans are granted in Drachmas and must be reimbursed in foreign currencies. The interest rate is fixed at 14 per cent. representing a rebate of 4 per cent. Duration four years, half yearly payments.				
Spain				Home credit scheme 85 per cent. of value, max. 12 years with two years grace. Interest rate eight per cent.					

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Welsh Language

Mr. Wigley asked the Attorney-General if he will consider establishing an inquiry into the use of the Welsh language in the courts of Wales.

The Solicitor-General: The Government are committed to the principle of equal validity in the use of English and Welsh in court proceedings in Wales as provided for in the Welsh Language Act 1967. The Lord Chancellor will willingly consider any specific representations about the facilities for the use of Welsh in courts for which he is responsible, but no need is seen for a further general review.

Mr. Wigley asked the Attorney-General what provision is being made as part of the development of land registration in Wales, for the certificate of land registration to be available in either a Welsh language or bilingual form.

The Solicitor-General: There are approximately 340,000 separate registered properties in Wales. The translation of this information in every case could at present be accomplished only at the cost of an unacceptable delay in the compulsory registration of title.

Merthyr Tydfil County Court

Mr. Rowlands asked the Attorney-General how many special procedure sittings took place at Merthyr Tydfil county court between 1 August and 1 October in 1983, 1984 and 1985; and how many are planned for those months in 1986.

The Solicitor-General: During the period 1 August to 1 October 1983 there was no special procedure sitting for dissolution of marriage at Merthyr Tydfil county court. One such sitting took place during the same period in each of the following years and one is planned for this year. Normally there is about one special procedure sitting each month. The court on an average sits about four days each month.

ENERGY

Nuclear Industry

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will deposit in the Library a full copy of the original safety case for one of the Magnox nuclear power stations now subject to a 20-year safety review.

Mr. Goodlad: No. I understand from the operators that the original safety cases, which were prepared for the construction of the Magnox stations, have been continuously updated and that the original documentation does not therefore fully reflect the current safety cases.

Goods and Services

Mr. Forman asked the Secretary of State for Energy what is the latest estimate of the total value of purchases

of goods and services made by the public energy utilities; and what proportion of the total was supplied by the private sector.

Mr. Peter Walker: This information is not available centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

National Coal Board

Mr. Christopher Hawkins asked the Secretary of State for Energy whether the terms of his assurance about Government financial support for the National Coal Board set out in his answer of 19 June 1985 to the hon. Member for Enfield, Southgate (Mr. Portillo), apply to 1986-87 also.

Mr. David Hunt: Lower oil prices have increased the competitive pressure on the coal industry. Nevertheless, it remains the board's objective to break even on revenue account by 1987-88, and to earn a positive return thereafter on its assets in real terms after the payment of social grants.

I can confirm that, subject to Parliament's approving the necessary provisions, the Government will continue to make available funds to enable the NCB to meet its obligations as they fall due during the board's current financial year to 28 March 1987.

EMPLOYMENT

Labour Statistics

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Paymaster General (1) if, pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for Great Grimsby, *Official Report*, 28 April, columns *337-38*, he will show the types of job on the CODOT classification of those people aged under 20 years recorded as in *(a)* full-time and *(b)* part-time work;

(2) if, in the manner of the answer to the hon. Member for Great Grimsby, *Official Report*, 28 April, columns *337-38*, he will give the comparable figures for the labour force surveys from 1979 to 1985 for those recorded to be in full-time and part-time work aged from 21 to 24 years.

Mr. Lang: The available labour force survey estimates are given in tables 1 and 2. The amount of occupational detail that can be given is limited by sample size.

Table 1—Labour Force Survey data on employees aged 16-19 by occupational groupings, in Great Britain*

	Male		*Female*	
	Full-time† (thousands)	*Part-time†* (thousands)	*Full-time†* (thousands)	*Part-time†* (thousands)
CODOT broad groupings—1979				
Managerial and professional	93	..	58	..
Clerical and related	83	..	378	11
Other non-manual occupations	54	13	107	37
Craft and similar occupations	390	..	80	..
General labourers	55	..	7	..
Other manual occupations	325	20	204	24
TOTAL‡	1,002	41	838	75
CODOT broad groupings—1981				
Managerial and professional	74	..	53	..
Clerical and related	69	..	335	22
Other non-manual occupations	57	40	104	91
Craft and similar occupations	351	..	57	..
General labourers	35	..	..	..
Other manual occupations	251	64	173	63
TOTAL‡	840	122	727	181
CODOT broad groupings—1983				
Managerial and professional	62	..	48	..
Clerical and related	57	..	273	26
Other non-manual occupations	49	37	86	91
Craft and similar occupations	277	..	45	..
General labourers	42	..	..	..
Other manual occupations	252	65	157	79
TOTAL‡	742	114	616	200
CODOT broad groupings—1984				
Managerial and professional	62	..	49	..
Clerical and related	62	11	277	34
Other non-manual occupations	49	55	96	100
Craft and similar occupations	287	..	46	..
General labourers	40	..	..	..
Other manual occupations	266	82	179	97
TOTAL‡	768	163	652	236

	Male		Female	
	Full-time† (thousands)	Part-time† (thousands)	Full-time† (thousands)	Part-time† (thousands)
CODOT broad groupings—1985 ‖				
Managerial and professional	52	..	46	..
Clerical and related	75	..	271	32
Other non-manual occupations	47	55	62	114
Craft and similar occupations	227	..	39	..
General labourers	22	..	..	..
Other manual occupations	227	85	154	98
TOTAL‡	651	157	574	250

• The Labour Force Survey estimates relate to the spring of each year. Figures for 1985 exclude those employees on Government schemes, whereas earlier years include those on schemes if reported as in employment as an employer.
† In this table an employee is shown as full-time or part-time according to whether he considers his job to be a full or part-time job.
‡ Includes those who did not state their occupation.
‖ Preliminary estimates.
..less than 10 thousand.

Table 2
Labour Force Survey data on employees• aged 20-24 years, in Great Britain

Thousands

	Males	Females
1979		
Full-time†	1,578	1,056
Part-time†	12	117
All employees‡	1,589	1,173
1981		
Full-time†	1,417	1,058
Part-time†	18	121
All employees‡	1,452	1,195
1983		
Full-time†	1,416	1,112
Part-time†	26	128
All employees‡	1,444	1,246
1984		
Full-time†	1,445	1,104
Part-time†	42	168
All employees‡	1,489	1,273
1985‖		
Full-time†	1,504	1,136
Part-time†	44	179
All employees‡	1,548	1,315

• The labour force survey estimates relate to the spring of each year. Figures for 1985 exclude those employees on Government schemes, whereas earlier years include those on schemes if reported as in employment as an employee.
† In this table an employee is shown as full-time or part-time according to whether he considers his job to be a full or part-time job.
‡ Includes those who did not state whether their job was full or part-time.
‖ Preliminary estimates.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Paymaster General if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for each year of the labour force survey the number of people aged *(a)* 16 to 19 years, *(b)* 20 to 24 years and *(c)* 25 years and over who were in temporary work, broken down into full and part-time workers.

Mr. Lang: Estimates of the number of seasonal, temporary or casual jobs are available from the labour force survey since 1981. These are presented in the following table.

Persons‖ in seasonal, temporary or casual jobs—Great Britain

Thousands

	Age					
	16-19		20-24		25+	
Year	Full-time•	Part-time•	Full-time•	Part-time•	Full-time	Part-time•
1981†	39	118	19	24	49	261
1983	73	204	61	47	150	379
1984	82	207	55	50	157	417
1985‡	47	197	66	60	152	454

‖ Estimates relate to the Spring of each year. Figures for 1985 exclude those on Government schemes, whereas earlier years include those on schemes if reported as in employment.
• In this table an employee is shown as full-time or part-time according to whether he considers his job to be a full or part-time job.
† In 1981 the relevant question was addressed to employees only and identified occasional or casual (including seasonal) jobs.
‡ Preliminary estimates.

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Paymaster General what data have been assembled by his Department reflecting the overall level of employment and increases in levels of pay and earnings in the west midlands region each year since 1979; and how these statistics compare with those of east Anglia and the south-east.

Mr. Lang: Table 1 records the civilian employed labour force (the sum of employees in employment and the self-employed) in the regions specified at June each year from 1979 while table 2 presents the new earnings survey estimates of gross weekly earnings for April of each year.

Table 1
Civilian employed labour force in June of each year

	West Midlands	East Anglia	South East
1979	2,382	781	8,124
1980	2,362	793	8,166
1981	2,221	768	7,963
1982	2,145	767	7,867
1983	2,094	775	7,825
1984	2,113	802	8,064
1985	2,128	824	8,227

Table 2
Average gross weekly earnings of full-time adult employees April*

	West Midlands		East Anglia		South East	
	£/week	Per cent. change from previous year	£/week	Per cent. change from previous year	£/week	Per cent. change from previous year
1979†	87·2	+13·8	85·7	+14·9	95·6	+13·1
1980†	105·0	+20·4	104·3	+21·7	119·1	+24·6
1981†	117·8	+12·2	120·6	+15·6	134·8	+13·2
1982†	127·9	+8·6	130·3	+8·0	149·3	+10·8
1983	‡137·8	†+8·0	‡139·6	†+8·4	‡162·9	†+9·1
1984‡	149·7	+8·6	150·8	+8·0	176·1	+8·9
1985‡	160·3	+7·1	163·7	+8·6	189·1	+7·4

* Whose earnings were not affected by absence.
† Women aged 18 and over and men aged 21 and over.
‡ Women and men on adult rates.

Mr. Lofthouse asked the Paymaster General what has been the percentage increase in unemployment in Pontefract and Castleford and Knottingley since 1979.

Mr. Lang: The information requested is not available. Statistics of unemployment for parliamentary constituencies and electoral wards are derived from the new ward-based system and are available only from June 1983. These and statistics from the former system based on jobcentre areas are available in the Library.

Mr. Lofthouse asked the Paymaster General how many people were unemployed for more than one year in 1979 and each subsequent year in *(a)* the Castleford travel-to-work area and *(b)* the Yorkshire and Humberside region.

Mr. Lang: Following is the available information which is in the Library. The figures are affected by the 1983 Budget provisions which mean that certain older men, mainly aged 60 or over, no longer have to sign on to receive benefit, and by the change in the timng of compilation of unemployment statistics in March 1986. Larger discontinuities occurred in the local area statistics in 1982 and 1983 with the change in the basis of the count, the introduction of ward-based statistics and the revision to boundaries of travel-to-work areas. Therefore the figures are not directly comparable.

Claimants—unemployed for over 12 months

	Yorkshire and Humberside Region	Castleford and Pontefract travel-to-work area
April 1983	108,868	—
April 1984	112,894	2,849
April 1985	126,373	3,535
April 1986	127,791	3,349

Registrants—unemployed for over 12 months
Yorkshire and Humberside Region

	Number
April 1979	32,728
April 1980	30,808
April 1981	47,208
April 1982	93,806

Mr. Lofthouse asked the Paymaster General what is the latest figure of persons aged under 25 years who are unemployed; and how many have been unemployed for more than 12 months in the Castleford travel-to-work area.

Mr. Lang: On 10 April 1986, the latest date for which an analysis of unemployment by age and duration is available, there were 1,183,833 unemployed claimants aged under 25 years in the United Kingdom. The number of claimants aged under 25 years in the Castleford and Pontefract travel-to-work area was 3,460, of whom 928 had been unemployed for over 12 months.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Paymaster General what is the percentage unemployment rate in the constituencies of Leicester, East, Leicester, West and Leicester, South; and what was the equivalent figure and the number of claimants in May 1985.

Mr. Lang: Unemployment rates are not calculated for areas smaller than travel-to-work areas. The following information on the numbers of unemployed claimants in the requested constituencies in May 1985 is in the Library. For the corresponding figures for May 1986, I refer my hon. Friend to my previous reply to him on 26 June at column *243*.

Unemployed Claimants, May 1985

	Number
Leicester East	5,768
Leicester West	7,284
Leicester South	7,557

Mr. Hancock asked the Paymaster General what is the number of unemployed building and construction workers by region at the latest available date.

Mr. Lang: The available information which is derived from the labour force survey is as follows:

Persons without a job and actively seeking work, having become unemployed within the past three years, with their last job in the construction industry—Spring 1984

Region	Unemployed (Thousands)
South East	61
East Anglia	*
South West	13
West Midlands	18
East Midlands	14
Yorkshire and Humberside	20

Region	*Unemployed (Thousands)*
North West	28
North	21
Wales	17
Scotland	33
Great Britain	233

• Less than 10 thousand persons.

Uranium Workers (Health)

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Paymaster General what information is available from his Department, the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority or the National Radiological Protection Board on radiological assessments of the health and morbidity rates of workers at the uranium mines from which the United Kingdom obtains uranium for civil nuclear use.

Mr. Trippier: All uranium for the civil nuclear programme is obtained from overseas. No information on any radiological assessments or morbidity rates of workers at the mines from which the United Kingdom obtains uranium is held by my Department, the Health and Safety Executive, or the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority. The National Radiological Protection Board has accumulated some information on the radiation induced lung cancer mortality of uranium miners and I am asking the director to reply to the hon. Gentleman direct.

Career Development Loans

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Paymaster General how many disabled people have *(a)* applied for and *(b)* received career development loans in each of the four pilot areas since their introduction.

Mr. Trippier: No information is available as applicants do not have to declare whether they are disabled as a condition of receiving the career development loan. Evaluation of these pilot experiments will include a follow up of successful and unsuccessful applicants and will seek more detailed information about personal characteristics, including disablement.

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Paymaster General if he intends to take steps to introduce training for banking staff to equip them to decide whether an applicant is suitable for a career development loan and, in particular, training taking account of the special needs of disabled people.

Mr. Trippier: No. All applicants are provided with guidance intended to help them decide whether a career development loan would be the best way to improve their employment prospects. A checklist suggests that health and any disabilities should be taken into account when choosing a course. Bank staff assess only eligibility and, taking account of the Government assistance available, the applicant's ability to repay the loan.

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Paymaster General if those organisations which provide training under the career development loans scheme will be given any guidance in assessing the needs of disabled people who apply for courses organised by them and in dealing with their special training requirements.

Mr. Trippier: The disablement advisory service of the Manpower Services Commission provides assistance to all training organisations which seek guidance about special needs of disabled people who apply for courses, whether or not the trainees in question are financed through career development loans.

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Paymaster General if he is satisfied with the progress of the career development loans scheme; what action he is taking to assist disabled people to benefit from it; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: I am encouraged by the response so far. Career development loans make it easier for people, including those with a disability, to borrow money for training of their choice. The disablement advisory service of the Manpower Services Commission is aware of the experiment and will be drawing the possibilities to the attention of disabled people in the four pilot areas of Aberdeen, Bristol/Bath, Greater Manchester and Reading/Slough whenever it thinks it appropriate to do so.

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Paymaster General how many people have *(a)* applied for and *(b)* received career development loans in each of the four pilot areas since their introduction.

Mr. Trippier: Participating banks notify my Department only when an application has been accepted or rejected. Since the launch on 15 April the following notifications have been received:

	(a) Applications	*(b) Approvals*
Aberdeen	4	4
Bristol and Bath	0	0
Manchester	10	1
Reading and Slough	3	2
Total	17	7

Job Creation

Mr. Lofthouse asked the Paymaster General if he will give details of job-creating schemes *(a)* for the current year and *(b)* planned for 1987 in the Castleford travel-to-work area.

Mr. Lang: The full range of employment, enterprise and training opportunities described in the "Action for Jobs" booklet is available to people living in Pontefract and Castleford. The only exception is the new career development loans initiative, which we are piloting in four areas.

Jobcentres

Mr. Lofthouse asked the Paymaster General how many jobs were available at jobcentres in *(a)* the Yorkshire and Humberside region and *(b)* the Castleford travel-to-work area in May 1979 and June 1986; and what are the latest figures available.

Mr. Lang: The following table shows the numbers of unfilled vacancies in the Yorkshire and Humberside region, and at Castleford, Knottingley, Pontefract and Normanton jobcentres, which cover an area closely corresponding to the Pontefract and Castleford constituency. Vacancy figures for June 1986 will be available in the Library on 17 July.

Vacancies at Jobcentres (excluding community programme)

	Yorkshire and Humberside Region	*Castleford, Knottingley Pontefract and Normanton Jobcentres*
May 1979	17,674	425
May 1986	10,623	303

Closures and Redundancies

Mr. Lofthouse asked the Paymaster General if he will list the largest 20 closures or redundancies in the Yorkshire and Humberside region since 1979, giving in each instance *(a)* the total jobs lost, *(b)* the date and *(c)* the company name.

Mr. Lang: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) on 26 June at column *244*.

"Action for Jobs—Opening More Doors"

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Paymaster General what was the total cost of producing the booklet "Action for Jobs — Opening More Doors"; how much of this cost was as a result of work done by his Department and how much due to services supplied by the Central Office of Information; and if he will give a breakdown of the Central Office of Information costs.

Mr. Lang: The total cost to date of the "Action for Jobs" booklets produced by the Central Office of Information is £383,820 (excluding VAT). This figure includes COI editorial, design, artworks, and commercial printing/production costs for the 2,980,000 booklets so far produced.

It would be disproportionately expensive to attempt an estimate of the time spent on the project by departmental and MSC officials.

Radioactive Substances (Incidents)

Mr. Gould asked the Paymaster General if he is satisfied that the advice and recommendations to local site authorities on the appliances and equipment to be deployed at incidents involving radioactive substances are being implemented; and if he will clarify and amplify that advice where necessary.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I have been asked to reply.

I have no reason to believe that the comprehensive guidance issued to all chief fire officers is not acted upon. It is kept under review and will be amplified as necessary.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

South Africa

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received about the likely effect of sanctions against South Africa on employment in the United Kingdom and in South Africa; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: We receive a large amount of correspondence about South Africa, some of which deals with the effect that sanctions against South Africa might have on employment in the United Kingdom and in South Africa. We shall continue to take full account of this important negative aspect of economic sanctions.

Mr. Stanbrook asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will give his estimate of the total number of persons resident in South Africa who are believed to be entitled to the right of abode in the United Kingdom, specifying their supposed British nationality status by birth, descent, registration and naturalisation, respectively.

Mrs. Chalker: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer given by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State to my hon. Friend the Member for Elmet (Mr. Batiste) on 15 April at column 380.

It is not possible to specify the proportion of British nationals, resident in South Africa, who have acquired British nationality by each of the means mentioned in my hon. Friend's question.

Kyshtyu (Nuclear Accident)

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will place in the Library copies of the representations made by Her Majesty's Government to the Soviet Government following reports in the British press on 18 March 1959 concerning an accident at a nuclear installation at Kyshtyu.

Mrs. Chalker: No representations were made.

Hong Kong

Sir Paul Bryan asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he is satisfied with the level of provision of facilities in Hong Kong for the teaching of the performing arts; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: Satisfactory training and coaching facilities for students of the performing arts are provided by the Hong Kong Government and various voluntary associations and private organisations. There are over 100 independent arts institutions which provide training in dance and drama. The Hong Kong Government's music office also provides training in musical instruments, both Chinese and Western, for approximately 4,000 young students.

The Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts, a prime example of private and public sector co-operation, has been established since September 1984 as an independent institution which aims to provide and encourage training, education and research in the performing arts and related technical fields. The facilities in the academy are among the most advanced in the world. At present, the academy has 205 full-time students and 120 part-time junior students, and on full establishment will provide training for 600 full-time students in the four major disciplines of dance, drama, music and technical arts. In its latest admission exercise which closed in May, over 2,000 applications for 140 places were received.

Sir Paul Bryan asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he is satisfied with the level of provision of facilities for outdoor leisure pursuits in Hong Kong; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: Outdoor leisure pursuits are the most popular form of recreational activity in Hong Kong and

the territory's population are now able to pursue a greater variety of activities than ever before. Government planning standards aim to ensure that in spite of the territory's land shortages each district is adequately provided with open space and recreational facilities. Opportunities exist for participation in practically every outdoor sport. Increasing use is made of Hong Kong's 21 country parks, covering 40 per cent. of the land area of the territory, for hiking, camping and related activities.

SOLICITOR-GENERAL FOR SCOTLAND

Departmental Accommodation

38. **Mr. Michael Forsyth** asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland, pursuant to his answer of 4 June, *Official Report*, column 894, what steps he has taken to obtain more appropriate accommodation for his Department than is currently offered by the Royal High school building in Edinburgh; and if he will make a statement.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: I anticipate that the Crown Office will be accommodated on part of the site at Chambers street, Edinburgh on which the new sheriff court will be erected. However, this could not be achieved before 1992.

Procurators Fiscal (Warnings)

39. **Mr. Bill Walker** asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland if he will provide details of instructions given by his Department to procurators fiscal with regard to the issuing of warnings to individuals who have been charged by the police when the procurators have decided not to take the case to court.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: The current instructions given by my Department to procurators fiscal with regard to the issuing of warnings remain the same in substance as those contained in Crown Office circular No. 1685, copies of which were deposited in the Libraries of both Houses in July 1980. I refer my hon. Friend to my predecessor's answer to my question on 9 July 1980 at columns *546-48*.

Diligence (Crown Preference)

40. **Mr. Pollock** asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland if he has any plans to seek to amend the law relating to Crown preference in regard to the law of diligence.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: My noble and learned Friend the Lord Advocate and I are both considering with our ministerial colleagues both the Commission's proposals and the related proposals of the Keith committee on enforcement powers of the Revenue departments.

Until our consideration of the proposals is completed I am not in a position to say whether, or in what way the law might be amended.

Crown Office Staff

41. **Mr. Canavan** asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland how many Crown Office staff are employed in the Scottish Assembly building.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: The total number of persons currently employed in the Crown Office, Scotland, is 104.

Traders (Licences)

42. **Sir Hector Monro** asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland how many traders have been proceeded against by procurators fiscal under the Civic Government Act for failure to have the appropriate licences.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: Statistics recording this information are not kept separately.

Violent Crime (Prosecutions)

43. **Mr. Hirst** asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland how many prosecutions took place in 1985 in Strathclyde for serious crimes involving violence; and if he will make a statement.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: The provisional figure available for 1985 is 2,473 persons proceeded against. The Government welcome the fact that, overall, crime in Strathclyde has decreased but are concerned that there has been an increase in serious crimes of violence. Every effort possible will be made by this Government to support the law enforcement agencies in combating this problem.

Mr. Alan J. Pocock

44. **Mr. Kennedy** asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland if he will explain the reasons for the length of time which has elapsed in replying to the hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye with regard to the case of Mr. Alan J. Pocock; and if he will make a statement.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: The matter is still being considered and further inquiries are being made. I shall write to the hon. Gentleman once these have been completed.

SCOTLAND

Birdlife Habitat

10. **Mr. John Mark Taylor** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the Forestry Commission's policies towards the preservation of the birdlife habitat.

Mr. John MacKay: It is the Forestry Commission's policy actively to conserve legally protected species. The commission is increasing its consultations with bodies such as the Nature Conservancy Council and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds.

Leith (SDA Plans)

12. **Mr. Ron Brown** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement about the Scottish Development Agency's future plans in Leith.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The agency will continue its activities in Leith, though the Leith project has now completed its agreed five-year term. The work of the project will be carried forward by the Leith Enterprise Trust, and agency staff will be seconded to the trust. The agency has plans to spend about £1 million in the area in 1986-87.

South of Scotland Electricity Board

13. **Mr. Strang** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met the chairman of the South of Scotland Electricity Board; and what was discussed.

Mr. Allan Stewart: My right hon. and learned Friend met the chairman on 10 June when a range of matters of current interest were discussed.

Colleges of Education

14. **Mr. Foulkes** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he has completed his consideration of the representations regarding the Scottish Tertiary Education Advisory Council recommendation on colleges of education; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Allan Stewart: My right hon. and learned Friend is still considering this matter and will make a statement in due course.

Student Grants

15. **Mr. Wallace** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to make adjustment to grants to students studying at Scottish universities who will have to pay a community charge in the period when students studying south of the border will not.

Mr. Ancram: My right hon. and learned Friend will give careful consideration to the position of students in Scotland who become liable to pay the community charge, against the background of progress with the comprehensive review of all aspects of financial support for students announced on 18 June, at column 1046.

National Health Service (STUC Meeting)

16. **Mr. James Hamilton** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he will next meet the Scottish Trades Union Congress to discuss the National Health Service in Scotland.

Mr. John MacKay: My right hon. and learned Friend has had no recent request to discuss the National Health Service from the Scottish Trades Union Congress, but will consider any request for a meeting. I met the STUC on 24 March 1986.

Secondary Schools

17. **Mr. David Marshall** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make it his policy that each secondary school in Scotland should receive the same additional allocation of moneys as their English and Welsh counterparts in the current year for books and equipment, in order to implement the changes in the curricula and examination system.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The Government have already made substantial additional resources available for standard grade. Since 1984-85 we have allowed in our provision for local authority current expenditure for staffing of 6 per cent. above Red Book (significantly above the earlier recommended levels) and we have also allowed for additional non-teaching costs of £1·5 million in 1985-86 and £2 million in 1986-87. The Government are also spending £750,000 this year on development officers and course materials for standard grade in addition to the £4·14 million already spent on similar support in previous years. The concession allowing schools to close for up to 10 days a year for in-service training and preparation also still stands. Moreover, standard grade, unlike GCSE, is being introduced on a phased basis and ordinary grade examinations are being retained for the time being.

Dundee Airport

18. **Mr. Wilson** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will pay an official visit to Dundee airport.

Mr. Ancram: My right hon. and learned Friend has no immediate plans to do so.

Housing

19. **Mr. Willie W. Hamilton** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has for increasing the housing supply in Scotland in the next two years.

Mr. Ancram: The Government will continue to seek to maximise the capital resources available to meet local authorities' housing needs, although the proportion of those resources devoted to increasing the housing stock is entirely for the authorities themselves to decide. Within the overall resources available for housing expenditure, we also intend continuing to give full support through the Housing Corporation to housing associations, the bulk of whose efforts will be devoted to the provision of housing for rent.

Planning authorities have been asked to ensure that structure plans make provision for at least a four-year supply of land for private housing. When structure plans and alterations thereto are submitted for his approval my right hon. and learned Friend considers whether sufficient land is allocated for private housing and, where necessary, makes modifications to increase the amount of land so allocated.

Local Government Finance

20. **Mr. Ernie Ross** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will now meet Tayside regional council and local hon. Members to discuss the provisional capital allocations for 1987-88 and 1988-89, respectively.

Mr. Ancram: My right hon. and learned Friend has told the regional council that he would be happy to listen to any general points it wishes to make about future years when he visits it in October. If there are preliminary points that the region wishes to pursue, an official meeting can be arranged, but it will not be possible to take decisions until the Government have assessed the needs for all authorities later this year.

21. **Mr. Home Robertson** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the local authorities which have indicated their support for his proposals for the future funding of local government.

Mr. Ancram: It is not possible to provide a list in the form requested since most of the responses received so far from local authorities include comments in favour of some of the proposals and against others.

22. **Mr. McKelvey** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next plans to meet the representatives of the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities to discuss local government finance.

Mr. Ancram: My right hon. and learned Friend next plans to discuss local government finance matters with the convention on 18 July.

Health Services

23. **Mrs. McCurley** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he has issued any guidelines to area health boards on improving co-operation with the private sector; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: Yes. Guidance on the powers available to health boards to make NHS facilities and services available to the private sector was included in general advice on private medical practice in NHS hospitals issued in NHS circular 1981 (GEN)1 and 1983 (GEN)6. Advice on the potential use by boards of contractual arrangements with private sector establishments for the provision of facilities and services for NHS patients was given in NHS circular 1981(GEN)30. I am arranging for copies to be placed in the Library.

Electricity Supplies

24. **Mr. Henderson** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will introduce measures to assist financially the South of Scotland Electricity Board and householders in rural areas in the initial provision of an electricity supply.

Mr. Allan Stewart: My right hon. and learned Friend has no plans to do so.

Roads (Highland Region)

25. **Mr. Kennedy** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any plans to meet representatives of the Highland regional council to discuss roads provision in the Highland region; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram: My right hon. and learned Friend has no present plans to meet Highland regional council for this purpose.

Owner-occupied Houses

26. **Mr. Hugh Brown** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what percentage of houses are now in owner occupation as a result of purchases from the public sectors of new towns, the Scottish Special Housing Association and district or regional housing authorities; and what proposals he has to review the social consequences of promoting further sales of such houses.

Mr. Ancram: It is estimated that about 10 per cent. of the stock in owner-occupation in Scotland at 31 December 1985 was formerly in public ownership. A major component of our housing policy is to encourage public sector tenants to exercise their right to buy their homes. Sales offer advantages to the purchasers, the selling landlords and their remaining tenants. 80,500 former public sector tenants have bought their homes since April 1979 and are now enjoying the benefits of home ownership; and sales over this period have released over £600 million additional resources for housing authorities and agencies to re-invest in the remaining public sector stock. We will continue to monitor the success of the right-to-buy policy.

Tourism

27. **Mr. Donald Stewart** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the latest indicators for tourism in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: It is too early to give an indication as to prospects for this year. The Scottish Tourist Board estimates that, last year, visitor spending in Scotland amounted to £1,439 million as compared with £1,423 million in 1984.

Commission for Local Administration

28. **Mr. Michael Forsyth** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will introduce legislation to extend the powers of the Commissioner for Local Administration in Scotland so that local authorities are required to implement his recommendations within a specified period; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram: My right hon. and learned Friend has not ruled out the possibility of introducing legislation to provide for enforcement although, as the commissioner has himself said, voluntary compliance by local authorities would be the better course. The recommendation of the Widdicombe committee on this point will be carefully considered, as will any recommendation bearing on the matter which may be made by the Select Committee on the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration.

Students (Community Charge)

29. **Mr. Steel** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what action he has taken in response to the representations he has received from Scottish universities and central institutions concerning the implications of a community charge for students.

Mr. Rifkind: I am considering the comments made by Scottish universities and central institutions with all other responses to the rates reform proposals made during the current consultation period.

SHARE Formula

30. **Mr. Maxton** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next intends to meet the chairmen of the health boards in Scotland to discuss the operation of the SHARE formula.

Mr. John MacKay: I met health board chairmen collectively on 23 June when the operation of the SHARE (Scottish health authorities revenue equalisation) formula, and a further review being undertaken of certain aspects of the formula, were among the range of issues discussed. My next scheduled meeting with chairmen is to take place in November.

Geriatric Patients

31. **Mr. MacKenzie** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what additional resources he proposes to make available to area health boards for the provision of additional accommodation, beds and nursing care of geriatric patients during the next 12 months.

Mr. Rifkind: For the current year the boards' hospital and community health services resources have been

increased by 7·2 per cent. in cash terms compared with 1985-86. In using these funds, boards are expected to give high priority to services for the elderly.

The age structure of the population is one of the factors taken into account in determining the allocation among boards of resources.

Greater Glasgow Health Board

32. **Mr. Craigen** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he intends to meet the chairman of Greater Glasgow health board to discuss the level of funding for the board.

Mr. John MacKay: The chairman of the board was present when I met health board chairmen collectively on 23 June. The funding of boards under the SHARE (Scottish health authorities revenue equalisation) formula was among the range of issues discussed. My next scheduled meeting with chairmen is to take place in November.

Unemployment (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth)

33. **Mr. Norman Hogg** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any plans to visit Cumbernauld and Kilsyth to discuss the level of unemployment with the authorities concerned.

Mr. Allan Stewart: My right hon. and learned Friend has at present no plans to do so.

Macaulay Institute

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the persons who are to be consulted about the feasibility study concerning the location of the proposed new Macaulay Institute; and if he will place a copy of the feasibility study in the Library.

Mr. John MacKay: My right hon. and learned Friend will arrange for a copy of the report of the steering group on the amalgamation of the Macaulay Institute for Soil Research and the Hill Farming Research Organisation to be placed in the Library when it is available. The document is being prepared as a report for my right hon. and learned Friend. While copies will be made available to interested parties for information, the report will not be a consultation document.

Labour Statistics

Mr. MacKenzie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table indicating the current total number of men, women and young people unemployed in the Glasgow, Rutherglen constituency for six months or over, one year or over, and two years or over, respectively; and if he will publish a comparable table for May 1979.

Mr. Rifkind: At 10 April 1986, the latest date for which information is available, the number of men, women and young persons (conventionally 16 and 17-year-olds) who were unemployed in the Glasgow Rutherglen parliamentary constituency and claiming benefit and who had been unemployed for six months or more, is shown in the table. Information on a constituency basis is not available prior to June 1983.

	Male			*Female*			*Total*		
	16-17 years	*18 years*	*All ages*	*16-17 years*	*18 years*	*All ages*	*16-17 years*	*18 years*	*All ages*
Over 26 and up to 52 weeks	105	46	849	56	37	390	161	83	1,239
Over 52 and up to 104 weeks	34	51	860	16	25	274	50	76	1,134
Over 104 weeks	0	23	1,910	0	10	391	0	33	2,301

Motorways (Lighting)

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many miles of motorway in Scotland are lit and how many are unlit.

Mr. Ancram: Of a total of 151·5 miles of motorway in Scotland 22 miles are lit and 129·5 miles are unlit.

Greenock and Port Glasgow (Ministerial Visit)

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any plans to pay an official visit to Greenock and Port Glasgow in the near future.

Mr. Allan Stewart: My right hon. and learned Friend has arranged to visit the offices of the Inverclyde initiative in Greenock on Friday 4 July 1986.

Forestry Commission

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what has been the net decrease in the area of land maintained by the Forestry Commission since 1980.

Mr. John MacKay: Between 1 April 1980 and 31 March 1986 the net decrease has been 98,283 hectares.

School Buildings (Lothian)

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if, pursuant to his answer of 4 June, *Official Report*, column *887*, he will list by name those school buildings in the Lothian region which his Department has been informed are half empty.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The Scottish Education Department currently has information on school capacities in respect of 18 individual secondary schools in Lothian region. Three of these were understood to be more than half-empty and a further 11 to have been operating at between one half and about two thirds of total capacity at September 1985. Since secondary school rolls are projected to decline even further, this degree of under-utilisation is likely to increase unless action is taken to remedy the position. Details are as follows:

Secondary School Rolls and Capacities—Lothian Region

School	*Capacity (at date of notification) Main Building*	*Huts/Annexes*	*Total*	*Roll Sept 1985 (provisional)*	*per cent. Utilisation*
Ainslie Park High School	1,450	—	1,450	491	34
Blackburn Academy	1,200	—	1,200	527	44
*James Young High School	1,400	—	1,400	672	48
Craigshill High School	1,100	—	1,100	593	54
Craigroyston High School	1,250	—	1,250	685	55
*Drummond High School	950	—	950	545	57
Inveralmond High School	1,800	—	1,800	1,025	57
Our Lady's High School Broxburn	350	150	500	283	57
St. Augustine's	1,250	200	1,450	891	61
St. Kentigern's Academy	1,050	300	1,350	837	62
Trinity Academy	900	300	1,200	746	62
Broughton High School	1,650	—	1,650	1,080	65
Holyrood	1,300	—	1,300	840	65
Leith Academy	750	750	1,500	1,008	67

* September 1985 school roll figures for Drummond High School and James Young High School are not available—the figures given are for September 1984.

Vocational Education and Training

Mrs. McCurley asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement about arrangements for vocational education and training in Scotland.

Mr. Rifkind: The Government's plans for vocational education and training in the United Kingdom are set out in a White Paper published today by my noble Friend the Secretary of State for Employment.

Points of particular significance for Scotland include the extension of the technical and vocational education initiative (TVEI), which will allow Scottish authorities to build on the success they are already enjoying under the pilot schemes. The curricular principles on which the extended TVEI scheme will be based are set out in a written answer given today by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science to the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey). They are fully consistent with the objectives of standard grade for 14 to 16s and action plan for 16 to 18s. As with the pilot scheme, my Department will be fully involved with the Manpower Services Commission in the management of TVEI in Scotland and in particular will continue to be represented on the national steering group.

In recognition of the stage which has already been reached in Scotland in securing the changes needed in the field of vocational qualifications through the successful implementation of the 16-plus action plan, I have decided that it would be inappropriate for the national vocational qualifications framework and the National Council for Vocational Qualifications to extend to Scotland at the present time. The Scottish Vocational Education Council (SCOTVEC) will, however, continue to be a member of the YTS certification board. The Government intend to consolidate the reforms already made in Scotland under 16-plus action plan and to press ahead with a number of new developments, including the accreditation of work-based learning, competency testing and a review of advanced SCOTVEC qualifications. In view of the need to secure mutual recognition of equivalent vocational qualifications obtained in Scotland and in the rest of the United Kingdom, close working relationships will be maintained between the National Council for Vocational Qualifications and Scottish interests. I will consider in two or three years' time whether there should be any formal change in the relationship between the National Council and Scotland.

British Steel Corporation

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people in Scotland were employed by the British Steel Corporation in each year since 1974.

Mr. Allan Stewart [*pursuant to his reply*, 30 June 1986, c. *385*]: The number of people employed by the British Steel Corporation in Scotland in each year since 1974 is set out in the table.

Year (end-September)	*Employment*
1974	27,570
1975	27,040
1976	24,250
1977	22,440
1978	20,540
1979	18,970
1980	14,840
1981	13,260
1982	11,250
1983	8,490
1984	8,200
1985	7,970

Incontinence Aids

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many patients in Scotland receive incontinence aids, including pads and pants, on prescription; what he estimates to be the annual cost of this service; and what estimate he has made of the cost if the service were provided through the health centres and district nurses.

Mr. John MacKay [*pursuant to his reply*, 30 June 1986, c. *383*]: In 1984 there were 150,000 general practitioner prescriptions for incontinence pads at a cost of £1·6 million. Incontinence pants and all other garments are provided through the district nursing service. The number of patients and administrative costs of provision by district nurses are not held centrally.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Research and Development

Mr. Colin Shepherd asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he is yet in a position to announce his Department's plans for the funding of research and development in 1987-88.

Mr. Jopling: In January 1985 I announced that expenditure by the agriculture departments on research and development would be reduced by £10 million in 1986-87 and £20 million in 1987-88. These changes reflected the Government's aim that industry should make a greater financial contribution towards the research and development from which it benefits. In line with that decision I announced in July 1985 that the savings required in the publicly funded research and development programme in 1986-87 would be found through rationalisation of the existing programme and the removal of less effective areas of work.

In order to achieve the savings required in 1987-88, it is now necessary for the public sector sponsors to identify the further adjustments which will be made to their research expenditure. In reaching decisions on the changes, we have been guided by the advice of the Priorities Board on future priorities and resource allocations. In the case of my own Department, the level of our commissioned expenditure with the Agricultural and Food Research Council in 1987-88 is expected to reduce from £47·9 million in the current year to £43·8 million next year. In parallel the funds allocated to research and development in the Agricultural Development and Advisory Service will reduce from £42·2 million to £39·4 million. Even after these reductions and those to be made by the other sponsors, the Government will still be funding nearly £200 million of research and development in relation to agriculture and food in 1987-88.

We are in close consultation with all sector interests to encourage the development of industry funding arrangements which could operate alongside the publicly funded programme. The positive response in the horticultural and cereals sector is most welcome and I know that other sectors are considering actively how they might be involved in funding such work. I am sure that the industry fully appreciates the benefits which flow from the research and development programme and I hope that all sectors will be willing to fund work that is likely to be of direct economic benefit to them. A partnership on this basis will ensure that work is targeted even more precisely on industry's needs.

River Pollution

Mr. Onslow asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many cases of river pollution from silage operations have been reported to his Department in each of the past five years.

Mr. Gummer: River pollution incidents resulting from farm silage effluent are reported by water authorities in England and Wales to my Department's farm waste unit. Their numbers for each of the years 1980 to 1984 were:

	Number
1980	376
1981	577
1982	373
1983	575
1984	573

The results of the survey for 1985 will be published shortly.

Butter

Mr. Walters asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what was the total value of the subsidy on open market butter purchased by non-profit-making organisations during 1985;

(2) what was the subsidy on each 250 gramme packet of butter on the open market purchased by non-profit-making organisations during 1985;

(3) what percentage of non-profit-making organisations have claimed the subsidy on butter purchased on the open market; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Food Additives

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what guidelines he proposes to issue to food companies regarding policy on the future use of food additives.

Mrs. Fenner: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Radioactivity

Dr. David Clark asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if he will place in the Library the results of radioactivity monitoring on cows milk, sheep milk, sheep and vegetables for May 1985 for Cleveland, Cumbria, Durham and Northumberland;

(2) if he will place in the Library the results of radioactivity monitoring of sheep milk for 1 to 14 May for Cleveland, Cumbria, Durham and Northumberland;

(3) why no figures have been issued on the results of the monitoring of radioactivity in sheep milk in Cumbria between 3 and 14 May;

(4) if he increased the monitoring of vegetables in Cumbria following the discovery of readings of 1100 bq/kg of caesium 137 and 895 bq/kg of iodine 131 on cabbages and leeks in Cumbria on 9 May.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his advice regarding the safety of eating whimberries, wild bilberries, wild raspberries and blackberries growing in north Wales or the Lake District, as well as garden fruits, in the light of radioactive fallout in May in those areas.

Mr. Jopling: I shall reply to the hon. Members as soon as possible.

Sheep (Caesium Levels)

Mr. John asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has as to the likely long-term effects upon ewes in north Wales and Cumbria of exposure to radiation, and in particular how long such

ewes are likely to give contaminated milk; whether movement to uncontaminated pasture would have a beneficial effect; and whether there is any risk to genetic mutations in sheep.

Mr. Jopling [*pursuant to his reply*, 26 June 1986, c. *308*]: The Ministry's monitoring programme of foodstuffs instituted following the Chernobyl accident detected transient increases in radioactivity in ewes' milk during May but levels have now declined substantially. Movement to uncontaminated pasture is not necessary and in any case would have been impracticable.

There is no reason to expect that the slightly increased levels of radioactivity following the accident at Chernobyl will lead to any detectable increase in genetic mutation in sheep.

SOCIAL SERVICES

In-patients (Post-operative Infection)

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what was the number of inpatients with post-operative infections in each regional health authority area in 1984 and 1985;

(2) what proportion of inpatients suffered from post-operative infection in each regional health authority in 1983 and each year since.

Mr. Whitney: I am sorry I cannot give the hon. Member all the information he seeks. Figures for 1985 are not yet available. The available information is given in the table. Between 1983 and 1984 the estimated number of in-patient cases undergoing operations increased from 2,135,890 to 2,251,820.

NHS non-psychiatric, non-maternity hospitals

Regional health authorities	*Estimated number of in-patient cases with a diagnosis of post-operative infection as percentage of all in-patient cases who undergo operations*		*Estimated number of in-patient cases with a diagnosis of post-operative infection*
	1983	*1984*	*1984*
Northern	0·7	0·6	890
Yorkshire	0·6	0·6	1,060
Trent	0·8	0·8	1,780
East Anglian	0·8	0·8	860
North West Thames	0·8	0·6	890
North East Thames	0·8	0·6	1,330
South East Thames	0·6	0·8	1,450
South West Thames	0·7	0·7	790
Wessex	0·5	0·5	700
Oxford	0·4	0·5	590
South Western	1·5	1·4	2,020
West Midlands	0·6	0·6	1,150
Mersey	0·8	0·7	690
North Western	0·8	0·9	1,970
All RHAs	0·7	0·7	16,170

Overseas Visitors (Treatment)

Mr. Forth asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will give the number of non-British people treated by the National Health Service for the last year for which figures are available;

(2) if he is satisfied with the effectiveness of the provisions for the charging of those treated under the National Health Service who are not British nationals or taxpayers;

(3) if he will give the total amount recovered by the National Health Service from non-British people treated by the National Health Service in the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Hayhoe: Comprehensive information is not available centrally on the nationality of patients treated in National Health Service hospitals. Legal eligibility for free treatment is based on residence, not nationality or the payment of taxes. Income from overseas visitors in 1985-86 is provisionally estimated at £2·3 million, but information is not collected on the number of patients charged.

Baby Milk (Cartons)

Mr. Sean Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Social Services on what basis the decision was taken to change the sizes of baby milk cartons.

Mr. Whitney: The basis of this welfare food provision has not changed. The previous Order provided for recipients to receive two 450g packs of dried baby milk per week. The new Order permits recipients to receive either two 450g packs or one 900g pack.

Cervical Cancer

Mr. Lofthouse asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women have died prematurely from cervical cancer in the Yorkshire regional health authority since January 1980.

Mr. Hayhoe: I regret that information is not available in precisely the form requested. The figures in the table may be of help to the hon. Member.

Number of deaths from malignant neoplasm of cervix uteri (ICD(9) 180) to women usually resident in Yorkshire regional health authority area, by age group 1980-1985

Year	*All ages*	*Age group*			
		15-34	*35-54*	*55-74*	*75 and over*
1980	194	10	38	101	45
1981	175	13	38	80	44
1982	159	9	37	86	27
1983	168	8	41	77	42
1984	165	8	39	85	33
1985	177	14	35	85	43

Local Office Staffing

Mr. Lofthouse asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the present level of staffing of his Department's offices in the Castleford travel-to-work area; and what was the comparable figure for May 1979.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the precise form requested. The approved complement for May 1979 and the staff allocation for 1 July 1986 in respect of each of the offices in the Castleford travel-to-work area are set out in the table. They reflect overall reductions in workload over the period mainly due to the introduction of housing benefit and statutory sick pay.

	Complement May 1979	*Staff allocation 1 July 1986*
Castleford AO	47	61
Castleford NIO	63	*37
Normanton NIO	14	(1)
Hemsworth ILO	86	71
Pontefract ILO	97	84
Wakefield ILO	156	151

* Normanton NIO was merged with Castleford NIO in September 1982, and 13 posts were transferred to Castleford NIO's complement.
Abbreviations: ILO—Integrated Local office;
NIO—National Insurance Office;
AO — Area Office (dealing with supplementary benefit only).

Supplementary Benefit

Mr. Lofthouse asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people were in receipt of supplementary benefit *(a)* in the Yorkshire and Humberside Region and *(b)* in the Castleford travel-to-work area in 1979 and each subsequent year.

Mr. Major: The Castleford travel-to-work area is covered by the Department's offices at Castleford, Hemsworth, Pontefract and Wakefield, although their boundaries are not conterminous with that area.

The numbers of people receiving supplementary benefit in *(a)* Yorkshire and Humberside and *(b)* each of the four offices specified on 6 May 1986 and on comparable dates for each year since 1979 were as follows:

	1979	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
Yorkshire and Humberside Region*	287,678	291,737	333,760†	404,279	429,906	455,812	475,762	483,176
Castleford	4,366	4,452	5,170	6,195	6,402	6,624	6,991	7,236
Hemsworth	2,502	2,670	3,214	3,850	4,057	4,489	4,684	4,784
Pontefract	3,743	3,767	4,708	5,463	5,695	6,210	6,552	6,550
Wakefield	6,630	6,714	7,863	9,128	9,981	10,775	11,529	11,616

* Yorkshire and Humberside region was merged with Northern region in 1982 to form the present North Eastern region. But for the sake of consistency, the table shows, for 1983 onwards, the total figures for those offices which were formerly part of Yorkshire and Humberside region.
† Figures for the region as a whole show the position at February 1981.
Source: 100 per cent. count of cases in action.

NHS (Property Sales)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what proportion of all National Health Service property sold since the review by Lord Rayner in 1984 was empty; and what proportion of property presently owned by the National Health Service is now standing empty.

Mr. Hayhoe: I regret that this information is not held centrally.

NHS (Pay)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what response he is making to the joint submission to his Department from the British Medical Association, the Royal College of Nursing and the Institute of Health Service Management about pay rises to National Health Service medical employees and ancillary workers in conjuction with improvement of services to patients.

Mr. Hayhoe: I responded to the original joint submission ("Public Expenditure on the National Health Service: Recent Trends and the Outlook") on 28 January and to the subsequent submission on 8 April. I am sending copies to the hon. Member and have also placed them in the Library.

NHS (Private Patients)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many private patient officers have been designated in National Health Service hospitals to reduce losses of charges from treatment of private patients; and if he will list the hospitals concerned.

Mr. Hayhoe: The Department's handbook: "The Management of Private Practice in Health Service Hospitals in England and Wales", which was issued to health authorities under health circular HC(86)4, requires the designation of private patient officers at all hospitals where the treatment of private patients is authorised. 847 hospitals in England are so authorised.

Doctors (West Midlands)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many doctors employed by the West Midlands regional health authority originally on a full-time basis have reduced their posts to a part-time contract during the last seven years.

Mr. Hayhoe: I regret I cannot give the hon. Member the information she seeks as it can be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Community Health Councils

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will indicate for each community health council the sex of the holder of the office of chairman;

(2) if he will list for each community health council the number of members; and of these, how many in each case are women.

Mr. Hayhoe: I regret that the information requested is not held centrally.

Health Authorities

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will indicate for each regional health authority the sex of the holder of the office of chairman;

(2) if he will list for each regional health authority the number of members; and in each case, of these how many are women;

(3) if he will list for each district health authority the number of members; and, of these, how many in each case are women;

(4) if he will indicate for each district health authority the sex of the holder of the office of chairman.

Mr. Hayhoe: The 14 regional health authority chairmen are all men. Of the 191 district health authority chairmen, 30 are women. District health authority members are appointed by the appropriate regional health authority and relevant local authorities and I regret detailed information is not held centrally. The information requested on regional health authority members is as follows:

Regional health authority	*Number of current members*	*Number of female members*
Northern	16	6
Yorkshire	16	3
Trent	17	3
East Anglian	15	3
North East Thames	16	5
North West Thames	16	5
South East Thames	16	4
South West Thames	16	4
Wessex	16	4
South Western	17	5
Oxford	15	2
West Midlands	15	3
Mersey	16	5
North Western	14	6
TOTAL	221	58

Broadmoor Patients (Day Trips)

Mr. Andrew Bowden asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what procedures are implemented before parties of patients from Broadmoor are allowed to go on day trips to seaside towns or other similar places; and if he will publish the regulations and procedures involved.

Mr. Whitney: The procedures relating to such outings are set out in standing instructions to all staff concerned at the hospital. They are reviewed regularly. Publication of the instructions could prejudice rather than improve security. Escort staff are of course trained and experienced in working with the patients for whom they are responsible.

Mr. Andrew Bowden asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the proportion of the party comprising staff that accompany groups of patients from Broadmoor when they go on day trips to seaside towns and similar places.

Mr. Whitney: This varies according to the needs of the patients and the circumstances of the outing.

Mr. Andrew Bowden asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what action is taken to inform the police when parties of patients from Broadmoor are taken out on day trips or longer periods to seaside towns and similar other places.

Mr. Whitney: The staff escorting patients have the addresses and telephone numbers of the local police stations concerned. Should a patient abscond on an outing, standing instructions require staff to notify the police immediately and to stand by to give any assistance or information they might require.

Mr. Andrew Bowden asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many day trip patients from Broadmoor visited *(a)* East Sussex and *(b)* West Sussex in 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984, 1985 and the latest figure for 1986; and which towns were included in the visits.

Mr. Whitney: Figures are not readily available for the years 1980 and 1981. Since then, the following day outings have been made:

East Sussex
1984: 1 outing to Brighton

West Sussex
1982: 3 outings to Littlehampton
1984: 1 outing to Chichester
1984: 1 outing to Worthing

Mr. Andrew Bowden asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many day-trip parties of patients from Broadmoor visited the Brighton and Hove area in *(a)* each year since 1980 and *(b)* 1986 to date; and what was the total number in each party.

Mr. Whitney: Information about day outings in 1980 and 1981 is not readily available. There was one outing to the Brighton and Hove area in the later period, to Brighton in 1984, when the party consisted of four patients and two escort staff. There have been no outings to the area this year.

NHS (Resources)

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what proportion of gross national product was devoted to expenditure on the National Health Service in each year since 1981; what equivalent information he has about other Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries; and to what factors he attributes any difference between the figures for the United Kingdom and the average for the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

Mr. Hayhoe [*pursuant to his reply*, 24 June 1986, c. *154*]: The table shows public expenditure on health in member states of the Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development expressed as a percentage share of gross domestic product for the period 1981 to 1983, the latest year for which OECD information is available. (Figures showing the share of gross national product are not readily available from other OECD countries.) Comparisons are affected by different definitions as to what constitutes health care, the proportion of total costs borne by patients as charges (excluded from the figures) or other payments; and the balance between private and public health care in each country. They are also affected by the relative costs of health care. It is widely recognised internationally that the National Health Service provides very good value for money.

Total public expenditure on health as a percentage of gross domestic product

	1981	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*
United Kingdom	5·4	5·2	5·4	5·4
Australia	4·7	4·8	4·9	—
Austria	4·7	4·7	4·6	—
Belgium	5·7	5·8	6·0	—
Canada	5·5	6·1	6·2	—
Denmark	5·8	5·9	5·6	—
Finland	5·1	5·2	5·2	—
France	6·4	6·6	6·6	—
Germany	6·7	6·6	—	—

	1981	1982	1983	1984
Greece	3·8	3·4	—	—
Iceland	6·6	6·6	—	—
Ireland	7·9	7·7	7·5	—
Italy	5·9	6·1	6·2	—
Japan	4·6	4·8	5·0	—
Netherlands	6·6	6·9	6·9	—
New Zealand	4·7	5·1	5·3	—
Norway	6·6	6·6	6·2	—
Portugal	4·3	4·0	3·9	—
Spain	4·4	4·6	4·4	—
Sweden	8·8	8·9	8·8	—
United States	4·1	4·5	4·5	—
OECD Average*	5·7	5·8	5·8	—

* Average excludes Portugal

Single Payments

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for Social Services *(a)* how many single payments have been made under regulation 28 of the Supplementary Benefit (Single Payments) Regulations for each year since November 1981 to the following categories of claimants: (i) pensioners, (ii) unemployed, (iii) sick and disabled, (iv) single parents and (v) others, *(b)* the cost by year and on average for each category, *(c)* how many of these payments have been made to the long-term unemployed, *(d)* how much the Government expect to save by their abolition and *(e)* what is the margin of error which should be taken into account in the figures.

Mr. Nellist asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, if he will state *(a)* how many single payments have been made under regulation 28 of the Supplementary Benefit (Single Payments) Regulations for each year since November 1981 to the following categories of claimants: (i) pensioners, (ii) unemployed, (iii) sick and disabled, (iv) single parents and (v) others; *(b)* what was the cost, by year and on average for each category, *(c)* how many of these payments have been made to the long-term unemployed, *(d)* how much Her Majesty's Government expect to save by the abolition and *(e)* what is the margin of error in the figures.

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will state *(a)* how many single payments have been made under regulation 28 of the Supplementary Benefit (Single Payments) Regulations for each year since November 1981 to the following categories of claimants: (i) pensioners, (ii) unemployed, (iii) sick and disabled, (iv) single parents and (v) others, *(b)* the cost by year and on average for each category, *(c)* how many of these payments have been made to the long-term unemployed and *(d)* how much the Government expect to save by the abolition of this regulation.

Mr. Corbett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will state *(a)* how many single payments have been made under regulation 28 of the Supplementary Benefit (Single Payments) Regulations for each year since November 1981 to the following categories of claimants: (i) pensioners, (ii) unemployed, (iii) sick and disabled, (iv) single parents and (v) others, *(b)* the cost by year and on average for each category, *(c)* how many of these payments have been made to the long-term unemployed, *(d)* how much it is expected to save by its abolition and *(e)* how much under or over estimation should be taken into account in the figures.

Mr. Major [*pursuant to his replies*, 26 June 1986, c. *295* and 30 June 1986, c. *432*]: Information is not available in the precise form requested. The table following gives details of single payments under regulation 28 (costs where supplementary benefit is not paid or not claimed) up to 1984 the latest year for which data are available. Information is not readily available on the average payment for each separate category of claimant, nor on the number of payments to the long-term unemployed; and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Single Payments: Regulation 28

Year	Total Amount Paid (£000's)	Average Payment £	Number of awards by category of claimant (nearest hundred)					
			Pensioners	Unemployed	Sick and Disabled	Single Parent	Other	Total
1981	136	53·66	†	1,200	†	*	†	2,500
1982	448	34·60	6,000	3,000	1,100	2,500	†	13,000
1983	183	40·33	*	1,500	†	1,700	†	4,500
1984	184	52·23	*	1,100	*	1,000	†	3,500

Source: Annual Statistical Enquiries

Notes

1. The ASE data are derived from an analysis of a sample of cases and are therefore subject to "sampling error". Where the number of cases is less than 1,000 the effect of "sampling error" may be quite large. Further information can be found in the"Introduction to the Annual Statistical Enquiry", (particularly page 3 "Single Payments", and page 5 "Sampling Effects") a copy of which can be found in the House of Commons Library.
2. The Current regulation 28 was regulation 26 at the time of the 1981 ASE.
3. *less than 1,000
4. †less than 500
5. Rows may not sum to total due to rounding.
6. The information in the table relates to single payments made in the 12 months preceding the date of the Annual Statistical Enquiry to those in receipt of benefit at the time of the inquiry. As a result it does not record all the single payments made during the year.

Suicides

Mr. Nellist asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many suicides have occurred in each year since 1974 amongst 16 to 19-year-olds, 20 to 21-year-olds and over 25-year-olds, giving figures for males and females separately.

Mr. Whitney [*pursuant to his reply*, 30 June 1986, c. *433*]: The exact information requested can be provided only at disproportionate cost. The readily available information is given in the table.

Number of deaths registered with underlying causes of suicide and self-inflicted injury (ICD E950-E959) by sex and selected age groups, 1974 to 1985
England and Wales

Year	Sex	Age 15 to 19	20 to 24	25 and over
1974	M	47	156	2,076
	F	28	69	1,521
1975	M	62	163	1,957
	F	36	60	1,411
1976	M	60	155	2,112
	F	30	69	1,383
1977	M	62	169	2,131
	F	32	98	1,446
1978	M	72	188	2,170
	F	29	67	1,489
1979	M	84	169	2,305
	F	35	61	1,532
1980	M	84	166	2,377
	F	39	72	1,580
1981	M	88	186	2,483
	F	27	52	1,578
1982	M	78	184	2,515
	F	23	55	1,417
1983	M	84	191	2,535
	F	24	65	1,372
1984	M	90	219	2,549
	F	20	44	1,391
1985	M	87	253	2,607
	F	21	52	1,396

NATIONAL FINANCE

Tax Increases

Mr. Hubbard-Miles asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list in the *Official Report* taxes that have been raised in the United Kingdom since 1979 specifically for distribution to, and the financial benefit of, one sector of industry.

Mr. MacGregor: A number of levies involve raising money from an industry which is then deployed for the benefit of that industry; these are not treated as taxes. Examples are the Industrial Training Board levies and the Milk Marketing Board levy. The only levy I have identified which might meet the criteria set out by my hon. Friend and which is counted by the Central Statistical Office as a tax for national accounts purposes is the London Regional Transport levy which represents a partial recovery from London rating authorities by the Secretary of State for Transport of his grant to London Regional Transport.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Fair Employment Act (Northern Ireland) 1976

Mr. Bell asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland for which employers in Northern Ireland the Fair Employment Agency has chosen, under part II, section 13(5)*(a)* or *(b)* of the Fair Employment Act (Northern Ireland) 1976, to revoke or modify directions previously given under subsection 2(i) or 2(ii).

Dr. Boyson: I understand from the chairman of the Fair Employment Agency that while discussions on revocation or modification have taken place with some employers the agency have not formally served notice as required under section 13(6).

Mr. Bell asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many subscribers there were in Northern Ireland to the register of equal opportunity employers and organisations for each quarter since the enactment of the Fair Employment Act (Northern Ireland) 1976, broken down by standard industrial classification; how many of such subscribers previously declined to become signatories to the Fair Employment Agency's declaration of principle and intent; and how many of such subscribers have been removed from the register each quarter since the enactment of the legislation.

Dr. Boyson: The table gives the numbers of new subscribers in each quarter:

Quarter ended	Number of subscribers
31 January 1977	530
30 April 1977	277
31 July 1977	155
31 October 1977	28
31 January 1978	4
30 April 1978	4
31 July 1978	93
31 October 1978	317
31 January 1979	298
30 April 1979	53
31 July 1979	3
31 October 1979	608
31 January 1980	35
30 April 1980	14
31 July 1980	9
31 October 1980	3
31 January 1981	4
30 April 1981	9
31 July 1981	6
31 October 1981	10
31 January 1982	238
30 April 1982	924
31 July 1982	367
31 October 1982	273
31 January 1983	321
30 April 1983	395
31 July 1983	187
31 October 1983	365
31 January 1984	441
30 April 1984	479
31 July 1984	165
31 October 1984	192

Quarter ended	*Number of subscribers*
31 January 1985	251
30 April 1985	223
31 July 1985	179
31 October 1985	162
31 January 1986	195
30 April 1986	155
31 July 1986	90

I understand from the chairman that the Fair Employment Agency does not now list subscribers by standard industrial classification, a practice which ceased in 1981. A copy of the 1981 register of employers by classification is available in the Library. No figures are available for the numbers of subscribers who previously declined to become signatories to the declaration. No subscribers have been removed from the register.

Mr. Bell asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) what are the employers, excluding vocational organisations, for which the Fair Employment Agency (Northern Ireland) has completed or initiated formal investigations; what findings were made in each case; and which of the employers are signatories to the Fair Employment Agency's declaration of principle and intent; and when they became signatories;

(2) if he will list the numbers of investigations carried out and complaints received by date by the Fair Employment Agency under part III, section 17*(a)(b)*, section 18(1)(2), section 19*(a)(b)*, section 20, section 22 and section 23; and if he will state the outcome in each case;

(3) to list those employers or departments in the case of public authorities in the Civil Service where a finding of failure to afford equality of opportunity has been made by the Fair Employment Agency, following an investigation under section 12 of the Fair Employment Act (Northern Ireland) 1976 or a finding of unlawful discrimination in the case of an individual complaint for each year since the introduction of the Fair Employment Act.

Dr. Boyson: The information sought by the hon. Member is contained in the agency's annual reports, the reports of published investigations and the register of equal opportunity employers and organisations which are in the Library.

Mr. Bell asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will provide estimates for the average length of time taken to conduct an investigation under *(a)* part II section 12 and *(b)* part II section 22, of the Fair Employment Act (Northern Ireland) 1976; and if he will list the numbers and type of investigation carried out, and their start and competition dates.

Dr. Boyson: I have been advised by the chairman of the Fair Employment Agency that information in the form requested is not readily available and could be compiled only at disproportionate cost. Some relevant information can be obtained from the agency's annual reports, which are in the Library.

Mr. Bell asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the number and type of cases referred under the Fair Employment Act (Northern Ireland) 1976 to *(a)* the High Court, *(b)* the county court and *(c)* the number of findings upheld or overturned by each court.

Dr. Boyson: The table sets out details supplied by the Fair Employment Agency.

Appeals to County Court	*Total*	*Findings upheld*	*Findings overturned*	*Pending*
Appeal by respondent under section 28(2)	12	2	6	4
Appeal by complainant under section 28(3)	6	2	1	3
Total	18	4	7	7

No cases have been referred to the High Court.

Mr. Bell asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the cases *(a)* in which an employer has made a compensation payment to a complainant and state the sums involved in each case, *(b)* the original date of each settlement as compared to the eventual date of payment and *(c)* specify the number of cases and amounts involved where the Fair Employment Agency has acted as a guarantor to a financial institution for an individual or paid the compensation itself, pending payment by the respondent.

Dr. Boyson: I understand from the chairman of the Fair Employment Agency that there have been 18 cases, the details of which are in the table:

Case	*Amount £*	*Settled*	*Paid*
C44/77	3,000	30 November 1982	21 December 1982
C54/77	5,500	9 June 1982	7 July 1982
C82/78	2,500	24 October 1983	23 December 1983
C107/78	750	14 September 1980	7 October 1980
C119/79	500	6 June 1981	9 March 1982
C155/80	1,500	14 September 1983	28 November 1983
C161/80	4,350	27 August 1982	22 September 1982
C171/80	750	14 January 1982	1 March 1982
C176/80	1,500	16 November 1983	17 November 1983
C188/80	1,000	6 August 1982	26 August 1982
C195/80	1,500	19 October 1983	14 November 1983
C228/81	550	14 September 1982	16 September 1982
C230/81	1,400	26 February 1984	7 March 1984
C263/82	1,500	8 June 1984	1 August 1984
C300/83	1,000	1 May 1985	2 May 1985
C313/83	2,100	8 November 1985	13 December 1985
C321/83	350	6 December 1984	14 December 1984
C330/84	2,000	5 March 1986	10 April 1986

The Fair Employment Agency has neither acted as a guarantor nor paid compensation from its own funds in anticipation of a settlement.

Discrimination

Mr. Archer asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when the Government intend to release the report of the review of initiatives on employment discrimination

and inequality in the Northern Ireland Civil Service announced in his reply to a question on 3 July 1985, *Official Report*, column *161*, and which he announced in a reply on 12 November 1985, *Official Report*, column *129*, would be published early in 1986.

Mr. Tom King: I shall reply to the right hon. and learned Member as soon as possible.

Divis Flats (Rehousing)

Mr. Archer asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what offer has been made by the Catholic Church in Northern Ireland to release land for use by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive for the rehousing of the present tenants of the Divis flats; what is the basis of such an arrangement; and when the land would become available.

Mr. Needham: I am not aware of any offer of land by the Catholic Church for use by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive in the rehousing of tenants of Divis Complex.

Mr. Archer asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what plans exist for the demolition of the Divis flats in Belfast; and what dates are planned for the completion of demolition and the completion of rehousing of the present residents of Divis.

Mr. Needham: Demolition of Pound block will begin shortly. St. Brendan's block will be demolished around the turn of the year. The Northern Ireland Housing Executive has made no plans for further demolition.

DEFENCE

Fylingdales (Early Warning System)

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for Defence in relation to the proposed modernisation of the Fylingdales early warning system, what account has been taken of the environmental impact of the proposed development on the landscape in the North York Moors national park; and what alternative sites have been investigated.

Mr. Freeman: Since we are proposing to modernise the existing ballistic missile early warning system at RAF Fylingdales, and not to construct an entirely new facility, alternative sites have not been considered. The modernised system will have a more compact, less visible profile than the present installation, but the environmental impact will be one of the issues to be discussed with the North Yorkshire moors national park committee in accordance with the normal planning procedures.

Richard Dix (Letter)

Mr. Douglas Hogg asked the Secretary of State for Defence when he proposes to reply to the letter dated 5 June and written to him by Richard Dix of Heathfield, Gorse Hill Lane, Caythorpe, near Grantham.

Mr. Lee: Mr. Dix's letter to my Department is being considered, and a reply will be sent as soon as possible.

Test Ban Treaty

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for Defence if there has been any recent change of policy regarding the standard of proof required as regards verification necessary for an effective comprehensive test ban treaty; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: No. We are looking for adequate verification that is sufficiently reliable to give confidence to all sides. The detailed requirements were set out by my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office in the Adjournment debate on 26 March at columns 1047-52.

Armed Forces (Purchases)

Mr. Forman asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the latest estimate of the total amount of purchases of goods and services made by the armed forces; and what proportion of the total was supplied by the private sector.

Mr. Lee: The information required to answer the question is not held in the form requested and to gather it would require the expense of a disproportionate amount of time and effort.

Trident

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Defence at what stage of completion Trident submarines, excluding missiles, will be *(a)* in one year's time and *(b)* in two year's time.

Mr. Lee: It is estimated that HMS Vanguard, which was ordered in April this year, will be approximately one third complete in two years' time. No other Trident submarines have yet been ordered.

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Defence what proportion of the total cost of Trident will have been spent *(a)* one year from now and *(b)* two years from now.

Mr. Lee: I have nothing to add to the answer given by the then Minister of State for Defence procurement the right hon. Member for Bosworth (Sir A. Butler) to the hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) on 21 June 1985 at columns 247-248. It is not the practice to give forecasts of cost profiles for projects on a year by year basis.

Arms Trade

Mr. Freeson asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish the figures for employment generated by Britain's arms trade and the basis for his Department's calculation of such figures.

Mr. Lee: Some 120,000 jobs were directly sustained last year by British defence exports. This figure is based upon the totals for such exports appearing in column 2.8 of volume 2 of the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1986" (Cmnd. 9763) divided by the estimated average output per head in the main defence industries.

Mr. Freeson asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the industries and companies contributing to the United Kingdom arms trade.

Mr. Lee: The main companies concerned appear in the "British Defence Equipment Catalogue 1986", a copy of which is in the House of Commons Library.

Arms Control

Mr. Freeson asked the Secretary of State for Defence what studies his Department has undertaken into the

conversion of arms production into civil production in the event of international arms control and reduction agreements.

Mr. Lee: No such studies have been undertaken by the Ministry of Defence.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 3 July 1986

PRIME MINISTER

Merchant Navy

Q36. **Sir David Price** asked the Prime Minister what assessment Her Majesty's Government have made of the minimum size of the British Merchant Navy necessary to be maintained for reasons of national defence; and what measures she intends to take to ensure that this minimum is sustained in future years.

The Prime Minister: At present the United Kingdom registered merchant fleet numbers some 656 ships. The requirement for merchant vessels to support Her Majesty's forces in time of tension or war is kept under continuous review. If deficiencies seem likely to arise, action will be taken appropriate to the type of vessel concerned.

La Belle Discotheque, Berlin

Q41. **Mr. Dalyell** asked the Prime Minister if Her Majesty's Government have received, either before or since 15 April, any evidence alleging the involvement of individuals or Governments of countries other than Libya in the bombing of La Belle discotheque in Berlin on 5 April; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The German authorities are continuing their investigations, but there is no evidence of involvement of individuals or Governments of countries other than Libya in the bombing of La Belle discotheque.

Engagements

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 3 July.

Mr. Greenway asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 3 July.

Mr. Pike asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 3 July.

Mr. Tom Clarke asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 3 July.

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House I shall be having further meetings later today. This evening I shall attend a dinner given by the President of the Federal Republic of Germany.

Disabled Persons (Conductive Education)

Mr. Ashley asked the Prime Minister what steps she is taking to increase co-ordination between the Department of Education and Science and the Department of Health and Social Security concerning conductive education for severely disabled people; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: Conductive education is the subject of frequent discussion between the Department of Education and Science and the Department of Health and Social Security.

Officials of both Departments are jointly discussing with the Spastics Society a proposed study of current provision and an evaluation of the implications of wider development of conductive education in this country.

Drinking and Driving

Mr. Frank Field asked the Prime Minister if she has any proposals to improve ministerial co-ordination of policy on the misuse of alcohol and its resulting road traffic offences; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The Government attach high priority to reducing the incidence of drinking and driving. I believe that current ministerial arrangements are generally satisfactory for this purpose. However, one of our objectives in establishing the review of road safety policy, now nearing completion, was to consider whether any organisational changes might facilitate progress in road safety generally or in any particular aspects of it.

ENVIRONMENT

Hampton Court Palace (Fire)

Mr. Jessel asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has received the report of the inquiry by Sir John Garlick into the role of his Department in relation to the fire at Hampton Court Palace on 30-31 March; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ridley: Yes. I have recently received Sir John's report. Sir John was asked in April by my predecessor "to report on the discharge of the functions of the Secretary of State for the Environment in relation to Hampton Court Palace in the light of the events of 31 March 1986, with particular reference to—

(i) Maintenance.
(ii) Fire precautions.
(iii) The action taken when the fire was discovered, and to make recommendations."

I have this afternoon placed copies of this report in the Libraries of both Houses. There have been some very minor deletions for security reasons. They are indicated by asterisks.

The report refers to evidence that indicates that the fire started within an hour or two of midnight in the main bedroom of Lady Gale's apartment and that the cause of the fire was probably a naked flame.

The fire was discovered as the result of an intruder alarm being activated at 5.20 am. The automatic fire detection system did not operate until about 6.15 am. The delay in the discovery of the fire was a material factor in the extent of the damage that ultimately occurred.

Sir John concluded that earlier discovery would not have averted the death of Lady Gale. He also concluded that little blame attached to the custody officers or other staff at the palace. He praised their devotion and courage and that of the palace staff and the salvage squad in seeking to protect life and property once the fire was discovered.

Sir John said that the evidence did not enable him to establish with any certainty why the fire was not discovered earlier. He considered that the most likely cause of the apparent delay in the operation of the fire alarm was

that part, or even all, of the automatic fire detection system had inadvertently been rendered inoperative. He criticised the arrangements that allowed an alarm system with design shortcomings to be installed, and then handed over with a less than adequate commissioning process.

Sir John described the exercise of responsibility at Hampton Court palace, divided among different parts of the Department of the Environment, as contributing significantly to the unsatisfactory state of affairs that had developed by the time of the fire. He recommended that responsibility and accountability for Hampton Court should be more clearly located among officials of the Department of the Environment. He also commented on the division of responsibility between the Department of the Environment and the Royal Household and recommended that consideration should be given to achieving a more unified basis of decision-making and authority at Hampton Court palace.

Sir John considered that the most immediate improvements in security against fire would be achieved by implementing 12 recommendations concerning technical improvements to the automatic fire detection system and changes in the procedures for its use and in the training of the staff concerned.

I am putting the procedural changes recommended by Sir John into immediate effect. I have set in hand an urgent evaluation by experts of the technical recommendations; the necessary changes will be implemented as soon as possible; some have already been set in train. I am urgently considering the conclusions and recommendations in the report relating to responsibility and accountability upon which I shall consult with the Lord Chamberlain, as appropriate. As soon as this consideration is concluded, I shall report to the House what further steps I propose to take to improve the security of Hampton Court palace and its management generally.

I deeply regret the fire and the loss of life and the damage it caused and I am determined that the lessons we can learn from it shall be applied to all other historic buildings in the care of the Department.

I am grateful to Sir John Garlick for his thorough report.

London Docklands

Mr. John Fraser asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many homes are currently under construction or creation by conversion in the area of the London docklands; how many are for sale and for rent, respectively; and of those for sale, what proportion will cost less than £40,000.

Sir George Young: A total of 3,282 homes are currently being constructed or created by conversion on sites owned by the London Docklands Development Corporation. Of these 2,846 are intended for owner-occupation, of which about a quarter will be priced at or below £40,000. The remaining 436 homes are intended to be rented. Homes are also under construction on other sites within docklands not in LDDC ownership, but no figures are available.

London Residuary Body

Mr. Mikardo asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what guidance his Department has given to the London residuary body about whether it is a public or private landlord.

Mr. Tracey: Schedule 13 to the Local Government Act 1985 (which was amended by schedule 2 to the Housing (Consequential Provisions) Act 1985) sets out how the residuary bodies are to be treated for purposes of various enactments. No specific guidance as to the role of the London residuary body as a landlord has been considered necessary.

Catholic Chapel, Biddlestone

Mr. Beith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether the Catholic chapel at Biddlestone, near Harbottle, Northumberland, has been listed since 18 May 1984.

Mr. Tracey: No.

Land Bank (Southampton)

Mr. Colvin asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to the acreage of the land bank within the city of Southampton held by *(a)* Southampton city council, *(b)* Hampshire county council, *(c)* British Rail, *(d)* any other public bodies and *(e)* Associated British Ports.

Sir George Young: My Department does not hold information about land banks. What is recorded in the land register is unused and underused land in the ownership of public bodies. There are 96 acres of such land within the city of Southampton, 49 acres owned by Southampton city council, 35 acres by Hampshire county council and 12 acres by the British Railways Board.

Wind Damage

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what statistics have been produced by the Building Research Establishment in each of the last seven years to indicate the extent and cost of wind damage to buildings in the United Kingdom in respect of roofs, sections of wall, electricity pylons, cooling towers and sports grandstands.

Sir George Young: Statistics have been produced by BRE in each of the last seven years relating to the extent and cost of damage to buildings in the United Kingdom due to the wind (and not other causes). The statistics form part of a continuing survey of reports of wind damage started in 1962. Information from the last seven years has been published in:

Performance of buildings in the United Kingdom. N. J. Cook
Engineering Structures, Vol 6, October 1984, pp 248-255.
The designer's guide to wind loading of building structures. N. J. Cook. Butterworths, 1985. ISBN 0-408-00870-9.

Overall, during the last seven years, there have been wind damage reports from some 2,900 different locations in the United Kingdom, the number of buildings involved varying from one to several hundred at each location. During that same period, 20 people have been killed and nearly 300 have been injured as a result of the wind damage to the buildings. The total cost of the damage has varied considerably from year to year. On average since 1962, some 200,000 buildings are damaged each year by high winds at an annual cost of about £35 million (1986 prices).

The estimated total cost of all wind damage to buildings during the last seven years, together with the number of

reports received in respect of specific categories—roofs, walls of buildings, electricity pylons, cooling towers and sports grandstands—is given below.

	1979 £ *million*	*1980* £ *million*	*1981* £ *million*	*1982* £ *million*	*1983* £ *million*	*1984* £ *million*	*1985* £ *million*
Estimated total cost of all wind damage to buildings (1986 prices)	12	2	9	11	23	62	2
Number of reports of damage to:							
Roofs	222	43	336	352	773	3,101	44
Walls of buildings	62	17	33	50	112	262	7
Electricity pylons	—	—	—	—	4	3	—
Cooling towers	—	—	—	—	1	2	—
Sports grandstands	1	—	1	2	10	18	—

Subdivision of the total cost into those relating to each category cannot be made from the available information.

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what design programmes have been produced for engineers by the Building Research Establishment to enable them to predict wind loading more accurately.

Sir George Young: In November 1985 BRE published a new book, "The designer's guide to wind loading of building structures" by N. J. Cook aimed at helping engineers predict wind loads more accurately. In December 1985, a suite of computer programs called STRONGBLOW was then produced as an extension to the information available in the book. STRONGBLOW is a user-friendly computer program suite in BASIC which generates design wind speed data accurately and reliably at any site for all wind directions and any height above ground for the assessment of wind loads on buildings. STRONGBLOW is orientated to sites in the United Kingdom but instructions are included to extend the scope to overseas sites. STRONGBLOW is available from BRE priced £300+VAT.

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what surveys have been conducted by the Building Research Establishment to establish the extent to which buildings stand up to natural winds in the midlands, north and south of England; and what results have been produced.

Sir George Young: As part of the wind damage survey referred to in another question from the hon. Member answered today the location of all incidents has been recorded and, where possible, an estimate made of the wind speed at the time the damage occurred. The results of this assessment have been published in:

Performance of buildings in the United Kingdom, N. J. Cook. Engineering Structures, Vol. 6, October 1984, pp 248-255.
The designer's guide to wind loading of building structures. N. J. Cook. Butterworths, 1985. ISBN 0-408-00870-9.

In general it is noted that the wind speed at which damage starts to occur in the north of the United Kingdom are greater than in the south. This is due largely to variations of traditional building practices across the United Kingdom in response to geographical differences in wind climate.

The number of reports of damage since 1962 has not been sufficient to compare susceptibility of buildings to wind damage on a local regional basis. However, the reports have been divided into two sets, one for Scotland and northern England, the other for Wales and southern England. This division indicates that minor damage to building starts to occur at about 15 m/s in the South and 17·5 m/s in the North.

Homelessness

Mr. John Fraser asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many families were placed in bed-and-breakfast type accommodation for homeless people in 1985 in Greater London.

Sir George Young: My Department collects from local authorities only figures of homeless households resident in bed-and-breakfast accommodation at the end of each quarter; this information is published regularly and is placed in the Library. As at 31 December 1985, there were 2,960 households resident in bed-and-breakfast accommodation in Greater London. Some information about households placed in such accommodation during the financial year 1984-85 is contained in "Homelessness Statistics, 1984-85 Actuals" published by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy.

Shopping Areas (Palace of Westminster)

Mr. MacKenzie asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to include in new or renegotiated leases for shops let by his Department near to the Palace of Westminster provisions relating to the quality and price of goods offered or exposed for sale and primarily intended for purchase by tourists: and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: It is intended to include provision for shops at ground floor level of the Bridge street frontage of the prospective redevelopment of that area. I have yet to consider on what conditions leases for these premises will be offered. I shall consult the Services Committee about the leasing arrangements in due course.

Housing Starts

Mr. Norman Atkinson asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the number of council housing starts he anticipates that each London borough will commence during the year 1986-87 compared with the year 1980-81.

Sir George Young: My Department has made no such estimates.

Liverpool City Council (Rate Fixing)

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what amount of interest accrued to Her Majesty's Government as a result of payments being withheld from Liverpool city council during the period when that local authority delayed fixing a rate; and if this accrued interest was credited to the Liverpool city council on the final settlement of its rate.

Mrs. Rumbold: It is not possible to give a figure since the calculation would depend on hypothetical assumptions about how central Government's financing would have been carried out in other circumstances.

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the total sum of money withheld by Her Majesty's Government from the Liverpool city council as a consequence of that local authority's delay in fixing a rate for 1985-86; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: Payment of some £8·2 million was held back because of the city council's delay in setting a rate in 1985-86.

Four central Government grants should not be paid before a rating authority has fixed its rate. These are:

(i) rate rebate subsidy;
(ii) grants towards rate relief for disabled persons and institutions;
(iii) compensation to local authorities for loss of rate income in enterprise zones; and
(iv) contributions in lieu of rates on Crown and diplomatic properties.

Payment of some £8·2 million of these grants to Liverpool city council was delayed in 1985-86 until after the council set a rate on 14 June.

Anti-litter Campaign

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to announce the details of the anti-litter campaign to be headed by Mr. Richard Branson.

Mrs. Rumbold: I refer the hon. Member to the answer my right hon. Friend gave to the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) on 20 June at column *651*.

Degradable Plastics

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what efforts are being made by his Department to encourage the development and use of degradable plastics by industry.

Mrs. Rumbold: It is not the function of my Department to encourage the development of degradable plastics by industry. Rather it is for industry itself to seek out avenues of research and development. Such projects could be eligible for grant under the support for innovation scheme operated by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry.

We would encourage the use of products which have environmental advantages provided they represented an economic and practical alternative to products already in use.

Hays Chemicals Ltd., St. Helens

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether compensation will be paid to *(a)* local residents for physical and material damage suffered and *(b)* local businesses for damages suffered by virtue of the emission and subsequent emergency procedures, as a result of the incident on 28 June at Hays Chemicals Ltd. plant, St. Helens.

Mrs. Rumbold: Although local authorities have powers to make grants or loans in the event of an emergency, questions about compensation for damage should be addressed in the first instance to those believed to be liable and/or their insurers.

Voluntary Organisations (Grants)

Mr. Spencer asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish details of the programmes under which his Department and the non-departmental public bodies for which he is responsible offer grants to voluntary organisations.

Sir George Young: The Department of the Environment and its sponsored bodies have a wide range of grant programmes through which they assist the voluntary sector. The Department has just published a pamphlet outlining these grants which are given by the Department, Countryside Commission, Historic Building and Monuments Commission, Nature Conservancy Council and Sports Council. I have no doubt about the valuable role that is played by voluntary organisations across the entire spectrum of interests covered by the Department and its sponsored bodies. I am sure that voluntary organisations will find this leaflet a very useful guide when seeking support for their activities. I have arranged for a copy to be placed in the House of Commons Library.

Housing Associations

Mr. Freeson asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how many homes were owned for rental by housing associations in England and Wales at the latest available date; and what were the figures for the same period for each of the last three years;

(2) how many homes have been built by housing associations for sale or shared ownership in each of the last three years;

(3) what is the total number of homes owned by housing associations at the latest available date; and what were the figures for the same period for each of the last three years.

Sir George Young: I shall answer these questions shortly.

Thames Water Authority

Mr. Sims asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress he has made with plans to privatise the water authorities.

Mr. Ridley [*pursuant to his reply*, 25 June 1986, c. *309-11*]: My consultations on privatising the water authorities have shown that, while preparations for their privatisation are well under way, more time is needed to prepare the necessary legislation. I have therefore concluded that we are unlikely to be able to introduce the Bill next Session.

I understand further powers may be needed to enable water authorities to prepare themselves for privatisation.

I reaffirm the Government's intention to proceed with water privatisation as soon as practicable.

Okehampton Bypass

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions he has had with the Dartmoor national park authority over the permanent siting of spoil heaps, arising from the construction of the proposed Okehampton bypass, within the boundaries of the national park.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I have been asked to reply and will do so shortly.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Mr. Kevin Taylor

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Attorney-General, pursuant to his reply of 26 June to the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe, *Official Report*, column *267*, what role the Director of Public Prosecutions has played in the investigations concerning Mr. Kevin Taylor, in so far as they relate to the matters in connection with which the deputy chief constable of Greater Manchester has been asked to take leave of absence; what action the Director of Public Prosecutions proposes to take on the preliminary report which he has received on the subject; and if he will make a statement.

The Solicitor-General: The preliminary report concerning Mr. Kevin Taylor submitted to the Director of Public Prosecutions was not intended to be, nor is it suitable as, a basis for advice as to possible charges; the role of the director has been to advise as to appropriate lines of inquiry. The investigation concerning Mr. Taylor is quite separate from that being conducted in relation to the deputy chief constable of Greater Manchester, and the nature and purpose of, and the issues involved in, the respective inquiries are different.

Northern Association of Sporting and Charitable Organisations

Mr. Thornton asked the Attorney-General if he will ask the Director of Public Prosecutions to institute proceedings against the Northern Association of Sporting and Charitable Organisations (NASCO) for breaches of the law relating to lotteries and the circumstance of the use for non-charitable purposes of the name of a well-known charity in the Merseyside area.

The Solicitor-General: The investigation of alleged criminal offences and the institution of proceedings is a matter for the police service which may seek the advice of the Director of Public Prosecutions in appropriate cases. The power conferred by section 3(2)*(b)* of the Prosecution of Offences Act 1985 on the director to institute proceedings himself is a reserve power which he may use in circumstances where the ordinary enforcement machinery appears to have failed or there are otherwise special circumstances why the proceedings should be instituted in his name. I am not aware of any circumstances which would justify the director doing so in the present case. I understand that the matters to which my hon. Friend refers are the subject of an investigation by the Merseyside police, and the decision whether to prosecute will be taken at the conclusion of the investigation, in accordance with the ordinary procedures.

SCOTLAND

Maternity Services (Glasgow)

Mr. David Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the latest perinatal and neonatal mortality rates in the Rottenrow maternity hospital, Glasgow; and what are the figures for each of the last 10 years.

Mr. John MacKay: The information on perinatal mortality rates is set out in the table. Information on neonatal mortality rates is not available centrally for individual hospitals.

Year	*Rate per 1,000 births*
1976	22·4
1977	18·1
1978	18·9
1979	13·2
1980	14·9
1981	15·0
1982	13·1
1983	7·6
1984	11·8
1985	10·3

Mr. David Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list in the *Official Report* the main catchment areas for each of the maternity units in the city of Glasgow.

Mr. John MacKay: The Glasgow royal maternity unit provides a service to the east of Glasgow and also to some extent the Coatbridge/Airdrie area of Lanarkshire health board; the Stobhill maternity unit serves the north of Glasgow and the Cumbernauld/Kilsyth area of Lanarkshire; the Rutherglen maternity hospital serves south-east Glasgow and the East Kilbride area of Lanarkshire; the Southern general serves south-west Glasgow and the Renfrew and Argyll and Bute areas of Argyll and Clyde health board; and the Queen Mother's hospital serves west Glasgow and also some patients from the Renfrew area of Argyll and Clyde.

Mr. David Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what size of maternity unit is envisaged on the site earmarked for such a unit in the plans for the Royal infirmary, Glasgow.

Mr. John MacKay: The Greater Glasgow health board has not yet submitted for approval its formal case for a new obstetric unit. The board has indicated that it plans to provide a 140-bed obstetric unit, to be located either at Stobhill or at the royal infirmary, Glasgow.

NHS (Waiting Lists)

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the average waiting time for patients on National Health Service waiting lists in Scotland in each year since 1978.

Mr. Rifkind: The mean waiting times (in days) for all in-patient treatment up to 1984 (the latest year for which statistics are available) were as follows:

Year	*Days*
1978	68
1979	79

Year	Days
1980	75
1981	73
1982	67
1983	98
1984	85

The general increases in 1979 and 1983 reflect the effect of previous industrial action.

Geriatric Beds

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the ratio of geriatric beds available under the National Health Service in Scotland to people aged over 60 years in each year since 1978.

Mr. Rifkind: The ratio of available staffed geriatric beds to people aged 60 and over is as follows:

	Ratio
1978	1:105
1979	1:102
1980	1:101
1981	1:99
1982	1:99
1983	1:97
1984	1:94
1985	*1:95

* Provisional.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table to show the average monthly count of persons registered as unemployed in Scotland, in each year since 1974 who were *(a)* school leavers and *(b)* aged 19 years and under.

Mr. Allan Stewart [*pursuant to his reply*, 30 June 1986, c. *385-86*]: Information is not available in the precise form requested. The following table gives annual average unemployment in Scotland from April 1974 to May 1986 for school leavers aged under 18 and from January 1979 to April 1986 for those aged 19 and under. Annual average unemployment figures are not available prior to January 1979 for those aged 19 and under. Because of various changes in the way unemployment statistics have been compiled over the period, the figures cannot readily be compared.

Annual average unemployment in Scotland

Year	School leavers under 18	Young persons aged 19 and under
†1974	1,769	*
1975	5,014	*
1976	8,572	*
1977	12,448	*
1978	11,605	*
1979	10,126	39,453
1980	13,180	48,160
1981	14,607	61,109
1982	17,841	69,858
1983	20,593	70,330
1984	18,443	68,379
1985	17,263	65,175
‡1986	18,706	64,514

* Not available from 1974 to 1978.
† Nine months.
‡ Five months.

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the number of people in Scotland, at the latest date, who have not been in full-time employment since leaving school; and how many of them are school-leavers from *(a)* 1986, *(b)* 1985, *(c)* 1984 and *(d)* 1983 or before.

Mr. Allan Stewart [*pursuant to his reply*, 30 June 1986, c. *385-86*]: The number of people in Scotland who, at May 1986, had not been in full-time employment since leaving school was 17,521. There is no information to indicate in which year they left school.

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing the average monthly count of persons registered as unemployed in Scotland for each year since 1974; and if he will give the percentage unemployment figure for each year.

Mr. Allan Stewart [*pursuant to his reply*, 30 June 1986, c. *385-86*]: The following table shows the annual average of the monthly count of unemployed persons claiming benefit in Scotland for each year from April 1974 to May 1986. Because of various changes in the way unemployment statistics have been compiled over the period, the figures are not directly comparable year by year.

Annual average unemployment in Scotland

Year	Total	Percentage Unemployed
*1974	82,406	3·8
1975	109,309	5·0
1976	148,323	6·7
1977	172,117	7·7
1978	172,042	7·7
1979	168,345	7·4
1980	207,918	9·1
1981	282,807	12·4
1982	318,017	14·0
1983	335,579	14·9
1984	341,599	15·1
1985	352,967	15·6
1986†	361,176	16·0

* Nine months.
† Five months.

Housing

Mr. Norman Hogg asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many public sector houses, other than special needs houses, were built in each of the Scottish new towns in each year since 1974.

Mr. Allan Stewart [*pursuant to his reply*, 26 June 1986, c. *314*]: The information is not readily available in the form requested. The available information, for houses (other than special needs houses) built by development corporations in the new towns, is as follows:

	Cumbernauld	East Kilbride	Glenrothes	Irvine	Livingston
1974	748	504	70	267	850
1975	590	717	486	896	875
1976	286	840	289	775	1,392
1977	673	143	319	761	1,021
1978	485	—	256	240	454
1979	299	—	339	462	702
1980	213	91	299	49	485
1981	238	89	360	491	187
1982	220	40	94	23	239
1983	—	303	186	5	55
1984	—	109	54	8	26
1985	116	—	—	39	—

Mr. Norman Hogg asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many houses for special needs have been built in each of the Scottish new towns in each year since 1979.

Mr. Allan Stewart [*pursuant to his reply*, 26 June 1986, c. *314*]: The information is not readily available in the form requested. The available information, for special needs houses built by development corporations in the new towns, is as follows:

	Cumbernauld	East Kilbride	Glenrothes	Irvine	Livingston
1979	—	—	127	4	85
1980	—	—	27	36	85
1981	—	—	98	30	23
1982	—	—	53	—	52
1983	—	—	74	37	7
1984	—	19	—	53	—
1985	—	—	8	25	14
1986*	—	—	—	2	—

* Position to 31 March.

These figures do not include conversion of existing houses or houses under construction.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Science and Mathematics

Mr. Batiste asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many student places in universities and polytechnics in science, engineering and mathematics were unfilled in the last academic year.

Mr. Walden: Information on student places is not collected centrally. The University Grants Committee and the National Advisory Body for Public Sector Higher Education regularly monitor trends in student numbers and their relationship to planning totals. Such monitoring does not, however, extend to the numbers of empty places. Provision is also being made to monitor the engineering and technology programme and the effect this has on other similar courses.

Students (Industrial Sponsorship)

Mr. Forman asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will set out in tabular form the number and value of industrial sponsorships for home students in higher education in each year from 1970 to the latest available date.

Mr. Walden: The "University Statistics" shows that the following numbers of home university students were in receipt of financial support from industry and commerce between 1980 and 1984.

Home Students in Great Britain Universities

	Thousands
1980	2·6
1981	2·5
1982	2·3
1983	2·6
1984	2·6

Notes:

1. "Home" students are defined as those full-time students paying home fee rates (which includes some students domiciled in the EC) and all part-time students.
2. "Students" include those on full-time, part-time and sandwich courses and includes both undergraduates and postgraduates.

Figures for the years between 1970 and 1979 are not readily available. Information about the value of industrial sponsorships, and the number of home students in the public sector of higher education in receipt of such sponsorships, is not held centrally.

Higher Education

Mr. Forman asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many students in *(a)* universities and *(b)* public sector institutions are now studying with the benefit of distance learning techniques; and what were the equivalent figures in each year from 1970 to the latest available date.

Mr. Walden: In November 1984, 460 advanced course students and 6,250 non-advanced course students were recorded as studying at further education colleges in England using distance learning.

The numbers of Open University undergraduate and associate students, all of whom use distance learning techniques, were as follows:

Calendar year	*Thousands*
1971	19·6
1975	53·5
1979	69·4
1980	68·9
1981	67·0
1982	70·3
1983	73·8
1984	75·4
1985	76·4

The numbers of such students at universities, other than the Open University, and for earlier years at further education colleges are not available.

Mr. Radice asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what has been the total number of mature entrants into higher education in each year since 1974.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The information for home full-time and sandwich initial entrants aged 21 and over to higher education in Great Britain is as follows:

Higher Education in Great Britain

Thousands

Academic year beginning	*Full-time and sandwich home mature initial entrants*
1974	30·7
1975	31·4
1976	33·0
1977	30·5
1978	32·3
1979	34·0
1980	33·2
1981	36·0
1982	35·9
1983	36·8
1984	37·1
*1985	39·2

* Provisional.

Mr. Radice asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what has been the older, mature participation index for higher education in each year since 1974.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Figures for the older mature participation index, which is defined as the number of home full-time and sandwich initial entrants aged 25 and over, expressed as a percentage of the population aged 25 to 34 in that year, are shown in the following table.

Older Mature entry indices to Higher Education in Great Britain

Academic year beginning	*Men*	*Women*
1974	0·223	0·243
1975	0·237	0·242
1976	0·234	0·217
1977	0·210	0·170
1978	0·229	0·185
1979	0·228	0·207
1980	0·229	0·209
1981	0·260	0·230
1982	0·255	0·237
1983	0·273	0·248
1984	0·262	0·250
*1985	0·260	0·274

* Provisional.

Note:

1. Due to a minor change in definition the figures for 1974 to 1978 are not strictly comparable with those for later years.

Mr. Radice asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) what has been the total number of part-time students in higher education each year since 1970;

(2) what has been the total, full-time equivalent number of students in higher education each year since 1970.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The information for selected years is as follows:

Student numbers in higher education—Great Britain thousands

Academic Year beginning	*Full-time and sandwich*	*Part-time*	*Approximate full-time equivalent*
1970	446	162	503
1975	504	215	579
1979	510	268	604
1980	521	288	622
1981	542	297	646
1982	553	303	659
1983	566	312	675
1984	573	312	682
*1985	578	328	693

* Provisional.

Notes:

1. Conversion factors vary in the different sectors and for different levels of course. For this table an illustrative factor of 35 per cent. has been used for all part-time students.

Civil-funded Research

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will undertake a review of the effects of Government expenditure cuts on civil-funded research carried out in universities and research establishments.

Mr. Walden: No. The Advisory Board for the Research Councils and the University Grants Committee advise my right hon. Friend on the financial needs of research undertaken in higher education and in research council establishments.

Scottish Universities (Funding)

Mr. Wallace asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has any plans to meet representatives of Scottish universities to discuss future funding of these institutions.

Mr. Walden: My right hon. Friend has no plans at present to meet representatives of Scottish universities.

Tertiary Colleges

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has as to which local education authorities have a single tertiary college, on multiple sites, with a single governing board.

Mr. Dunn: The only local education authority which currently provides all 16 to 19 education in a single tertiary college is the London borough of Richmond-upon-Thames. That college is on one site, and has a single governing body.

School Reorganisation

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has as to which local education authorities have reorganised their schools within the past five years and which have instituted different age ranges in schools in different parts of the authority.

Mr. Dunn: Full information on any changes in age range could be obtained only at disproportionate cost, but the list shows those local education authorities in whose areas major secondary reorganisations have been approved within the past five years.

LEAs for which major secondary reorganisations have been approved since 1981.

Croydon
Harrow
Waltham Forest
ILEA
Birmingham
Dudley
Knowsley
Liverpool
Wirral
Bolton
Manchester
Calderdale
Kirklees
Wakefield
Gateshead
Avon
Cheshire
Cleveland
Cumbria
Durham
East Sussex
Essex
Gloucestershire
Hampshire
Hereford and Worcester
Humberside
Lancashire
Lincolnshire
North Yorkshire
Staffordshire
Wiltshire

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make it his policy, when approving school reorganisations for the purpose of accommodating falling school rolls, to make available extra resources to deal with any problems arising from the transition from the existing organisation to the new one; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: Priority is given in determining authorities' allocations of prescribed capital expenditure to projects resulting from approved statutory proposals. Budgeting for current expenditure is a matter for the individual authority.

Hampshire

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what study his Department has made of the transcript of Mr. Justice Taylor's judgment in the judicial review of decisions by the Hampshire local education authority, R. *v.* Hampshire Education Authority ex part J, 28 November 1985; what action he has now taken; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: My right hon. Friend has considered the judgment in this case and has concluded that it is broadly in line with his Department's interpretation of the Education Act 1981. He has written to chief education officers and amendments will be made to the guidance contained in circular 1/83 in due course.

Universities (Revenue)

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list what information the University Grants Committee has on the forecast surplus or deficit of revenue for 1986-87 for universities in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Walden: I understand that this information was provided to the University Grants Committee in confidence. It has not been made available to the Department.

School Governors

Mr. Marlow asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has as to which local authorities recruit or propose to recruit school governors on the basis of ethnic background.

Mr. Dunn: No information is collected on actual practice. I am looking into recent reports suggesting that the Inner London education authority intends to reserve certain governorships for ethnic minorities.

University Grants Committee

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what subjects he expects to discuss at his next meeting with the University Grants Committee.

Mr. Walden: My right hon. Friend will be meeting the University Grants Committee on 10 July. He expects to discuss a wide range of issues about universities.

Universities (Grants)

Mr. Radice asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will publish a list of the *(a)* learned bodies, *(b)* medical charities and *(c)* individuals with specialist knowledge which gave help to the University Grants Committee and its sub-committees in determination of recurrent grants to universities for 1986-87.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I understand that the main bodies which provided information and advice to the University Grants Committee and its sub-committees in their assessments of universities' research strengths were:

Agricultural and Food Research Council
Economic and Social Research Council
Medical Research Council
Natural Environment Research Council
Science and Engineering Research Council
Engineering Council
Royal Society
Royal Society of Chemistry
National Institutes of Health (United States of America)
Information Technology Skills Agency
Institute of Cost and Management Accountants
Institute of Chartered Accountants
Institute of Chartered Accountants of Scotland
Chartered Association of Certified Accountants
Arthritis and Rheumatism Council
Association for Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus
British Diabetic Association
British Heart Foundation
Cancer Research Campaign
Chest Heart and Stroke Association
Cystic Fibrosis Research Trust
Imperial Cancer Research Fund
Leukaemia Research Fund
Leverhulme Trust
Mental Health Foundation
Multiple Sclerosis of Great Britain
Muscular Dystrophy Group
National Fund for Research into Crippling Diseases
National Kidney Research fund
Nuffield Foundation
Tenovus Cancer Fund
Wellcome Foundation
Yorkshire Cancer Research Campaign

Individuals who provided information and advice did so on a confidential basis.

Grammar Schools

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many grammar schools are provided by education authorities in England and Wales, and where they are located.

Mr. Dunn [*pursuant to his reply*, 26 June 1986, c. *249*]: The number of grammar schools in local education authorities in England, as recorded in the annual census of schools in January 1986, are shown in the table. Information on Welsh schools is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

January 1986

	Number of grammar schools
Barnet	2
Bexley	2
Bromley	2
Enfield	1
Kingston-upon-Thames	2
Redbridge	2
Sutton	4
Birmingham	8
Walsall	2
Wolverhampton	1
Wirral	4
Trafford	8
Calderdale	2
Kirklees	1
Avon	2
Berkshire	6
Buckinghamshire	14
Devon	9
Dorset	6
Essex	8
Gloucestershire	10
Kent	28
Lancashire	4
Lincolnshire	15
North Yorkshire	3
Salop	2
Warwickshire	5
Wiltshire	2
Total England	155

ENERGY

Electricity Prices

Mr. Favell asked the Secretary of State for Energy what information he has as to how the recent fall in electricity prices compares in the United Kingdom with other European Economic Community countries.

Mr. Goodlad: Surveys conducted by the CBI in recent years have shown that the price of electricity to industrial users in the United Kingdom generally compares favourably with prices in other countries in the Community, except in France where consumers are reaping the benefits of a large nuclear power programme. I believe that this remains the position. The effects of movements in exchange rates has been to lessen the size of reductions in other countries in the Community in sterling terms, and in some cases has implied an increase in prices.

Oil and Gas Wells (Abandonment)

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the discussions with the oil industry and other interests involved on the requirements for removal of (i) onshore and (ii) offshore oil and gas rigs and platforms and undersea equipment, and the requirement for sealing of wells on abandonment.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: I have had discussions with representatives from offshore oil industry organisations, and from fishermen's organisations on the Government's proposals for the abandonment of disused offshore oil and gas installations; my officials are continuing discussions with these organisations. No discussions have yet taken place on the question of the eventual removal of onshore oil and gas production facilities.

The requirements for the sealing of abandoned wells are well understood by the offshore operating companies and have been in operation for a number of years.

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Energy what procedures are followed when it is proposed that (i) an onshore and (ii) an offshore oil or gas well is to be abandoned; and what proposed abandonments have so far been raised with his Department.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: When a company proposed to abandon a well onshore or offshore it must seek the Secretary of State's consent before commencing abandonment operations. The condition of the well and the proposed sealing arrangements are reviewed by my officials before giving consent. Over 1,000 offshore wells have been abandoned since exploration commenced in December 1964. A similar number of onshore wells have been abandoned.

EMPLOYMENT

Retail Prices Index

Mr. Sean Hughes asked the Paymaster General what has been the value of the petrol component of the retail prices index for each of the last 12 months.

Mr. Lang: Taking January 1974 as 100, the index figures for the "petrol and oil" component of the retail prices index for the 12 months to May were:

	Figures
14 May 1985	490·0
June 1985	488·3
July 1985	481·6
August 1985	478·6
September 1985	475·0
October 1985	467·5
November 1985	463·4
December 1985	462·1
January 1986	459·4
February 1986	447·5
March 1986	427·4
April 1986	412·8
May 1986	392·0

Community Programme

Mr. Frank Field asked the Paymaster General how many community programmes were in operation *(a)* in 1985 and *(b)* in the current year; and how many of these were occupied (i) for the whole of the period of the programme and (ii) for part of the time.

Mr. Lang: It is not possible to give information in the form requested. However, at the end of May 1985, and at the end of May 1986 (the latest date for which statistics are available) the number of community programme projects and places were as follows:

	May 1985	*May 1986*
Projects operating	8,040	10,984
Places authorised	157,602	256,321
Places filled		
Full-time	38,525	53,553
Part-time	95,471	162,068
Total	133,996	215,621

Hays Chemicals Ltd., St. Helens

Mr. Evans asked the Paymaster General why no officer of Her Majesty's Industrial Air Pollution Inspectorate was available to participate in Operation Cloudburst following an incident at Hays Chemicals Ltd., St. Helens, on Saturday 28 June; and when an officer of that establishment first made contact with St. Helens metropolitan council.

Mr. Trippier: The Industrial Air Pollution Inspectorate did not become aware of the incident at Hays Chemicals Ltd., St. Helens, until Monday 30 June, on which date St. Helens metropolitan council was contacted.

Mr. Bermingham asked the Paymaster General what information he has as to the age of the oleum tank that split at Hays Chemicals Ltd. plant, East Sutton, St. Helens on Saturday 28 June.

Mr. Trippier: Hays Chemicals Ltd. states that the tank was fabricated in 1969 and installed in 1970.

Mr. Bermingham asked the Paymaster General what information he has as to what welding tests were carried out on welded seams of the oleum tank at Hays Chemicals Ltd. plant, East Sutton, St. Helens on 28 June.

Mr. Trippier: No tests were carried out on 28 June. Visual examination and non-destructive tests were carried out in November and December 1985.

Mr. Bermingham asked the Paymaster General what information he has as to when the oleum tank that split at Hays Chemicals Ltd. plant, East Sutton, St. Helens on 28 June was last refurbished.

Mr. Trippier: Refurbishment was undertaken following the examination in November and December 1985.

Mr. Bermingham asked the Paymaster General what information he has as to what certificate was issued, and by whom, after each refurbishment of the oleum tank that split at Hays Chemicals Ltd. plant, East Sutton, St. Helens on 28 June.

Mr. Trippier: No information is available at present.

Mr. Bermingham asked the Paymaster General what information he has as to how many tanks of oleum are on the Hays Chemicals Limited site at East Sutton, St. Helens.

Mr. Trippier: There are four oleum tanks on site.

Mr. Bermingham asked the Paymaster General what information he has as to whether the oleum tank that split at the Hays Chemicals Limited plant at East Sutton, St. Helens on 28 June was pressurised.

Mr. Trippier: The oleum tank is not normally pressurised. Preliminary investigations suggest that there was an accidental pressurisation on 28 June.

Mr. Bermingham asked the Paymaster General (1) what information he has as to the temperature of the oleum in the tank that split at the Hays Chemicals Limited plant at East Sutton, St. Helens on 28 June at the time of the split;

(2) what information he has as to steps taken to keep oleum tanks at Hays Chemicals Limited plant, East Sutton, St. Helens within safe temperature control limits.

Mr. Trippier: No information is available at present.

Mr. Bermingham asked the Paymaster General what information he has as to what warning devices are used on oleum tanks at Hays Chemicals Limited, St. Helens to give notice that a tank has split or is in any way in a dangerous condition.

Mr. Trippier: A contents level indicator was fitted to the tank.

Mr. Bermingham asked the Paymaster General what regulations govern pressurised and non-pressurised tanks, including those containing oleum.

Mr. Trippier: It is not customary to store oleum in pressurised tanks. Tanks which operate at atmospheric pressure are not subject to any specific regulations. Tanks used for containing steam or air above atmospheric pressure and steam boilers are subject to sections 32 to 37 of the Factories Act 1961.

Mr. Bermingham asked the Paymaster General what information he has as to what facilities there are for emptying tanks containing oleum at Hays Chemicals Limited, St. Helens.

Mr. Trippier: Rigid and flexible pipes and pumps are available for emptying oleum tanks into other static tanks or mobile road tankers.

Mr. Bermingham asked the Paymaster General (1) whether the site at Hays Chemicals Limited, East Sutton, St. Helens is governed by the Controls of Industrial Major Accident Hazard Regulations.

(2) if he has any plans to designate installations that have tanks containing sulphur trioxide under Control of Industrial Major Accident Hazard regulations.

Mr. Trippier: The site at present is subject to regulations 4 and 5 of the Control of Industrial Major Accident Hazards Regulations 1984 because an industrial activity is carried out there that involves sulphur trioxide which is a dangerous substance as defined in regulation 2(1).

A directive is expected to be adopted shortly which would require amendment to the CIMAH regulations. This would add sites with sulphur trioxide above a threshold quantity to the list of those to which the more stringent requirements in regulations 7 to 12 apply.

Mr. Evans asked the Paymaster General if he will hold a public inquiry into the incident at Hays Chemicals Ltd., St. Helens, on Saturday 28 June in which a tank containing oleum fractured and sent a cloud of sulphuric acid mist over St. Helens; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: No. I will write to the hon. Member when the Health and Safety Executive has completed its investigation and place a copy in the Library.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Radiation

Mr. John asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has as to the likely long-term effects upon ewes in north Wales and Cumbria of exposure to radiation, and in particular how long such ewes are likely to give contaminated milk; whether movement to uncontaminated pasture would have a beneficial effect; and whether there is any risk of genetic mutations in sheep.

Mr. Jopling [*pursuant to his reply*, 2 July 1986]: Results of monitoring data up to Wednesday 2 July show an encouraging reduction in radiocaesium levels in lamb in certain parts of the designated areas of south-west Cumbria which have been intensively sampled. The latest batch of results is being published today. On the basis of these results my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales and I will today be making a new order to come into effect at midnight under the Food and Environment Protection Act 1985 to release certain areas from restriction while retaining restrictions on the remainder for a further three weeks.

A map showing the areas to be released has been placed in the Library of the House. It will free over 1,200 holdings, 549 with sheep, in Cumbria from restriction.

We hope to reduce further the size of the designated area in Cumbria as soon as additional sampling results confirm the expected fall in radiocaesium levels in the area still subject to restriction. The latest monitoring results are also being placed in the Library of the House.

In my statement on 20 June I said that, if it should prove to be necessary, the Government would be prepared to discuss cases of compensation for severe loss in particular circumstances to specific farmers. We have already had discussions with representatives of the farmer's unions on compensation and these will continue with a view to making a further statement as soon as we are in a position to do so.

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the actions taken in response to the risk of radioactive contamination of food during May and June by his Department and by his counterparts in France, West Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Belgium, Austria, Switzerland, Finland, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Poland and Czechoslovakia; and what arrangements were made for international co-ordination of precautions during the Chernobyl emergency.

Mrs. Fenner [*pursuant to her reply*, 26 June 1986, c. *307*]: As soon as news of the Chernobyl accident was reported my Department undertook monitoring which was intensified on and after 2 May when the cloud carrying radioactive material reached the United Kingdom. Other European countries also undertook monitoring. The extent of radioactive deposition varied depending on the length of time the cloud was overhead and rainfall during that time. Although the levels of radioactivity in foodstuffs in the United Kingdom have generally been well below the level at which action would need to be considered, levels of radiocaesium in young unfinished lambs, not yet ready for market, in certain areas of Cumbria and north Wales were sufficient to warrant the introduction of controls on movement and slaughter of sheep in these areas. I understand that a number of other European countries have had to institute similar controls on a range of their foodstuffs.

On 1 May the Department of Health and Social Security asked port health authorities to hold imports of certain foods from Poland and Russia for testing and extended this advice on 10 May to cover the range of foodstuffs from eastern bloc countries likely to be subject to a Community ban. The European Community reached agreement on 12 May on the imposition of a ban from 13 to 31 May on certain food imports, including fresh milk and milk products, and fresh fruit and vegetables from Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland, Rumania, Czechoslovakia, the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia.

On 31 May, the ban was replaced by a Community regulation specifying maximum levels of caesium 134 and 137 in certain foods imported into the Community from third countries. The regulation expires on 30 September 1986. Procedures under the regulation allow for the issue in countries of origin, as part of the monitoring arrangements, of certificates to accompany consignments of foodstuffs confirming that the health standards required by the regulation are met. Discussions were held on 22-23 May by a group of Community scientists under article 31 of the Euratom treaty to discuss the trigger level for contamination of Community control measures.

Dr. David Clark asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if he will place in the Library the results of radioactivity monitoring of sheep milk for 1 to 14 May for Cleveland, Cumbria, Durham and Northumberland;

(2) why no figures have been issued on the results of the monitoring of radioactivity in sheep milk in Cumbria between 3 and 14 May.

Mr. Jopling [*pursuant to his reply*, 2 July 1986]: Immediately following the accident at Chernobyl the Ministry's monitoring programme concentrated upon cows' milk to ensure that there was no danger to human health from its consumption, particularly by infants. When we were satisfied that there was no hazard to health from cows' milk, my Department extended its monitoring to sheeps' and goats' milk to ensure that these, too, were safe for consumption.

The first results of monitoring of sheeps' milk in Durham and Cumria and Northumberland relate to samples taken on 12 and 14 May, respectively. These results were published in the data issued by my Department on 30 May and included in the compendium of data provided on 20 June which is in the House of Commons Library.

Fish Quotas

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what are the present European Community quotas for each type of fish imposed on the sea-fishing industries of each of the member states; and which of the quotas have been exceeded to date.

Mr. Gummer: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Fish Sizes

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps are being taken by Her

Majesty's Government and other European Governments to ensure that no fish below the minimum size allowed to be caught are fished in European waters.

Mr. Gummer: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Persistent Plastics (Dumping Convention)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what methods are being used by Her Majesty's Government to monitor the effectiveness of the London and Oslo dumping convention in respect of persistent plastics.

Mr. Gummer: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Agriculture (Expenditure)

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what estimate he has made of the addition to national spending in consequence of the transfer of responsibility for agricultural spending from the European Economic Community to national Governments in the price review in respect of 1986; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jopling: The decision to reduce the Community's reimbursement to member states for their national expenditure on intervention operations will cut Community expenditure by about 300 million ecu a year according to Commission estimates. As I explained in my reply to the hon. Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Deakins) on 14 May the overall effect on United Kingdom public expenditure is expected to be broadly neutral.

Potato Marketing Scheme

Mr. Soames asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he has decided to hold a public inquiry into the Potato Marketing Board's proposals to amend the potato marketing scheme.

Mr. Jopling: I and my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Scotland and Wales have carefully considered the objections we have received to the board's proposals. We have decided to direct that a public inquiry be held and have appointed His Honour Judge David Peck to be chairman. The inquiry will begin on 30 July and will be held in Church house, Westminster.

Food Additives

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what guidelines he proposes to issue to food companies regarding policy on the future use of food additives.

Mrs. Fenner [*pursuant to her reply*, 2 July 1986]: I have no plans at present to issue specific guidelines to food companies regarding policy on the future use of food additives. The use of these substances is controlled by the Food Act 1984 and through specific regulations made under that Act and is based on the advice of expert committees and, where appropriate, implements Community controls.

WALES

Sheepmeat

Sir Raymond Gower asked the Secretary of State for Wales what is his latest information regarding the levels of radiocaesium in the parts of north Wales affected by the order made on 20 June prohibiting the movement and slaughter of sheep; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards [*pursuant to his reply*, 30 June 1986, c. *406*]: Results of monitoring data up to Wednesday 2 July show an encouraging reduction in radiocaesium levels in lamb in certain parts of the designated area of north Wales which have been intensively sampled. The latest batch of results is being published today and a copy is being placed in the Library of the House.

On the basis of these results my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and I have today made a new order to come into effect at midnight under the Food and Environment Protection Act 1985 to release certain areas, including south and west of the A5 in Anglesey and the Vale of Clwyd, from restrictions while retaining the remainder for a further 21 days.

A map showing the areas in Wales to be released has been placed in the Library of the House. It will free approximately 1,000 holdings in north Wales from restriction.

I am fully aware of the problems faced by those farmers still subject to restrictions and of the large numbers of lambs held on farms which are now ready to come to market. I hope to reduce further the size of the designated area in north Wales as soon as additional sampling results confirm the expected fall in radiocaesium levels in the area still subject to restriction.

I recognise that, now farmers in the newly released areas can market their lambs, there is a possibility that an abnormally high proportion of them may be rejected for variable premium through having become over fat because the restrictions have delayed their being marketed.

My right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, in his statement on 20 June, said that if it should prove to be necessary the Government would be prepared to discuss cases of compensation for severe loss in particular circumstances to specific farmers.

I have invited representatives of the farmers' unions to meet me next Monday for discussions on the effect of restrictions and on compensation. Their views will be taken fully into account. We hope to be in a position to make an early statement.

Conductive Education

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales whether he has issued any guidelines to local education authorities in Wales concerning the use of conductive education within their areas.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The introduction of conductive education, like other forms of special educational provision, would be a matter for consideration by local education authorities and individual schools.

Sheep (Restrictions)

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales (1) with which organisations representing farmers' interests he

consulted prior to the announcement on 20 June of a 21-day ban on the movement of lambs in certain parts of Wales;

(2) on what dates he met representatives of *(a)* the Farmers Union of Wales and *(b)* the National Farmers Union to discuss either the possible introduction of a ban on lamb movements or the implications of such a ban on the farming community in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: I met the chairman and deputy chairman of the National Farmers Union on 20 June about the imposition of the restrictions. Arrangements were made to inform the president of the Farmers Union of Wales at the same time.

The closest contact is being maintained with the farming industry and others both locally and centrally.

Radiation

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales at what centres, at what frequency and with what size of sample are radioactivity levels in sheep and lambs in Wales measured; and what is the estimated statistical accuracy of such tests.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Testing is being carried out at the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food laboratories at Weybridge and Lowestoft and at other establishments in the public and private sectors. More than 500 sheep each week are currently being tested as part of the intensive monitoring programme. The statistical limits set will ensure that the prospect of sheepmeat with radiocaesium in excess of 1,000 becquerels/kilogramme level getting into the food chain is minimal.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales on what date he advised the public protection officers or trading standards officers of local authorities in Wales to be vigilant for any incidence of radioactive carcases of lamb on sale in butchers shops in their area.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The restrictions on the slaughtering and movement of sheep are specifically designed to prevent lambs with high radiocaesium levels reaching butchers' shops. There is no reason for the public to be afraid of buying and eating lamb in the shops. The attention of county emergency planning officers was drawn to the Food Protection (Emergency Prohibitions) Order 1986 on 20 June. Subsequently further approaches have been made with a view to enlisting the aid of local authority officers in order to help Agriculture Department officials to check the movement of animals at livestock markets, showgrounds and slaughterhouses.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales what measurements of bodily levels of radioactivity by body monitors, cytogenetic techniques and measurements of bodily excretions have been made by his Department.

Mr. Mark Robinson: No such monitoring is conducted by my Department although such measurements can be undertaken as part of the clinical care of patients utilising health service facilities.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales what monitoring of the levels of radioactivity of estuarial silts have been made by his Department.

Mr. Mark Robinson: No such monitoring is conducted by the Department.

Radiation

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales what monitoring of the levels of radioactivity of flotsam at sea has been made by his Department.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Monitoring of the marine environment around the Welsh coast for radioactivity, carried out by the Government, concentrates on fish, shellfish, beach silt and sand so as to represent the main pathways by which radioactivity discharged to sea may return to man. Flotsam does not constitute such a pathway and is therefore not regularly monitored around the Welsh coast.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales what are the levels of radioactivity allowed for the disharge of low-level radioactive waste from establishments licenced to discharge such waste in Wales; and what the actual levels have been.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Authorisations for the disposal of radioactive waste are granted on a site specific basis and the levels of radioactivity prescribed vary accordingly. Guidance on the application of controls is set out in "Radioactive Substances Act 1960: A Guide to the administration of the Act", a copy of which is in the Library.

Actual discharge levels from premises subject to the provisions of the Nuclear Installations Act are published in numerous sources, including the Department's "Environmental Digest for Wales", a copy of which has been sent to the hon. Gentleman. Details of discharges from premises not covered by that Act are not maintained centrally. Such information is maintained as a condition of the authorisation and is subject to inspection by Her Majesty's Radiochemical Inspecorate.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales what are the highest permissible levels of radioactivity for the sea around the coast of Wales; and what have been the actual levels in each of the last five years.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Statutory controls are applied to discharges to sea from nuclear sites in order to ensure that the exposure of members of the public to artificial radiation is kept within internationally recommended limits. There are, therefore, no legal limits applying to the sea.

The results of monitoring in the marine environment around the Welsh coast carried out by the Government are published annually in a report entitled "Radioactivity in surface and coastal waters of the British Isles". Copies are placed in the Library of the House.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales what are the sources of radioactivity in the sea off the coast of Wales; and what proportion of the total each source contributes.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Levels of radioactivity in the sea around Wales vary with location, as do the relative contributions from different sources. However, Government scientists have estimated that, off the coast of north Wales, about 90 per cent. of the radioactivity in the sea originates from natural sources, whilst most of the remainder is attributable to discharges from BNFL Sellafield. The proportion of radioactivity originating

from natural sources is greater further south, and along the mid-Wales coastline such radioactivity accounts for over 99 per cent. of the total activity present.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales what testing is done to ascertain the levels of radioactivity in the environment in Wales; and by whom the testing is done.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Air, water, milk, fish and food are tested for levels of radioactivity in Wales. Analyses are carried out by the nuclear power stations and Amersham International (Cardiff) as a condition of their discharge authorisations, by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food as part of its programme of monitoring for radioactivity in the marine and terrestrial environments, by the National Radiological Protection Board, by the Atomic Energy Research Establishment, Harwell, and by HM Radiochemical Inspectorate.

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales why the airborne radioactivity readings measured at Trawsfynydd station on the late evening of 2 May have been excluded from the data he has published to date; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mark Robinson: All monitoring data made available to the Welsh Office in response to the Chernobyl accident up to 15 May have been made available to the public, and none has been excluded.

Radioactive Substances

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales what sites in Wales are licensed to use or to keep radioactive substances.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The CEGB power stations at Trawsfynydd and Wylfa, and Amersham International plc, Cardiff, are licensed under the Nuclear Installations Act 1965. In addition, under the Radioactive Substances Act 1960, certificates of registration are issued in respect of premises for the keeping and use thereon of radioactive material. The Welsh Office index of such registrations is in the process of being computerised, and I am arranging for a copy of the provisional computerised list to be placed in the Library of the House within the next few days.

Prince Charles Hospital, Merthyr Tydfil

Mr. Rowlands asked the Secretary of State for Wales what information he has on the average waiting time at Prince Charles hospital, Merthyr Tydfil, for operations in each of the categories of operations conducted at the hospital; and whether the review of waiting lists will include a specific analysis of the waiting lists at this hospital.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Information on the average waiting times at Prince Charles hospital is available in the Welsh hospital waiting list bulletin 1986, No. 1, published on 23 June, a copy of which has been sent to the hon. Gentleman. Copies have also been placed in the Library.

Members of the Welsh Office catalyst team met representatives of Mid Glamorgan health authority on 30 June to consider the problem of waiting times at Prince Charles hospital. The team will be carrying out specific analyses of the most problematic waiting lists in conjunction with the health authority as a first stage in helping the authority to identify possible solutions.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Royal Wedding

Mr. Neil Hamilton asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether the Royal Mint has any plans to commemorate the wedding of his Royal Highness Prince Andrew and Miss Sarah Ferguson on 23 July.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I am pleased to announce that approval has been given for the Royal Mint to issue a medal to commemorate the royal wedding. The obverse will show a portrait of Prince Andrew and Miss Sarah Ferguson and the reverse the rose window of Westminster Abbey.

EC (Value Added Tax)

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if, pursuant to his reply of 4 March, *Official Report*, column *94*, a date has yet been fixed at the European Court of Justice for the application by the European Economic Community Commission for a declaration that the United Kingdom has breached the sixth directive by levying a zero rate on certain goods and services in relation to the levying of value added tax; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: A date has not yet been fixed. The Government's position remains as given in my answer of 4 March.

EC (Abatements)

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if, in light of the paper produced on 22 May by the Vice President of the European Economic Community Commission, it remains the position of Her Majesty's Government that they are permitted to deduct their abatements or revised abatements from the United Kingdom's contributions to the European Economic Community; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: The paper produced by Vice-President Christophersen on 22 May (the 1986 Preliminary draft supplementary and amending budget) has no effect on the United Kingdom's right to continue to deduct the 1400 mecu abatement already contained in the 1986 budget. It simply proposes to increase the abatement provision by 500 mecu to 1900 mecu.

Personal Equity Plans

Mr. Michael Forsyth asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he plans to introduce measures to permit building societies to offer personal equity plans to the public.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The Government believe that building societies have a potentially important role to play in encouraging the growth of wider share ownership through the personal equity plan scheme announced by my right hon. Friend in his Budget speech. To this end, the Government will be introducing amendments to the Building Societies Bill which would give the societies power to undertake investment business for the purpose of providing personal equity plans. This will enable the societies to be plan managers and to offer a wide range of schemes which will be possible under the Government's

proposals. The power will be available only to those building societies with commercial assets of £100 million or more, and the business will have to be undertaken by a subsidiary of the society which may be wholly owned or a joint venture with another investment business, and which will require authorisation under the financial services legislation. Societies under the £100 million threshold will be free to market plans on behalf of a plan manager.

The amendments will be tabled as soon as possible.

EC (Expenditure)

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he has received a copy of Commission document No. 7113/86 issued by the Vice President of the Commission concerning the adequacy of their own resources of the European Community within a 1·4 per cent. rate; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: Yes. It was deposited under cover of an explanatory memorandum on 17 June 1986.

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps he intends to take to seek to ensure that the Commission of the Common Market restricts its spending to the legal limit imposed by the 1·4 per cent. value added tax rate; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: The 1·4 per cent. VAT ceiling is enshrined within the Community's new own resources decisions, which have treaty status. The Community is bound to keep its spending within this ceiling unless and until member states agree unanimously to change it, with the consent of their Parliaments.

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make it his policy not to accept liability for expenditure incurred by the European Economic Community Commission in excess of the legal limits of spending; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: I think it is highly unlikely that such an eventuality will arise. The Commission is subject to public audit by the Court of Auditors.

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make it his policy to secure parliamentary approval before any supplementary or amending European Economic Community budget is implemented for 1986; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: The Council and the European Parliament will be trying next week, in the light of the European Court's judgment this morning, to reach quick agreement on a new and valid budget for 1986. I regret, therefore, that there will be no opportunity for prior debate in the House. I have written to the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) and my right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins), about this.

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the authorised limits on European Economic Community spending in 1986; and what spending commitments for 1986 have been agreed by the European Economic Community Commission.

Mr. Brooke: The authorised limits on commitments and payments this year are subject to the outcome of the Council's case against the European Parliament's adoption of a disputed budget for 1986. We expect to receive the judgment of the European Court of Justice on 3 July.

No figures are available for the total commitments entered into by the Commission so far during 1986.

TRANSPORT

Safety Barriers

Mr. David Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has about methods and materials used in Europe and the United States of America for the construction of barriers to prevent cross-over accidents on motorways and other roads; what information he has as to their efficiency in terms of the trend in the number of cross-over accidents in those countries; if any such method or materials are currently being considered for introduction in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Information available indicates that most European countries make extensive use of steel safety fences of a similar design and construction to those used on roads in this country. A few European countries have installed lengths of concrete safety barriers on some roads. No statistical information is readily available on the efficiency of safety fences or barriers in other European countries in preventing crossover accidents. The extensive use of steel safety fences implies confidence in their performance.

Extensive use is made of concrete barriers in the United States of America, where they are found to be reasonably successful in preventing crossover accidents for the types and speeds of vehicles used in that country. In England concrete barriers are permitted on roads with speed limits up to 50 mph. The Department has a programme of research and development on safety fences and barriers. There are no plans at present to introduce any major changes to their design or construction. I will write to the hon. Member to give more detailed information on concrete barriers.

Mr. David Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Transport what sums have been spent by the transport road research laboratory on investigating concrete safety barriers in the past 12 months; and what conclusions have been drawn as to the scope for preventing cross-over accidents on British motorways and trunk roads.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: £150,000 was spent on an investigation, including a series of full-scale impact tests, completed in May 1985. Nothing has been spent in the past 12 months. Some aspects of performance were unsatisfactory and potential design improvements were identified. An estimated £70,000 will be spent on tests of a modified barrier design, beginning this month. I shall write to the hon. Member with details of the conclusions drawn from tests to date.

Estuarial Crossings

Mr. Warren asked the Secretary of State for Transport what estimate he has of the annual cost over the next five years of accepting the proposals of the Transport Committee that Her Majesty's Government should buy in the debts of the existing estuarial crossings.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Committee's report and its assessment of the cost of the proposals is under detailed consideration. A response will be sent to the Committee shortly.

Travel Cards

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will set a service objective for London Regional Transport such that no passenger has to wait more than 15 minutes before being able to purchase a travel card; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: I am encouraging the development of service standards for the underground, but their detailed formulation is a matter for the management, taking into account the results of market research.

Tankers (Re-routeing)

Mr. Kennedy asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will detail the further steps he proposes to take concerning the re-routeing of tankers out of the Minch and west of the Hebrides; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moore: Following the confirmation by surveys completed last year under the Government's civil hydrography programme that there is a route suitable for deep draught vessels to the west of the Outer Hebrides, I have decided to seek formal approval from the International Maritime Organisation for a deep water route in the area surveyed. If accepted, this will mean that the route will be prominently marked in magenta on charts of the area issued by all nations, which will also carry a recommendation that large tankers should use the route in preference to passing through the Minches. I am confident that the IMO's adoption of the proposed route will greatly assist in attracting tanker traffic away from the Minches.

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will extend the terms of reference of the joint consultative committee examining the environmental impact of the Channel tunnel to include London; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: No. The joint consultative committee to which the hon. Member refers consists principally of representatives of Kent local authorities, and focuses on problems in Kent. The specific effects of the scheme in London are all connected with alterations to the railway. BR is consulting interested parties, and I have met local residents in the Waterloo area with the hon. Member for Vauxhall (Mr. Holland).

NORTHERN IRELAND

Security

16. **Mr. Tim Smith** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement about the current security situation.

18. **Mr. Robert B. Jones** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the current security situation.

Mr. Hayes asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the current security situation.

Mr. Tom King: I refer my hon. Friends to the reply that I gave to a question by my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels) earlier today.

Political Talks

17. **Mr. Latham** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland by what methods he intends to consult leaders of political opinion in Northern Ireland, following the dissolution of the Assembly.

Mr. Tom King: I shall ensure that party leaders in Northern Ireland and interested Members of this House representing Northern Ireland constituencies receive the proposals for draft orders and other consultation documents which would have been sent to the Northern Ireland Assembly. As always, my ministerial colleagues and I will be willing to discuss their concern.

New Companies

19. **Mr. Thurnham** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the net number of new companies formed in Northern Ireland in the most recent 12-month period for which figures are available.

Dr. Boyson: The most comprehensive information on the formation of new businesses in Northern Ireland is that derived from VAT records. In 1984, the most recent year for which figures are available, the net increase in the number of VAT registrations in Northern Ireland, was 1,100. Information on new company registrations is available from the Registrar of Companies for Northern Ireland. During the period April 1985 to March 1986 there was a net increase of 179 in the number of registered companies.

NHS (Funding)

20. **Mr. Archer** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what the impact of Health Service funding in Northern Ireland for the financial year 1986-87 will be on jobs and services for each of the health and social services boards.

Mr. Needham: The increases in revenue allocations to Health and Social Services Boards in 1986-87, together with the funds realised by their cost improvement programmes, should enable boards to meet pay and other pressures while still allowing a range of valuable service developments to proceed. The precise impact on jobs will depend on the content of boards' final operational plans, including their cost improvement programmes.

Subsidies

21. **Mr. Ashton** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the latest total annual cost of all subsidies to Northern Ireland.

Dr. Boyson: The subvention, defined as the difference between revenue raised in Northern Ireland and total public expenditure in Northern Ireland, excluding the extra cost of the Army's task and certain receipts and refunds, is expected for 1985-86 to be around £1,533 million.

Prisoners (Costs)

22. **Mr. McLoughlin** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will state the cost of keeping a prisoner in jail in Northern Ireland as compared with keeping such a prisoner in a special compound.

Mr. Scott: The average cost of keeping a prisoner in Northern Ireland was £727 per week during 1985-86 or £838 per week when Prison Department headquarters and other central costs are included.

The average cost of keeping a prisoner in the compound accommodation at HM prison, Maze, was £1,325 per week during 1985-86.

With the reduction in special category prisoners, now 118, the compound and cellular accommodation at HM prison Maze is now being managed as one unit under the control of one governor. The use of central administrative and other facilities for prisoners housed in both types of accommodation should reduce the future cost of keeping prisoners in compound accommodation.

Democratic Forum

Mr. Favell asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what recent discussions he has had with the Northern Ireland political parties about a democratic forum.

Mr. Tom King: As I informed my hon. Friend the Member for Epping Forest (Sir J. Biggs-Davison) on 30 June 1986, at columns *391-92*, I have recently met the leaders of the Social Democratic and Labour and Alliance parties. To my regret the leaders of the Ulster Unionist and Democratic Unionist parties have not yet accepted my offer of dialogue with the Government.

Intergovernmental Conference

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what subjects he expects to be discussed at the next meeting with representatives of the Government of the Republic of Ireland.

Mr. Scott: The next meeting of the Intergovernmental Conference will discuss relations between the security forces and the community, electoral matters and economic and social issues, including international support for the promotion of economic and social development in both parts of Ireland. The conference will also hear further reports on legal matters and cross-border security co-operation.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Dealer McDope (Board Game)

Sir Edward Gardner asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will take steps to ban the sale in the United Kingdom of an American board game Dealer McDope which is based on drugs and drug dealing.

Mr. Mellor: I have seen press reports of this game, which appears to be most distasteful. We have no present plans to prohibit its sale, but we shall monitor developments.

Motorists (Traffic Lights)

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will take steps to ensure better motorist compliance with traffic light signals in the Metropolitan area.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The enforcement of road traffic legislation within the Metropolitan police district is a matter for the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis.

Community Radio

Mr. Corbett asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will compensate those community groups who responded to the Government's invitation to bid for 21 experimental community radio licences for the full costs of the preparation of the submission of application, now that the experiment has been cancelled.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The guidance notes sent to prospective applicants made clear that they were not expected to incur the cost of elaborate applications. Nevertheless, I will consider the issues raised by the hon. Member, and respond more fully in due course.

Police Officers (Personal Injury Compensation)

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many claims for personal injury compensation because of negligence have been made by policemen and women in the last year for which figures are available; what was the total amount paid out to those who won their cases; what proportion of the cases have been concluded; what proportion have been lost; and what proportion are still not concluded.

Mr. Giles Shaw: This information is not held centrally.

Carter Street Police Station

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many occasions in the past five years compensation has been paid to people as a result of misconduct by officers based at Carter street police station, S.E.17; and how much was paid on each occasion.

Mr. Giles Shaw: This information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many disiciplinary proceedings have been taken in the last five years against police officers based at Carter street police station, S.E.17, for misconduct relating to the public; and what was the outcome of such proceedings.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I shall reply as soon as possible.

Hays Chemicals Ltd. St. Helens

Mr. Evans asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department why no medical personnel from the St. Helens and Knowsley district health authority were included, or were part of, the emergency services who participated in Operation Cloudburst following an incident at Hays Chemicals Ltd., St. Helens, on Saturday 28 June.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I understand that ambulance officers in attendance were able to deal with the incident without seeking further aid.

Mr. Evans asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Merseyside as to why the police denied councillors access to their constituents who reside in the area adjacent to Hays Chemicals Ltd., St. Helens, following an incident at the plant which necessitated the declaration of Operation Cloudburst on Saturday 28 June.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The area referred to was threatened by a cloud of sulphuric acid vapour following a leak at the plant. I understand the police advised the public, including some local councillors, not to enter the area for their own protection.

Mr. Evans asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he is satisfied with the efficiency of the emergency services which participated in Operation Cloudburst following an incident at Hays Chemicals Ltd., St. Helens, on Saturday 28th June.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Yes. I understand that by rapid implementation of their contingency plans, the emergency services contained this incident quickly and effectively.

Mr. Evans asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department why no officers of the metropolitan borough of St. Helen were included in the emergency services who participated in Operation Cloudburst following an incident at Hays Chemicals Ltd., St. Helens, on Saturday 28 June.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The initial response to any emergency is made by the fire brigade, ambulance service and police, as appropriate. Others need to be involved only when there is a specific contribution for them to make.

Mr. Evans asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department which individual was in overall control of the emergency services in St. Helens on Saturday 28 June following the declaration of Operation Cloudburst following an incident at Hays Chemicals, St. Helens; and if he will make a statement on the implications for emergency service cover to other chemical plants in the area.

Mr. Giles Shaw: In accordance with normal practice, the emergency services' response was co-ordinated by the senior police officer present, the divisional chief superintendent. As to the implications for emergency service cover for other plants in the area, the speed and efficiency of their response in this case demonstrated the effectiveness of their normal contingency plan for this sort of incident.

Births in Custody

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many women gave birth while remanded in custody in each year from 1980 to 1985;

(2) how many women who gave birth while remanded in custody subsequently received a custodial sentence in each year from 1980 to 1985;

(3) how many prisoners serving sentences of *(a)* one to six months, *(b)* six months to one year, *(c)* one year to 18 months, *(d)* 18 months to two years, *(e)* two years to three years, *(f)* three years to four years and *(g)* more than four years gave birth during their sentences in each year from 1980 to 1985.

Mr. Mellor: This information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Open Prisons

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* female and *(b)* male prisoners were accommodated in open prisons in each year from 1980 to present.

Mr. Mellor: The readily available information which is published annually in "Prison Statistics, England and Wales" (table 1.2 of the latest issue, Cmnd. 9622 for 1984) is given in the table.

Average population of open prisons in England and Wales: by sex, 1980-85
Number of persons

	Males	*Females*
1980	3,190	422
1981	3,013	347
1982	3,094	331
1983	3,105	319
1984	2,971	308
1985	3,194	336

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* male and *(b)* female prisoners were eligible for accommodation in open prisons in each year from 1980 to date.

Mr. Mellor: Since allocation to an open prison depends upon a number of factors including a prisoner's security category, his or her medical condition, and suitability for the type of accommodation available (typically dormitories) and since at a number of open prisons there are agreements with the local authorities restricting the type of prisoner who may be sent there, it is not possible to give an accurate figure of the number of prisoners eligible for open prisons.

Female Prisoners

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many category A female prisoners there were in each year from 1980 to date.

Mr. Mellor: The table sets out the information requested.

Category A female prisoners in custody: at 30th June

	Number
1980	7
1981	6
1982	4
1983	3
1984	3
1985	3
1986	*1

* In addition there were 3 provisionally categorised A.

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received regarding the training, education and recreation of female prisoners.

Mr. Mellor: In recent months various individuals and organisations have expressed views on the treatment of women prisoners, but my right hon. Friend has not received any representations directed specifically and solely to their training, education and recreation.

Recidivism

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many *(a)* female and *(b)* male prisoners were sentenced to prison again within (i) six months, (ii) six months to one year and (iii) one year to two years of their original conviction in each year from 1980 to 1985;

(2) how many *(a)* female and *(b)* male prisoners were convicted of another offence within (i) six months, (ii) one year and (iii) two years of their release in each year from 1980 to 1985.

Mr. Mellor: The readily available information relates to sentenced persons reconvicted within two years of discharge from a Prison Department establishment and is published annually in "Prison Statistics England and Wales". (Information about those discharged in 1981 is given in tables 8.1, 8.3 and 8.5 of the latest issue, for 1984, Cmnd. 9622). Figures for persons released in 1982 will be published in the issue for 1985 and information about persons released in later years will be published in subsequent issues. Additional information could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Prisoners (Injuries)

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many incidents there were of *(a)* male prisoners injuring other prisoners, *(b)* male prisoners injuring themselves, *(c)* female prisoners injuring other prisoners and *(d)* female prisoners injuring themselves in each year from 1980 to 1985.

Mr. Mellor: During the period 1 April 1984 to 31 March 1985 there were 983 incidents of deliberate self injury by 921 male prisoners and 734 incidents of deliberate self injury by 461 female prisoners.

The other information requested is not available centrally.

Prisons (Drug Administration)

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what representations he has received regarding the variations amongst prisons as regards giving drugs;

(2) if he will publish Her Majesty's Government's guidelines for the giving of drugs to prisoners.

Mr. Mellor: Prison standing orders provide that whenever possible medicines will be administered under supervision and that no medicine should be administered for more than 28 days without the medical officer's further instructions. I am not aware of any recent representations about variations in local practice.

Prevention of Terrorism

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many persons were arrested or detained in each police authority area for each month since July 1985 under the Prevention of Terrorism Act; what was the length of time each person was held; with what offences they were charged; and how many were served with exclusion orders.

Mr. Giles Shaw [*pursuant to his reply*, 16 June 1986, c. *415*]: The quarterly information available is given in the tables. During the period covered by the tables one exclusion order was made against a person detained under the Act.

Persons detained under the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984 and charged with an offence, by principal offence
Great Britain, 1 July 1985-31 March 1986

Number of persons

*Principal offence**	*1985*		*1986*
	3rd quarter	*4th quarter*	*1st quarter*
Offences under the Prevention of Terrorism Act, 1984			
Failure to comply with an exclusion order	1	1	—
Failure to co-operate with examination at a port	—	2	5
Offences other than under the Prevention of Terrorism Act			
Conspiracy to murder	—	4	1
Causing/conspiracy to cause explosions	2	2	—
Conspiracy to destroy property by fire	5	—	—
Unlawful possession/conspiracy to possess explosives with intent to endanger life	—	8	—
Theft Act offences	—	1	—
Perverting the course of justice	—	3	—
	—	—	—
Total	8	21	6

* Offences under the Prevention of Terrorism legislation are treated as principal offences, even if a more severe sentence was given for other offences.

Persons detained under the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984 by length of detention*
Great Britain, 1 July 1985—31 March 1986

Number of persons

Length of detention	*1985*		*1986*
	3rd Quarter	*4th Quarter*	*1st Quarter*
Less than 1 day	18	20	14
day and less than 2 days	26	32	17
2 days and less than 3 days	—	8	—

Length of detention	1985		1986
	3rd Quarter	4th Quarter	1st Quarter
3 days and less than 4 days	4	8	1
4 days and less than 5 days	4	8	1
5 days and less than 6 days	2	6	3
6 days and less than 7 days	—	9	—
7 days	—	—	—
Total	54	91	36

• Including those charged with a criminal offence or excluded, deported or removed.

Persons detained under the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984, by police force area
Great Britain, 1 July 1985—31 March 1986

Number of persons

Police force area	1985		1986
	3rd Quarter	4th Quarter	1st Quarter
England and Wales			
Avon and Somerset	1	—	—
Derbyshire	4	—	—
Devon and Cornwall	1	—	—
Dorset	1	—	—
Essex	—	5	—
Greater Manchester	1	4	—
Hampshire	6	—	—
Kent	2	4	—
Lancashire	2	—	1
Leicestershire	—	12	—
Merseyside	3	12	1
Metropolitan Police	8	27	11
Sussex	4	1	2
West Midlands	3	1	—
West Yorkshire	—	1	—
Dyfed Powys	2	—	—
Gwent	2	—	—
Scotland			
Strathclyde	—	15	—
Dumfries and Galloway	14	9	21
Total	54	91	36

SOCIAL SERVICES

Mentally Ill People

Mr. Irving asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information is gathered centrally regarding respite care schemes for severely mentally disordered adults.

Mr. Whitney: No information is collected centrally by this Department on respite care schemes for this group of people. Most local services are now making some provision for respite care and we understand that the Health Advisory Service and the good practices in mental health project, which receives funding from the Department, have some information about good local schemes which may be useful for service planners.

Mentally Handicapped and Mentally Ill People

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he is satisfied with the standard of care of the mentally handicapped and mentally ill in hospitals and in the community; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: We are never complacent with regard to standards, which we are always seeking to improve.

In paragraphs 90-100 of the Government's response* to the report from the Social Services Committee on community care, we discuss guidance on standards, and the ways in which health and social services for mentally handicapped and mentally ill people are monitored in England. Central policies need to be implemented locally on the basis of local consultation, professional assessment of individual needs, and local circumstances. In England, the national development team for mentally handicapped people and the Health Advisory Service aim to help authorities to monitor and improve their activities and inform my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services of the state of those aspects of mental health services with which they are variously concerned. The Mental Health Act Commission's work is also relevant. No one can be satisfied with some of the gaps, weaknesses and prejudices to which they draw attention in their reports, but my colleagues and I learn from these and from our own visits and in other ways of good quality services and achievements that are real, widespread and encouraging. They show what can be done to make the best use of resources, and promote the spread of good practice by their example.

* Government response to the Report from the Social Services Committee "Community Care", (Cmnd. 9674 (1985)).

Community Psychiatric Nurses

Mr. Irving asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the number of approved posts by region for community psychiatric nurses, and how many of these posts were filled at the last convenient date.

Mr. Hayhoe: I regret that information on the number of approved posts for community psychiatric nurses or the number of nurses holding such qualifications in mental illness and mental handicap nursing is not available centrally. Information for the total nursing staff, in each region at September 1984, working in the community psychiatric and community mental handicap areas of work is shown in the table.

	Community psychiatric nursing staff (mental illness)	*Community mental handicap nursing staff*
England	1,883	765
Northern	95	46
Yorkshire	132	56
Trent	175	43
East Anglian	88	40
North West Thames	123	46
North East Thames	132	31
South East Thames	147	42
South West Thames	165	71
Wessex	137	27
Oxford	86	24
South Western	127	71
West Midlands	155	106
Mersey	124	17
North Western	195	144
London PG SHA's	2	1

Notes:

1. All figures independently rounded to the nearest wholetime equivalent.
2. Excludes agency staff.

NHS (Services)

Mr. Galley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many health authorities operating an in-house laundry service have now awarded the tender for future service provision to a private firm; how many have now awarded contracts in-house; and how many have not yet awarded contracts.

Mr. Whitney: Seventeen district health authorities have awarded a total of 20 laundry contracts to private contractors. Fifty-six in-house laundry tenders have been successful in 52 district health authorities. I regret the information on the number of contracts still to be awarded is not available centrally. However, at 31 March 1986 tenders had been invited for 52 per cent. of the total value of laundry services.

Mr. Galley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what are the total annual costs for each regional health authority for providing *(a)* laundry, *(b)* linen and *(c)* staff uniforms, including supply, replacement, maintenance and all overheads.

Mr. Hayhoe: Expenditure in 1984-85, as recorded in the annual accounts of regional and district health authorities, and special health authorities for the London post-graduate teaching hospitals, was as follows:

Region	*Laundry Services £ million*	*Linen Services £ million*
Northern	4·0	6·6
Yorkshire	4·7	8·6
Trent	5·1	10·0
East Anglian	2·6	4·3
North West Thames	4·6	8·9
North East Thames	5·6	10·4
South East Thames	5·7	8·7
South West Thames	4·7	8·6
Wessex	2·9	6·2
Oxford	2·9	4·5

Region	Laundry Services £ million	Linen Services £ million
South Western	4·0	7·3
West Midlands	6·3	12·1
Mersey	4·6	6·7
North Western	5·5	10·2
Special health authorities for the London postgraduate teaching hospitals	0·8	1·7

Expenditure on staff uniforms is not recorded separately but is included in the figures for linen services. The figures include all direct pay and materials costs but not overhead expenses such as energy, transport and engineering maintenance, which are not apportioned between particular activities in the accounts.

Mr. Galley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any proposals to review the tendering procedures for laundry, cleaning and catering services within the National Health Service, in so far as health authorities tendering in-house adjudicate on all tenders submitted; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: The Department reviewed the procedures for competitive tendering for laundry, cleaning and catering services last year. As a result of this review the chairman of the National Health Service Management Board issued further guidance to regional chairmen on 3 January 1986. A copy was placed in the Library. This includes the advice that the evaluation team assessing tenders should not include anyone who was directly responsible for putting together the in-house tender.

Mr. Galley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how much supplementary capital has been allocated to support services in-house tenders for laundry, cleaning and catering services since the competitive tendering process began.

Mr. Whitney: No specific provision is made for this in capital allocations to regional health authorities which relate to the population served and in small part to the state of regions' capital stock. (The latter element is now being phased out of the allocation formula).

It is for regional health authorities to allocate capital to their districts in accordance with agreed plans and programmes. In doing so they take account of any capital requirements for successful in-house tenders. Any such capital cases are reflected in the tender price. Information is not collected centrally on this expenditure.

Mr. Galley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any proposals to introduce competitive tendering for linen rental within the National Health Service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: Health authorities were sent specimen contracts and guidance notes for tendering for linen and garment rental services on 12 October 1984. This did not lead to the issue of tenders for linen hire and on 3 January 1986 the Department asked regional health authorities to encourage the districts to examine this option. I shall keep the situation under review.

General Practitioners

Mr. Knox asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many general practitioners worked in the National Health Service in each year since 1970.

Mr. Hayhoe: The following is the information for unrestricted principal general medical practitioners in England:

Year	Number of general practitioners
1970	19,099
1971	19,374
1972	19,775
1973	19,997
1974	20,219
1975	20,377
1976	20,551
1977	20,796
1978	21,040
1979	21,357
1980	21,812
1981	22,304
1982	22,786
1983	23,254
1984	23,640
1985	24,035

Doctors and Dentists

Mr. Knox asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many doctors and dentists were employed in National Health Service hospitals in each year since 1970.

Mr. Hayhoe: The information requested, expressed in both numbers and whole-time equivalents, is set out in the following table.

National Health Service hospital medical and dental staff: England

Staff as at 30 September	Doctors		Dentists	
	Number	Whole-time equivalents	Number	Whole-time equivalents
1970	23,478	21,338	944	671
1971	24,353	22,548	977	712
1972	25,469	23,657	1,006	739
1973	26,752	24,829	970	742
1974	27,576	25,618	1,022	789
1975	28,922	26,922	1,050	838
1976	29,719	27,686	1,062	853
1977	30,520	28,397	1,104	895
1978	31,515	29,293	1,136	926
1979	32,607	30,356	1,152	965
1980	33,475	31,431	1,163	976
1981	34,218	32,142	1,184	990
1982	34,585	32,594	1,215	1,028
1983	35,238	33,260	1,213	1,026
1984	35,338	33,416	1,243	1,061
1985	35,859	33,903	1,248	1,062

Note:
Figures exclude hospital practitioners and part-time medical and dental officers (clinical assistants).

Nurses

Mr. Knox asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many nurses were employed in National Health Service hospitals in each year since 1970.

Mr. Hayhoe: The information requested is shown in the table. Figures for 30 September 1984 are the latest currently available to this level of detail.

Hospital Nursing and Midwifery Staff (including agency staff) England*

30 September	†*Whole-time Equivalents*
1970	240,100
1971	255,800
1972	272,000
1973	276,400
‡1974	281,300
1975	304,500
1976	306,200
1977	306,300
1978	313,000
1979	319,300
1980	330,200
1981	347,700
1982	351,900
1983	350,500
1984	350,500

Source: DHSS annual census of non-medical manpower.

* Includes qualified, unqualified and learners.

† All figures are independently rounded to the nearest 100.

‡ Due to the effects of the 1974 NHS reorganisation, figures for the years up to and including 1974 may not be directly comparable with those for later years.

No adjustments have been made for the effects of changes in the standard working week introduced in 1972 and 1980, increased annual leave entitlements from 1974 and additional bank holiday entitlements introduced in 1977 and 1978.

NHS (Expenditure)

Mr. Knox asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what proportion of the gross national product has been spent on the National Health Service in each year since 1970.

Mr. Hayhoe: The following table shows gross expenditure on the National Health Service, (including patient charges), expressed as a percentage of the gross domestic product at market prices, for each year from 1970 to 1984. In accordance with international convention, gross expenditure on the National Health Service is expressed as a percentage of gross domestic product rather than as a percentage of gross national product as requested by my hon. Friend.

National Health Service Expenditure (Gross) expressed as a percentage share of Gross Domestic Product (GDP)

	per cent.
1970	4·0
1971	4·1
1972	4·3
1973	4·2
1974	4·8
1975	5·1
1976	5·1
1977	4·9
1978	4·9
1979	4·8
1980	5·3
1981	5·5
1982	5·4
1983	5·6
1984	5·5

Source: CSO *National Accounts*, 1985.

Alcohol (Health Warnings)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what response he will make to the British Medical Association's request for health warnings on cans and bottles of alcohol and on advertisements for the same.

Mr. Whitney: The Government have considered the possibility of introducing health hazard warnings for alcoholic drinks and taken the view that this would not be appropriate as it is the misuse, not the use, of alcohol which causes harm. As an aid to consumers measures have just been agreed in the European Community which will require the alcoholic strength to be indicated on the labels of all alcoholic drinks containing more than 1·2 per cent. of alcohol by volume.

Hospital Accommodation

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many National Health Service hospital wards were closed in 1985; how many medical and ancillary workers were made redundant as a result; and how many National Health Service hospital beds were made available for accommodation and treatment of private patients.

Mr. Hayhoe: I regret that information is not collected centrally about the number of wards closed or about numbers of medical and ancillary workers who are made redundant. At December 1985 the number of National Health Service beds authorised for accommodation and treatment of private patients was 2,970.

Goods and Services

Mr. Forman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the latest estimate of the total value of purchases of goods and services made by the National Health Service; and what proportion of the total was supplied by the private sector.

Mr. Whitney: Purchases of goods and services in the Health Service are currently of the order of £2 billion a year. We do not keep a detailed analysis of purchases by sector.

However, as I announced in my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Exeter (Mr. Hannam) on 25 March, at columns *459-60*, we believe that there is scope for improving the use of National Health Service purchasing power to strengthen suppliers' competitiveness and I am, with the help of a small group, reviewing actions to help support the development and maintenance of a strong, internationally competitive, health care industry.

Board and Lodging

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many young people he has exempted from the supplementary benefit board and lodging time restrictions using his discretionary powers since November 1985; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: Twenty-six.

Secure Units

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many, and which, regional health authorities have set up regional secure units;

(2) how many people can be accommodated in regional secure units;

(3) how many more regional secure units are being planned at the present time;

(4) what Her Majesty's Government are doing to encourage more regional secure units to be set up.

Mr. Whitney: The Government are anxious to see regional secure units provided in each region. Ten out of the 14 regions now have permanent regional secure units in operation; an eleventh, North West Thames, has completed the building (and commissioning) of a unit and hopes to begin admitting patients in a few weeks' time. Details are shown in the following table:

Region and location	*Bed complement*	*Number of beds staffed and available**
1. *Northern*		
St. Luke's Hospital, Middlesbrough	30	25
2. *Yorkshire*		
Fieldhead Hospital, Wakefield	48	32
3. *Trent*		
Towers Hospital, Leicester	60	20
4. *East Anglian*		
St. Andrew's Hospital, Norwich	36	24
5. *North East Thames*		
Runwell Hospital, nr. Southend	10	10
6. *South East Thames*		
Bethlem Royal Hospital + linked units managed by Bexley, Bromley, Maidstone and Eastbourne HAs	90	85
7. *Wessex*		
Knowle Hospital, Fareham	31	22
8. *South Western*		
Langdon Hospital, Dawlish	30	30
9. *Mersey*		
Rainhill Hospital, Prescot	50	50
10. *North Western*		
Prestwich Hospital, Manchester		
(adolescent)	20	20
(adult)	88	44
	493	362
11. *North West Thames*		
Ealing Hospital-St. Bernards Wing	40	

* Based on latest available information.

Developments in Regions still without a RSU

South West Thames

A unit is planned at Netherne Hospital, near Coulsdon and will function in association with several "close supervision" units in existing hospitals.

Oxford

A14 bed unit at Borocourt Hospital, near Reading, is under construction and is expected to open in 1987. The region is also planning two other units.

West Midlands

A unit at Rubery Hill Hospital, Birmingham (100 beds), is under construction and is expected to be completed before the end of 1987.

Additional developments in Regions which already have an RSU

Trent

Additional local psychiatric intensive care units are being developed throughout the Region.

North East Thames

The Region has plans for two further units.

South Western

Construction work on a second 30-bed unit at Glenside Hospital, Bristol is expected to commence towards the end of 1986.

We are funding a research study on the work of RSUs. When it is completed its findings will have to be evaluated, along with other research and relevant evidence, before decisions can be taken about the ultimate capacity to be planned, either for RSU accommodation or for the wider range of facilities to cover the range of patients requiring different degrees of security and types of care (including, in particular, patients with chronic mental illness which is unlikely to respond to treatment and severely mentally handicapped patients, neither of which groups is appropriate for the RSU regime).

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

South West Africa People's Organisation

Mr. David Atkinson asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about the extent and character of British Council involvement with the South West Africa People's Organisation.

Mrs. Chalker: The British Council administers on behalf of the Overseas Development Administration an educational aid programme to Namibians, including some who may be associated with the South West Africa People's Organisation. The assistance consists of training awards for study in Britain, book presentations and specialist advice in English language teaching. Similarly, the British Council also administers awards funded under the United Nations education and training programme for southern Africa.

Mr. David Atkinson asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the policy of Her Majesty's Government towards contacts with the South West Africa People's Organisation.

Mrs. Chalker: As we have made clear previously, we are willing to have contact with representatives of all the political parties involved in the Namibia negotiations.

British Council

Mr. David Atkinson asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the activities of the British Council within southern Africa.

Mrs. Chalker: The British Council has offices in Botswana, the Republic of South Africa and Lesotho (which also covers Swaziland). It is responsible for the administration of the educational aid programmes funded by the Overseas Development Administration.

The offices in Botswana and South Africa participate in the administration of the programme for Namibians. The British Council additionally provides its own programmes in support of education, libraries and the arts.

Helsinki Final Act

Mr. Murphy asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress has been made in the implementation by the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and Eastern European countries of the provisions of the Helsinki final act during the last six months.

Mr. Renton: During the six-month period to 30 June 1986 no significant improvements were recorded in the implementation of the Helsinki final act and the Madrid concluding document, although the pattern varied from country to country. Overall, the level of compliance continues to reflect the Warsaw pact countries' selective interpretation of the CSCE final act. There have again been widespread breaches of the provisions relating to human rights and fundamental freedoms, most notably in the Soviet Union.

Security in Europe: Principles Guiding Relations Between Participating States; Confidence-Building Measures and Certain Aspects of Security and Disarmament (Basket 1)
The most striking feature of Eastern performance over the period was the continued violation of principle VII which covers

"respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief."

Notwithstanding the isolated instance of Anatoly Shcharansky's release, the Soviet Union continued its repression of religious groups, dissidents and ethnic minorities without abatement. Neither was there any evidence of impending change for the better in Soviet policy on human rights.

The Jewish community continued to face difficulties over emigration and in practising its religion and culture. Confiscation of religious material from the homes of Soviet Jews, particularly of refuseniks, was widespread and the pressures on the teaching of Hebrew maintained. In June, the Moscow Hebrew teacher Alexsei Magarik was given the maximum sentence (three years) for alleged drugs possession: more generally, the practice of accusing dissidents of drug possession appears to be growing. Many other Jewish activists such as Vladimir Lifshitz faced harassment and arrest on charges of "anti-Soviet slander".

Other religious groups also suffered persecution. Soviet law requires any such group to register with the authorities. Believers, therefore, face a choice between participating in a group controlled and closely monitored by the authorities or breaking the law by refusing to be registered. Soviet laws are aimed at ensuring that religious groups play no part in the wider community except when called upon to support official policies or deny reports of persecution. Assertion of religious and cultural identity has led to the arrest of Jews, Ukrainians, Pentecostal Christians, Baptists and others during the period under review. Russian Orthodox Deacon Vladimir Rusak was arrested in March and charged with "anti-Soviet propaganda". Groups such as the Jehovah's Witnesses and the Uniate Catholic Church remain prescribed organisations. The Soviet authorities continued to exert steady pressure to encourage Muslim inhabitants of central Asia and Azerbaijan to abandon their religion. Very few mosques in these regions are open for use and there are few officially recognised clergy.

Members of the group to establish trust between the USSR and USA continued to be subject to considerable official harassment. Human rights activists continued to attract persecution. In March Kirill Popov was sentenced to six years in the camps and five in internal exile for anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda, while in May Sergei Khodorovich, who had been sentenced to three years in 1983 for channelling charitable funds to political prisoners and their families, received a further sentence of three years. Details of the ill treatment and poor health of the poetess Irina Ratushinskaya (serving a 12-year sentence) became known, as did information on the fate of the unofficial trade union leader Vladimir Klebanov after a silence lasting several years: he has reportedly been a patient in the Tashkont special psychiatric hospital since 1983. Apart from the release of Anatoly Shcharansky and emigration permission granted to a few well-known refuseniks, such as Boris Gulko and his wife and the Goldstein brothers from Tbilisi, few improvements took place in the position of other better known individual cases, although Mrs. Yelena Bonner's journey to the West for medical treatment was a welcome development. Dr. Sakharov, however, remained in internal exile in Gorky, the subject of films secretly made by the KGB. Psychiatrist Dr. Anatoly Koryagin was reportedly sentenced during 1985 to a further two-year term for resisting force feeding during a hunger strike. There was continuing evidence of the abuse of psychiatry in suppressing dissent, a practice which Dr. Koryagin helped to expose.

Bulgarian implementation of CSCE commitments remained poor. When criticised for human rights violations, Bulgaria repeatedly invoked principles I (sovereignty) and VI (non-interference in internal affairs) whilst commitments under principle VII were virtually ignored. The practice of religion, in particular that of Islam, remained difficult with many mosques sealed and locked. Unregistered Pentecostal churches faced a new wave of persecution. The Bulgarian authorities continued to exert a total control over all other religious communities and to limit their rights to practice. The forced Bulgarisation of the Turkish minority is a particularly striking example of the dismal Bulgarian human rights performance.

In Czechoslovakia, the approach to human rights has not improved over the last six months, with continued reports of persecution of religious activists. There has been no visible improvement in Czechoslovakia's performance in the dissemination of information, which falls under rigid state control. The right to know and act upon rights was similarly restricted, with continued pressure on human rights' groups such as Charter 77.

In spite of the improvements which have taken place since 1975, East Germany's implementation balance still showed a considerable deficit. Restrictions on human rights and individual freedoms remained a central problem. There was little or no relaxation in the restrictions on freedom of movement. The GDR attitude towards the Church remained rather more forthcoming than in most other East European countries, although Christians continued to face problems and discrimination, particularly in the field of education. There was evidence of a more extensive and positive treatment of GDR churches in the official press.

Overall, Hungarian compliance with CSCE principles improved during the six months, and remained comparatively good in comparison with other East

European states. Relations between churches and the state remained settled. However, freedom of expression was limited and selective action was still taken against internal opposition.

In Poland there were fewer new repressive measures than in the period May to December 1985, but there was no overall relaxation. The number of political prisoners increased to over 250. The leader of underground Solidarity in Warsaw, Zbigniew Bujak, was arrested in May and further arrests have followed. The harsh sentences imposed on three prominent Solidarity prisoners were modified only slightly on appeal, but the case against Lech Walesa was dropped on the first day of his trial. Religious freedom and freedom of travel abroad remained greater than in other Eastern European countries and, in spite of general censorship, the level of genuine debate in the press was relatively high.

The human rights situation in Romania remained abysmal. Basic rights such as freedom of speech, freedom of press and freedom of assembly were ruthlessly denied. The Department of Religious Affairs retained a firm grip on the direction of church policy. Members of religious groups who did not keep within the strict limits prescribed by the laws of 1948 and 1950 were liable to harassment and even imprisonment.

Confidence and security-building measures

The Soviet Union provided notification of one major military manoeuvre involving approximately 250,000 personnel which took place from 10 to 17 February. Observers were not invited. There was no evidence of other manoeuvres involving more than 25,000 troops in Warsaw pact countries and there were no notifications of manoeuvres below that level.

Co-operation in the field of economics, of science and technology and of the environment (basket II)

In general, the procedures for conducting business in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe remained unchanged with Western business men confronted by considerable obstacles of a purely practical nature. Poor economic and trade performance in some countries, coupled with a general tendency to secrecy, have resulted in an unwillingness to publish information and statistical data. However, in Poland and Hungary new laws designed to facilitate foreign involvement in joint ventures have been enacted, and the position may be easing slightly in the Soviet Union and other countries. Joint commissions on economic, scientific and technical co-operation were held in the first half of 1986 with the USSR, Romania, Bulgaria and Hungary. They took place in a helpful and positive atmosphere. Similar exchanges with other East European countries are scheduled for later this year.

Co-operation in humanitarian and other fields (basket III)

Most East European countries continued to show a largely negative record in the fields of family visits, family reunification and contacts with individuals from states outside the Warsaw pact. Hungary and Poland were notable exceptions. Overall, emigration to the West continued at a low level. In the Soviet Union the number of exit visa permits granted to ethnic Germans in 1985 reached the lowest level since 1970; the number of Soviet Jews who emigrated during the review period was marginally higher than the figure for the preceding six months, but the figures still fell a long way short of the high levels of emigration observed a few years ago. The Soviet authorities continued to claim that virtually all Jews wishing to leave have already done so. The GDR continued to limit severely travel by its citizens to non-Communist countries — only a small fraction of those wishing to leave the GDR were allowed to do so. With very few exceptions restrictions remained in force in all Warsaw pact countries on individuals wishing to visit the West, as well as on access to Western diplomatic missions. In the field of information, restrictions on access to Western sources of information continued. So too did interference with Western broadcasts, especially by the Soviet Union which consistently jams BBC Russian and Polish service broadcasts on shortwave. The lack of progress on Anglo-Soviet bilateral cases in the margins of the Berne experts' meeting on human contacts, which took place in April and May, was disappointing.

Co-operation and exchanges in the field of culture and education

Bureaucratic and economic constraints were the main impediments to active bilateral relations. On the whole, existing agreements and projects were implemented in a satisfactory manner.

South African Armed Forces

Mr. Caborn asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has as to the number of personnel assigned by British companies to the South African armed forces in persons per year, and as to the top-up pay being made to such personnel.

Mrs. Chalker: We are not aware of any instance of British companies assigning personnel to the South African armed forces.

Mr. Caborn asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps Her Majesty's Government are taking to seek to stop British companies operating in South Africa from supplying personnel to the South African armed forces.

Mrs. Chalker: It is not our policy to restrict the freedom of individuals to work overseas.

Falkland Islands (Penguins)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he expects to receive the results of the examination by the Veterinary Affairs Investigation Centre into the deaths of Falkland Islands penguins; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: Investigation by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food's veterinary investigation centre at Norwich into the causes of death of 15 rockhopper penguins from the Falkland Islands indicates that the seabird disease Puffinosis and unusually high concentrations of lead in the birds' tissue were important contributory factors leading to the birds' emaciation and subsequent mortality. Further tests are being carried out to see whether other factors may also be involved.

THE ARTS

Globe Theatre

Mr. Proctor asked the Minister for the Arts what representations he has received on the Globe Theatre project in Southwark.

Mr. Luce: My predecessor had a number of representations. I was very pleased to learn the Globe Theatre Trust and Southwark borough council have now settled their dispute about the site.

Works of Art (Export)

Mr. Faulds asked the Minister for the Arts whether he will list the items for which the issuing of export licences was withheld on the recommendations of the Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art during the half-year ended 30 June, specifying in each case the valuation and whether an item was eventually exported or retained, with particulars, in the latter case, of the acquiring institutions; and whether he will list any items for which licences have been withheld but the final disposal of which is not decided, specifying in each case, *(a)* the valuation and *(b)* the relevant time limit.

Mr. Luce: The items for which export licenses were withheld for a period on the advice of the Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art are as follows. The vaulation has been omitted in two cases where the owners wished it to remain confidential.

Description of item	*Valuation* £	*Outcome*
A Capodimonte Ewer and Basin	100,000	Licence suspended for three months. Purchased by British Museum.
An engraving by Mantegna "Bacchanal with a Wine Press"	381,944	Licence suspended for three months. Licence granted.
A drawing by Raphael "The Virgin and Child with Infant Baptist"	—	Suspended for three months. With a review at two months. Licence granted.
Two sandstone figures of Knights	—	Licence suspended for three months. Potential purchase under negotiation.
A carved board bird and snake motif	21,000	Licence suspended for three months until 11 July 1986.
A carved board bird and snake motif	21,000	Licence suspended for three months until 11 July 1986.
A carved board bird and snake motif	20,000	Licence suspended for three months until 11 July 1986.
A hornbill composition	26,000	Licence suspended for three months until 11 July 1986.
An openwork carving	18,000	Licence suspended for three months until 11 July 1986.
A carved standing figure	17,000	Licence suspended for three months until 11 July 1986.
A carved standing figure	18,000	Licence suspended for three months until 11 July 1986.
A carved standing figure	19,000	Licence suspended for three months until 11 July 1986.
A carved standing figure	17,000	Licence suspended for three months until 11 July 1986.
A Tantua mask	16,000	Licence suspended for three months until 11 July 1986.
A Tantua mask	16,000	Licence suspended for three months until 11 July 1986.
An Owl mask	17,000	Licence suspended for three months until 11 July 1986.
An Owl mask	17,000	Licence suspended for three months until 11 July 1986.
A mask	19,000	Licence suspended for three months until 11 July 1986.

Description of item	*Valuation* £	*Outcome*
A Kepong mask	18,000	Licence suspended for three months until 11 July 1986.
A mask	19,000	Licence suspended for three months until 11 July 1986.
A Tantua mask	16,000	Licence suspended for three months until 11 July 1986.
A Kepong mask	18,000	Licence suspended for three months until 11 July 1986.
A Tolai mask	25,000	Licence suspended for three months until 11 July 1986.
A gold, diamond and enamel box presented by Queen Victoria to Henry Morton Stanley	106,200	Licence suspended for three months until 20 August 1986.
A watercolour "Two soldiers at Arras" by John Singer Sargent	21,840	Licence suspended for three months until 20 August 1986.
A painting "A huntsman coursing with a pack of Hounds" by Jan Wyck	323,350	Licence suspended for three months until September 1986 (with review after six weeks).

Objects in Lieu of Tax

Mr. Faulds asked the Minister for the Arts whether he will specify the allocations made to public institutions in the United Kingdom during the half-year ended 30 June of individual works of art and museum objects pre-eminent for national, scientific, historic or artistic interest which have been accepted in satisfaction of capital transfer tax, together with information, where applicable, as to the conditions or wishes expressed in the matter of allocation by testators and executors; and whether he will list the works of art and museum objects which are still awaiting allocation, with the respective dates of their acceptance in satisfaction of capital transfer tax.

Mr. Luce: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

CIVIL SERVICE

Departmental Duties (Emergency Cover)

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Minister for the Civil Service what steps are taken to provide emergency cover in Government Departments on those days in addition to statutory holidays and annual leave entitlement which civil servants are permitted to take as leave; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce [*pursuant to his reply*, 1 July 1986, c. *508*]: The overriding consideration affecting the additional holidays in the Civil Service is that sufficient staff should remain on duty to meet the demands of any public business that might arise. The detailed arrangements are left to the discretion of individual Departments.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

EUREKA Programme

Mr. Warren asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list the direct effects on the United Kingdom which have been recorded during his Department's chairmanship of the EUREKA programme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Pattie: During the period of United Kingdom chairmanship EUREKA has gathered considerable momentum. At the third ministerial conference held in London on 30 June 1986, 62 new EUREKA projects were announced over and above the 10 announced at the second ministerial conference in November 1985. A project information network is now in place and a small secretariat is to be set up in Brussels to strengthen the machinery and to provide guidance to firms and research institutes. United Kingdom participation in EUREKA projects has grown substantially: out of the 10 projects announced at Hanover, United Kingdom firms and research institutes were involved in three, with a total value of some £70 million. Of the 62 new projects, the United Kingdom is involved in 28, with a total value of over £730 million. EUREKA is a vital collaborative programme which can help British companies compete in world markets for advanced technology.

DEFENCE

Radar Facilities (USSR)

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what estimate he has made of the date of the initial operational capability for the large phased array radar currently being constructed by the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics at Krasnoyarsk;

(2) what evidence he has on the strength, air defences and operational capability of the large phased array radar currently being constructed by the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics at Krasnoyarsk;

(3) what assessment he has made of the potential role of the large phased array radar currently under construction at Krasnoyarsk in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics in providing coverage of potential flight corridors for incoming cruise missiles.

Mr. Stanley: Our assessments of the Krasnoyarsk radar, and the evidence on which it is based, are classified.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether Her Majesty's Government will be able to determine independently of the United States of America the precise military attributes of the large phased array Soviet radar when it becomes operational at Krasnoyarsk.

Mr. Stanley: The Government form their own assessments on the basis of the available evidence.

Royal Yacht Britannia

Mr. Michael Brown asked the Secretary of State for Defence why he has decided to award the contract for the re-fit of Her Majesty's Yacht Britannia to the Royal Dockyard, Devonport, without seeking tenders from private sector shipyards.

Mr. Chope asked the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the answer of 23 June, *Official Report*, column 28, to the hon. Member for Plymouth, Drake (Miss Fookes) concerning the refit of the royal yacht, what tenders were sought prior to award of the contract; and what consideration was given to putting the contract out to a private shipyard.

Mr. Lee: The possibility of inviting commercial tenders for the refit of Her Majesty's Yacht Britannia was originally considered based on our concern that the capacity to undertake this refit would not be available in the desired timescale at Devonport dockyard. However, local management and trades unions have agreed to adopt a series of measures which provide for flexible working practices and the avoidance of delay through industrial action, which will enable the work to be accommodated within the dockyard programme.

Dog School, Newton

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he is now considering the report entitled "Establishment of a Joint Service Dog School at RAF Newton"; and whether he will place a copy in the Library.

Mr. Freeman: The report entitled "Establishment of a Joint Service Dog School at RAF Newton" is an internal MOD document under consideration. I do not intend to place a copy in the Library.

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he has now supplied to the Comptroller and Auditor General a copy of the report entitled "Establishment of a Joint Service Dog School at RAF Newton", following the previous investigation by the National Audit Office into this proposal.

Mr. Freeman: Yes.

RAF North Luffenham

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Defence what progress is being made by the investigating team looking at RAF North Luffenham; and when it is expected to report.

Mr. Freeman: The study into the future of RAF North Luffenham is proceeding well and it is due to be completed by 31 July 1986. Subsequent consideration of the study within the MOD is likely to take some months.

Tigerfish Torpedo

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Defence what has been the total cost of the Tigerfish torpedo programme.

Mr. Lee: Total expenditure (development and production) on the Tigerfish programme up to March 1986, at July 1985 prices, is £1,055 million.

Stingray Programme

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Defence what has been the total cost of the Stingray programme; and what is the timetable for its full production.

Mr. Lee: Total expenditure (development and production) to March 1986 at July 1985 prices is £959 million. Stingray is in production and the first batch of torpedoes has been delivered.

Spearfish Programme

Mr Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Defence what has been the total cost of the Spearfish programme to date; and what is the timetable for its production.

Mr Lee: Total expenditure (development and production) on Spearfish to March 1986 at July 1985 is £267 million. On present plans it is expected that Spearfish will begin to enter service in the early 1990s.

Training Land

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on his plans to find further land for training purposes; and if any potential sites have yet been identified.

Mr. Freeman: There is a need to acquire additional land for training purposes. The opportunity is taken whenever possible to expand existing training areas. Proposals now exist to acquire land at Stainmore, Cumbria; Holcombe Moor, Lancs, and Hollingbourne, Kent.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 4 July 1986

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Teachers' Salaries

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what a scale 1 teacher was paid on 1 May of each year since 1974, at outturn and at current prices.

Mr. Chris Patten: The table shows the salary (excluding all allowances) of teachers in maintained and primary and secondary schools at point 13 of scale 1 on 1 May of each year since 1974 in cash prices and in 1986 prices (adjusted by reference to the RPI).

1 May	*Cash prices* £ *per annum*	*Constant prices** £ *per annum*
1974	2,553	9,159
1975	3,744	10,745
1976	4,056	10,088
1977	4,239	9,005
1978	4,662	9,195
1979	5,082	9,086
1980	6,228	9,134
1981	7,317	9,603
1982	7,755	9,296
1983	8,142	9,412
1984	8,556	9,409
1985	9,147	9,400
1986	9,804	9,804

* RPI-adjusted to April 1986 level.

Notes:

(1) Although point 13 is the maximim point for scale 1, there are two further points on the scale which are granted to teachers who are good honours graduates.

(2) The 1974 figure excludes the Houghton award which was implemented with effect from 24 May.

Educational Maintenance Allowances

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what would be the estimated cost of providing an educational maintenance allowance of £27 at 1985-86 prices for all pupils remaining in schools or colleges for one year after the school leaving age, for one week, 38 weeks, 40 weeks, 46 weeks and 52 weeks, after deducting child benefit and existing educational maintenance allowances; and if he will give projections on the same basis for each of the next three years.

Mr. Dunn: The estimated cost, based on provisional 1985-86 pupil and student numbers and projected numbers for the following three years, would be as follows:

£ *million*

	Weeks				
	1	*38*	*40*	*46*	*52*
1985-86	6	230	243	283	322
1986-87	6	222	235	273	312
1987-88	6	229	242	281	320
1988-89	6	219	231	269	307

Note: These costs are based on the proposed allowance of £27 per week, less child benefit at the current rate of £7 per week, and assume no change in the estimated 1984-85 level of local authority spending on maintenance grants, which has been converted to 1985-86 prices for the purpose of the current calculations.

Mature Students (Grants)

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what was the average grant paid to a mature student in full-time higher education for the last year for which a figure is available.

Mr. Walden: The mandatory awards regulations do not define a mature student. However, from their mid-20s, students may, in addition to a full grant, receive certain supplementary allowances, including an older students allowance and an allowance for dependants. In the academic year 1984-85 the average allowance paid to students in these categories was £530 and £1,355, respectively. This was in addition to a grant (for students not living with their parents) of £2,100 (London rate) of £1,775 (elsewhere rate).

Education Budget

Mr. Radice asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what proportion of gross domestic product has been spent on the education budget in 1984-85 and 1985-86.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Total public expenditure on education in the United Kingdom was 5·1 per cent. of gross domestic product in 1984-85. Final figures for 1985-86 are not yet available, but on the basis of estimates published in the public expenditure White Paper and the financial statement and Budget report, outturn for public expenditure on education in that year represents 4·8 per cent. of gross domestic product.

Schizophrenia

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how much the Government will be spending in the current year on research into the causes of schizophrenia; if he has any plans to increase this amount; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Walden: The Medical Research Council (MRC), which receives its grant-in-aid through the Department, is the main Government agency for the promotion of medical research in the United Kingdom. I understand that in the financial year 1985-86, the latest year for which information is available, the MRC spent £525,000 on projects exclusively on research into schizophrenia and a further £1,573,000 on projects which have schizophrenia as a minor component. The MRC is always willing to consider soundly based scientific proposals in competition with other applications.

Research work relevant to schizophrenia is also being conducted in universities and medical schools, financed from the block grant to universities allocated for teaching and research on advice from the University Grants Committee. Figures are not available.

I would also refer the right hon. Member to my reply of 1 July at c. *469* to my hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, East (Mr. Atkinson).

DEFENCE

Airborne Early Warning Radar System

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make it his policy that all bidders for the airborne early warning radar system will be subject to identical deadlines in all respects; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: This is already our policy.

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he has extended the deadline for the testing of airborne early warning radar systems in operational environmental conditions beyond 3 September; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: No.

Military Bands

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Defence how much is being spent currently by his Department on military bands and musical training in the armed forces.

Mr. Freeman: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my hon. Friend to the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Mr. Thomas) on 24 March at c. *395*.

Costs of musical training in the armed forces cannot be separately identified.

ENERGY

British Gas

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will provide details of the provisions for employee shareholdings to be made for the chairman and senior and area management of British Gas under privatisation.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: I refer the hon. Member to my right hon. Friend's announcement on 18 June at columns 537-39. The chairman and management of British Gas will be eligible for the Government share offers on the same basis as other staff.

Domestic Consumers (Disconnections)

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will discuss with the gas and electricity boards measures to prevent disconnection of a consumer when the contents of a pre-payment meter have been stolen.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: The code of practice on disconnections ensures that disconnection is used only as a last resort; the options that are examined before disconnection is pursued are shown in this code. The British Gas Corporation and the electricity supply industry consider individually each case of theft from a meter. Where they are satisfied that the theft was the work of a third party, unconnected with the household, they may waive the obligation on the consumer to make good the losses.

Northern Engineering International Nuclear Systems

Mr. Clelland asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will discuss with the chairman of British Nuclear Fuels Ltd. the implications for standards of quality and safety of the proposed closure of Northern Engineering International Nuclear Systems, Gateshead, and the consequential transfer to other suppliers of 11 of a 15-module order for the thermal oxide reprocessing plant at Sellafield, currently in production; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: This is a commercial matter for BNFL.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Guyana

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the amount of aid given by Her Majesty's Government to Guyana in each of the past five years.

Mr. Raison: Gross British official aid to Guyana was as follows:

	£'000
1981	2,475
1982	1,724
1983	1,555
1984	419
1985	354

Afghan Refugees

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what financial and other assistance the United Kingdom is providing to Afghan refugees in Pakistan.

Mr. Raison: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, East (Mr. Moynihan) on 21 April at column *35*.

Jamaica

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the cost of the emergency relief Her Majesty's Government have provided to Jamaica to assist in the repair of damage caused by recent floods; if he is proposing any long-term rehabilitation schemes to follow the immediate assistance; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Raison: The total cost of the emergency relief is expected to be around £300,000. In response to a request from the Jamaican Government, we have also provided 150 tonnes of Bailey bridging and associated material under an additional £250,000 programme aid loan. The bridging has already been shipped. We have no current plans for assisting with long-term rehabilitation.

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he expects the 150 tonnes of Bailey bridging materials Her Majesty's Government are providing to replace bridges destroyed by the recent floods in Jamaica to arrive.

Mr. Raison: The Bailey bridging materials are expected to arrive in Jamaica on 27 July.

WALES

Technical and Vocational Education Initiative

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales how much has been spent in Wales on the technical and vocational education initiative and community programme vocational education schemes in each year since their inception.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: I am advised by the Manpower Services Commission that expenditure under the technical and vocational education initiative for the financial years 1983-84, 1984-85 and 1985-86 was £1,449,568, £2,375,573 and £3,105,377, respectively.

The CPVE is administered by the Joint Board for Pre-Vocational Education and figures for the Board's expenditure in Wales are not separately available. The Welsh Office contributes to the grant paid by the Department of Education and Science to the joint board for the development of the CPVE. For the financial years 1983-84, 1984-85 and 1985-86 the contribution was £48,000, £41,000 and £57,000, respectively.

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales how much money has been spent on provision for Welsh-medium instruction of the technical and vocational education initiative and community programme vocational education schemes in Wales in each year since their inception.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: It is not possible separately to identify expenditure on provision for Welsh medium teaching under the TVEI and CPVE schemes.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Housing Executive (Offices)

Mr. Gow asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the tender price accepted for the building of the new offices of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive at Coleraine; and what has been the final cost for the completion of the building.

Mr. Needham: A fluctuating price tender of £492,918·91 was accepted by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive on 24 October 1984 for the construction of a new office building at Coleraine. The building reached practical completion on 20 June 1986. The estimated final cost is £534,250.

Housing Legislation

Mr. J. Enoch Powell asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the nature of the legislation on housing which the chief executive of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive announced on 20 June soon to be introduced.

Mr. Needham: The chief executive of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive was referring to the Government's previously announced intention to introduce legislation on homelessness for Northern Ireland.

Voting Rights

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement about the discussion by the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference of the voting rights of Irish citizens in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Tom King: Before the meeting of the Intergovernmental Conference on 17 June, the Irish Government put forward proposals concerning the voting rights of certain Northern Ireland residents in some Northern Ireland elections. The position of those voters (both British and Irish citizens) who may vote at parliamentary and European elections but not at local government or Northern Ireland Assembly elections, was subsequently discussed at that meeting. The United Kingdom representatives confirmed the Government's view that the provisions governing the franchise for parliamentary elections throughout the United Kingdom should also be applied to local government elections in Northern Ireland, as they are in Great Britain, and to elections to the Northern Ireland Assembly; and they stated their intention of taking appropriate legislative action.

Irish Language

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement about the discussion by the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference of the treatment of the Irish language in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Tom King: The Irish Government put forward proposals concerning the position of the Irish language in Northern Ireland at the conference on 10 January. At its meeting on 17 June the United Kingdom Government described current administrative practice, and indicated as areas for possible future development the provision of dual language street names where the local community so desires; ascertaining more precisely the number of Irish speakers in Northern Ireland; and financial support for Irish language-related cultural activities.

Flags and Emblems

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement about the discussion of flags and emblems by the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference.

Mr. Tom King: The Irish Government put forward proposals relating to flags and emblems at the conference on 10 January. At its meeting on 11 March the United Kingdom Government described the public order legislation for Great Britain before Parliament; explained the desirability of bringing Northern Ireland public order legislation so far as possible into line with that for Great Britain; and indicated that the question of flags and emblems would be considered in the context of the extension, as appropriate, by Order in Council, of this legislation to Northern Ireland. That remains the position.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

British Shipbuilders

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what current discussions are taking place between his Department and British Shipbuilders about contracts for *(a)* new merchant vessels and *(b)* merchant vessel refits.

Mr. Peter Morrison: British Shipbuilders keeps my Department in close touch about possible contracts. Details are commercially confidential.

South Africa

Mr. Caborn asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) what account has been taken by Her Majesty's Government in estimating the net number of jobs at risk from the possible imposition of sanctions against South Africa, of any offsetting job gains resulting from the manufacture in the United Kingdom of goods previously imported and the investment in the United Kingdom of capital previously exported to South Africa; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what method of calculation has been used to arrive at a figure of 120,000 job losses in the United Kingdom if full economic sanctions were applied to South Africa.

Mr. Alan Clark: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Mr. Caborn asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if any contingency plans exist for alternative sources of supplies of strategically important minerals currently supplied by South Africa; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Telecommunications Act (Licences)

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what action he intends to take in respect of pre-1984 Telecommunications Act licences which will cease to be valid on 5 August.

Mr. Pattie: I shall be making an order under the 1984 Act which will have the effect of extending their validity by up to a further three years depending on the licence involved.

TRANSPORT

Safety Barriers

Mr. Fry asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many motorway and trunk road cross-over accidents have occurred in the past five years involving the rupture or crossing of safety barriers; and what form of construction was used for those road barriers.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The most recent figures available are given in the table.

Year	*Motorways*	*'A' Road Dual Carriageways**
1980	28	32
1981	38	26
1982	21	43
1983	40	52
1984	29	56

* Includes both trunk and non-trunk roads, because separate statistics are not collected for these categories of roads.

National statistics on the types of barriers involved in cross-over accidents are not collected. For motorways the barrier would almost certainly have been a steel safety fence or either the tensioned corrugated beam or untensioned open box beam type, as these designs are used most widely. For dual carriageways it is reasonable to assume that in most cases the barriers would have been of the types mentioned above.

Air Travel Reserve Fund Agency

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he has received the annual report and accounts of the Air Travel Reserve Fund Agency for 1985-86.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Yes. The agency's final report is published today and copies are available in the Library. In acknowledging the report I would like to pay tribute to the work undertaken on behalf of holidaymakers by the chairman Sir Kenneth Selby, the members of the agency and their few executive staff. The history of the agency included in the report is itself testimony to the agency's efforts over the past 11 years.

I have read with interest the important points which Sir Kenneth has made in the report and I am sure that the trustees of the new Air Travel Trust, and the independent committee which advises them, will consider the report carefully. The committee will benefit from the expertise of members who were also members of the agency, and their presence will ensure an element of continuity with the experience of the agency.

Catholic Church, Biddlestone, Northumberland

Mr. Beith asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether the Forestry Commission has completed the sale of the Catholic chapel at Biddlestone, near Harbottle, Northumberland; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Fenner: I have been asked to reply.

Contracts for the sale of the chapel have been exchanged, but the sale is not yet completed.

PRIME MINISTER

"The SOE in Scandinavia"

Mr. Beith asked the Prime Minister what representations Her Majesty's Government have received about the accuracy of the volume of the official history of the war entitled "The SOE in Scandinavia"; what response has been made; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I am aware of no such representations.

Nuclear Accidents (Effects)

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Prime Minister, pursuant to her reply to the hon. Member for East Lothian on 30 June, if she will now provide the information requested concerning estimates of the possible scale of the financial, material and human costs of an accident at a British nuclear installation of similar magnitude to that which began at Chernobyl on 26 April; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I have nothing to add to my previous answer on 30 June at column *412*.

Nuclear Reactors

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Prime Minister, pursuant to her reply to the hon. Member for East Lothian

on Monday 30 June, if she will specify the fundamental differences between the nuclear steam supply system in the reactor at Chernobyl and those reactors operating in the United Kingdom.

The Prime Minister: The Chernobyl design involves cooling the nuclear fuel by boiling water. The water and fuel are contained in pressure tubes running through the reactor core. The steam from the boiling water goes directly to the turbine generators in a direct cycle system.

BNFL's and generating boards power reactors operate at much lower pressures and moderator temperatures and are cooled by carbon dioxide gas. This gas heats separate boilers to produce the steam, and this steam, which is never in contact with the nuclear fuel, drives the turbine generators.

CIVIL SERVICE

Civil Servants (Political Adherence)

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Minister for the Civil Service in what circumstances he collects information on the political adherence of civil servants.

Mr. Luce: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

THE ARTS

Objects in Lieu of Tax

Mr. Faulds asked the Minister for the Arts whether he will specify the allocations made to public institutions in the United Kingdom during the half-year ended 30 June of individual works of art and museum objects pre-eminent for national, scientific, historic and artistic interest which have been accepted in satisfaction of capital transfer tax, together with information, where applicable, as to the conditions or wishes expressed in the matter of allocation by testators and executors; and whether he will list the works of art and museum objects which are still awaiting allocation, with the respective dates of their acceptance in satisfaction of capital transfer tax.

Mr. Luce [*pursuant to his reply*, 3 July 1986]: The information is as follows:

Items accepted since 1 January 1986

Item	*Conditions*	*Allocation*
Collar Chain of a KCMG	Unconditional	Imperial War Museum
Chattels at Hagley Hall	In situ	Birmingham District Council
Sir Arthur Bryant Correspondence	Conditional	Imperial War Museum
Items Awaiting Allocation		
Portrait by Sir Thomas Lawrence	Unconditional—wish expressed to remain in situ	9 April 1986
Archives from the Dukes of Portland and Newcastle	Unconditional—wish expressed that they remain at Nottingham University Library, Bodleian Library Oxford, Nottinghamshire Record Library, Hampshire Record Library	14 March 1986
9 Paintings by Ben Nicholson	Unconditional	12 February 1986
Hans Arp Bronze Sculpture	Unconditional—wish expressed to go to Tate	12 March 1986

A press notice will be issued on 4 July 1986 to publicise this information.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Guyana

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations Her Majesty's Government have recently made to the Government of Guyans concerning human rights; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: None. We have regularly made clear at the United Nations and in other international human rights bodies our concern that human rights should be respected in accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the two international covenants on human rights, to which Guyana is a party. The Guyanese Government are well aware of our views.

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the United Kingdom's relations with Guyana.

Mr. Renton: We enjoy good relations with Guyana and are represented by a high commissioner resident in Georgetown.

South Africa

Mr. Marlow asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if, when he visits South Africa, he will make it his policy to refrain from meeting any person who has given support to the practice of murder by the placing of burning tyres around the neck of a living human being; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: We have consistently condemned the use of violence on all sides in South Africa. My right hon. and learned Friend's visit, on behalf of the Twelve member states of the European Community, is a further effort to promote the dialogue and the suspension of violence that are so urgently needed.

Test Ban Treaty

Mr. Soames asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much money was allocated in 1985-86 for research on verification of a comprehensive test ban treaty.

Mr. Lee: I have been asked to reply.

The most important verification technology is seismology. Government expenditure on unclassified work in this area during 1985-86 was £1·5 million. The Government also undertake classified work in related areas, details of which cannot be revealed on grounds of national security.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Psychopathically Disordered Prisoners

Mr. Irving asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many psychopathically disordered patients were resident in the four English special hospitals at the time of the implementation of the Mental Health Act 1983; how many patients since that time have been discharged from hospital by the mental health tribunals; and of those cases discharged by the mental health tribunals, how many are known to have subsequently offended by committing an offence similar in nature and equal or worse in degree compared to their index (admission) offences.

Mr. Mellor: Information is not available in precisely the form requested. At the end of 1983 there were 411 patients suffering from psychopathic disorder in special hospitals in England, of whom 339 were subject to the special restrictions set out in section 41 of the Mental Health Act 1983. Two restricted patients admitted to special hospitals by reason of psychopathic disorder were discharged by a mental health review tribunal between the coming into force of the Act on 30 September 1983 and the end of 1983; 24 were so discharged in 1984; and the provisional figure for 1985 is 12. Of these 38 patients, four are known to have committed subsequently a serious offence of a similar nature to their index offence.

Mr. Irving asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many convicted prisoners in the last five consecutive years for which figures are available have been transferred to the four English special hospitals for treatment of their psychopathic disorder; of these cases, what was the average time, to the nearest month, which elapsed between their conviction and transfer to the special hospital; and of these, how many remained in special hospitals after the expiry date of their sentence.

Mr. Mellor: The number of such prisoners and the average time between their conviction and transfer are as follows:

	Prisoners	*Months*
1981	10	24
1982	6	27
1983	7	24
1984	13	31
1985	*19	21

* Provisional.

Information about how many of these prisoners remained in hospital after the end of their sentence is not readily available.

India (Kabbadi)

Sir Dudley Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will grant limited entry into the United Kingdom for amateur sportsmen from the Indian sub-continent who are kabbadi players;

(2) why he is insisting on work permits to be presented by amateur kabbadi players from the Indian sub-continent coming to Britain every summer.

Mr. Waddington: Whether sportsmen require work permits depends on the terms of their engagement. I have considered the question of the admission of kabbadi players and have decided that they may be admitted without work permits unless the immigration officer is not satisfied that they meet the requirements of the immigration rules as visitors.

Immigration

Mr. Lawrence asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the latest figures for permanent settlement in the United Kingdom from *(a)* the West Indies, *(b)* Pakistan, *(c)* India and *(d)* Bangladesh; and how they compare with the comparable figures for settlement in each of the past five years.

Mr. Waddington: The numbers of persons accepted for settlement in the United Kingdom, by nationality, are published annually in Command Paper "Control of Immigration: Statistics, United Kingdom". The following table gives the figures for the nationalities requested where they are separately identified in the published statistics.

Number of persons accepted for settlement in the United Kingdom, 1980 to 1985

Nationality	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*
Pakistan	9,080	8,970	7,750	6,440	5,510	6,680
India	7,930	6,590	5,410	5,380	5,140	5,500
Bangladesh	5,210	5,810	7,020	4,870	4,180	5,330
Barbados	100	80	60	40	50	60
Guyana	240	220	180	190	190	200
Jamaica	590	440	320	310	290	350
Trinidad and Tobago	150	150	150	120	150	160

Crime Prevention

Mr. Lawrence asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the crime prevention initiatives taken since May 1979.

Mr. Hurd: Among the many crime prevention initiatives taken since May 1979 are the following:

— the establishment of the Home Office crime prevention unit to undertake research, formulate policy, monitor implementation and to provide advice;
—the expansion of the Home Office crime prevention centre at Stafford which trains police officers in crime prevention matters;
— the formation of the ministerial group on crime prevention to carry forward the crime prevention strategy and to review the arrangements within and outside of Government of the co-ordination, development and implementation of initiatives;
— the holding of two national seminars at No. 10 Downing street;
—encouraging the expansion of neighbourhood watch and similar schemes;
— raising the profile of crime prevention in the community at large by way of conferences and seminars;
—stimulating crime prevention activities and initiatives now being carried forward by non-Government bodies;
—encouraging the production of British standards on the security of buildings and vehicle security;
— the dissemination of crime prevention advice and guidance: through leaflet, poster, press, radio and television publicity campaigns;
—the provision of funds for crime prevention measures under the urban programme and through the urban housing renewal unit;
— the approval of some 5,000 places for crime prevention projects under the communty programme;
—the dissemination of information about good practice in police and local authority crime prevention schemes;
—the setting up of working groups, to report to the Home Office standing conference on crime prevention, on residential burglary, car security, commercial robbery, shop theft and the prevention of violence associated with licensed premises;
— the production of revised guidelines for crime prevention panels;
—the establishment of five local demonstration projects to stimulate a multi-agency involvement in tackling crime problems of particular concern to communities in specific locations;
— urging local authorities, commerce, voluntary groups, industry, trade unions and all other sectors of the community to identify and act upon the crime prevention potential within their fields of activity.

Passports

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what means have been employed to ascertain the demand for bilingual passport application forms.

Mr. Waddington: The two passport offices serving Wales have sought to record requests for forms in Welsh and receipt of forms completed in Welsh. Since 1980 they have recorded three requests for such forms and receipt of two forms completed in Welsh.

Mentally Ill People

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis and the chief constable of the West Midlands police as to the number of people who have been escorted to police custody for behaviour or offences warranting detention in a mental hospital or psychiatric institution under section 136 of the Mental Health Act; and what proportion of them were, after consultation in police custody with a psychiatrist or social worker *(a)* committed to one of the above establishments and *(b)* sent home.

Mr. Mellor: Statistics of persons detained by the police under section 136 of the Mental Health Act 1983 are not maintained locally or centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost. I would refer the hon. Member to the reply given to a question from the hon. Member for St Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham) on 19 May at c. *13*.

Prisons (Mother and Baby Units)

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many mother and baby units there are in each prison accommodating female prisoners.

Mr. Mellor: The Prison Department has three mother and baby units — at Holloway, Styal and Askham Grange.

Afghan Refugees

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many Afghan refugees have been granted asylum in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Waddington: The information requested was published in tables 2 and 3 of Home Office statistical bulletin No. 12/86, "Refugee Statistics, United Kingdom, 1985" on 1 May 1986.

Prisoners (Drugs)

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the average weekly dose by volume per capita of each of the main categories of drugs given in *(a)* each prison for male prisoners and *(b)* each prison for female offenders, during the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Mellor: Medicines administered to prisoner patients are not statistically recorded by volume. Information on the use of medicines in prison service establishments, including information about the use of certain categories of medicines, is published annually in the report on the work of the Prison Department, copies of which are in the Library. The most recently published report is that for 1984-85 (Cmnd. 9699).

Immigration Rules

Mr. Wheeler asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will amend the immigration rules to prevent men who come here as visitors and who then advertise for a bride being allowed to settle in the United Kingdom on the basis of marriage.

Mr. Hurd: No. The immigration rules already prevent marriage being used in this way as a device to obtain settlement. One of the requirements of the existing rules is that the Secretary of State must be satisfied that the marriage was not entered into primarily to obtain settlement here. A man who entered this country as a

visitor and advertised for a bride would be most unlikely to be able to satisfy that requirement of the rules if he then applied to remain permanently on the basis of the marriage.

SCOTLAND

Life Sentence Prisoners

Mr. Ron Brown asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give details of the average period of time taken to make review board decisions in the case of prisoners serving life sentences in Scotland *(a)* from 1979 until 1984 and *(b)* from 1984 onwards; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: Information is not available in the form requested. The initial review of the suitability or otherwise of an indeterminate sentence prisoner for release on life licence is carried out by a local review committee at the penal establishment concerned. Detailed reports and consideration by the local review committee normally take about 3 to 4 months to complete. The time taken to complete other stages of the review process, which under statute has to include consultation with the judiciary and a favourable recommendation from the Parole Board for Scotland before a provisional release date is granted by my right hon. and learned Friend, varies according to the circumstances of the individual case and the number and complexity of cases currently under consideration.

A new form of record keeping introduced last year has shown that in recent months the time taken to complete reviews has increased, but steps are being taken to improve the turnover as quickly as possible.

Mr. Ron Brown asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give details of the average period of time taken to make review board decisions in the case of those categories of prisoners serving a minimum life sentence of 20 years following legislation introduced in 1984 *(a)* in Scottish prisons and *(b)* in Saughton prison, Edinburgh; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: Information is not available in the form requested.

On 18 December 1984, at columns *90-91*, my right hon. and learned Friend announced that he had made clear to the Parole Board for Scotland that only in exceptional circumstances would he feel that release earlier than 20 years would be appropriate for a prisoner sentenced to life imprisonment for certain categories of murder (in particular, murders of police officers or prison officers, murder by terrorists, sexual or sadistic murders of children or murders committed by firearm in the commission of crime). These cases are subject to the same procedures of review as those of other indeterminate sentence prisoners although the timing of reviews may reflect the longer period in custody which the individual may be expected to serve.

Reviews of cases for especially grave offences may take longer to complete because of their serious nature or the potential risk to public safety on release.

European Regional Development Fund

Mr. Ron Brown asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give details of the total European regional development fund moneys for each year since 1979 for Scotland.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Total awards from the European regional development fund for Scotland from 1979 are as follows:

£ million

	Total	*Infrastructure*	*Industry*	*Non-Quota*
1979	37·9	35·9	2·0	
1980	27·9	17·1	10·8	
1981	70·7	55·3	15·4	
1982	71·6	61·7	1·9	8·0
1983	83·5	63·9	19·6	
1984	103·2	59·4	33·8	10·0
1985	121·4	*100·4	21·0	
Total	516·2	393·7	104·5	18·0

* Including £68·2 million for the Glasgow national programme of community interest.

Homelessness

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many families were placed in bed-and-breakfast type accommodation for homeless people in 1985 in *(a)* Strathclyde and *(b)* Scotland.

Mr. Ancram: 3,019 households in Scotland who applied during 1985 under the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977 were housed initially in bed-and-breakfast accommodation. Of these, 2,781 were in Strathclyde region.

EMPLOYMENT

Community Programme

Mr. Prescott asked the Paymaster General how many community programme managing agents or sponsors have been excluded from the scheme or had their work curtailed since 1983; and what were the reasons for exclusion.

Mr. Lang: Information on the number of managing agents and sponsors whose scheme contracts have not been renewed, or which have terminated early, is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Deakins asked the Paymaster General what is the rate of unemployment in the south of England, defined as south of a line from Bristol to the Wash; and what is the rate in the rest of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Lang: On 8 May 1986 the rate of unemployment in the South of England, defined as those counties* south of a line from Bristol to the Wash, was 10·3 per cent. The corresponding figure for the rest of the United Kingdom was 15·9 per cent.

* Avon, Bedfordshire, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Cambridgeshire, Cornwall, Devon, Dorset, East Sussex, Essex, Greater London, Hampshire, Hertfordshire, Isle of Wight, Kent, Norfolk, Northamptonshire, Oxfordshire, Somerset, Suffolk, Surrey, Wiltshire and West Sussex.

Mr. Deakins asked the Paymaster General what has been the change in numbers and percentage in the size of

the civilian employed labour force in the south of England, defined as south of a line from Bristol to the Wash, since 1966 and since 1976, respectively; and what are the comparable figures for the rest of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Lang: The available information is as follows:

Civilian employed labour force

	Change between June 1966 and June 1985		Change between June 1976 and June 1985	
	Numbers	*Percentage*	*Numbers*	*Percentage*
South of England*	544,000	5·3	551,000	5·3
Rest of the United Kingdom	−1,408,000	−9·6	−973,000	−6·9

* South East, East Anglia and South West regions.

Mr. Marlow asked the Paymaster General how many unemployed people under 25 years old drawing benefit there have been in the south-east for each of the last 10 years; and what percentage this was of *(a)* south-east unemployment and *(b)* United Kingdom unemployment.

Mr. Lang: The following information is in the Library. The table shows the numbers of unemployed claimants aged under 25 years in the south-east region for April of each year from 1983. The figures relate to unemployed persons claiming unemployment benefit, supplementary benefit or national insurance credits at unemployment benefit offices. Comparisons over the period are affected by the change in the timing of compilation of unemployment statistics in March 1986. Analyses of unemployed claimants are not available before October 1982.

Unemployed Claimants—under 25 years

	South East	*Percentage of South East Total*	*Percentage of United Kingdom Total*
April	*Number*	*Per cent.*	*Per cent.*
1983	261,089	35·7	8·2
1984	265,627	36·3	8·5
1985	275,665	35·2	8·4
1986	262,714	33·1	7·9

Part-time Employment

Mr. Deakins asked the Paymaster General what is the official definition of part-time employment.

Mr. Lang: Part-time employment is not defined as such in employment legislation. The criterion most widely used in the Department of Employment's statistics is whether an individual works 30 hours a week or less, excluding overtime, but other definitions are also in use.

Lost Working Days

Mr. Prescott asked the Paymaster General what criteria his Department uses to define a strike for the purposes of the statistics of the numbers of working days lost due to industrial disputes.

Mr. Lang: The statistics relate to stoppages of work in the United Kingdom due to industrial disputes between employers and workers, or between workers and other workers, connected with terms and conditions of employment. No distinction is made between lawful and unlawful stoppages, and both are included in the statistics. Disputes which do not result in a stoppage of work—for example, work-to-rules and go-slows — are not included in the statistics, as their effects are not readily quantifiable. Stoppages involving fewer than 10 workers or lasting less than one day are excluded, unless the total number of working days lost in the dispute is greater than 100.

In measuring the number of working days lost, account is taken of the time lost in the basic working week by workers both directly and indirectly involved at the establishments where the dispute occurred; workers indirectly involved are those who are not themselves parties to the dispute but are unable to work as a result of the dispute. Overtime work is not included and neither is weekend working where this is not normal. Allowance is made for public and known annual holidays — for example, factory fortnights.

In disputes where an employer dismisses his employees and replaces them with another work force, it is assumed that no further working days are being lost once the new work force is recruited.

ENVIRONMENT

Local Authority Housing

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list in the *Official Report* details of money held back from use by local authorities in England for housing purposes through the capital receipts limitation imposed at the present time; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: Information about local authorities' accumulated capital receipts is available only in respect of the position on 31 March 1985. At that time, the total spending power theoretically available to authorities in England, from their accumulated housing receipts was £4·1 billion but £1·3 billion of this had been used for purposes such as debt repayment. All accumulated receipts are available over time to permit additional capital expenditure, but the Government have set limits on the rate at which they can be used for this purpose, so as to minimise adverse effects on the public sector borrowing requirement.

Housing Investment Programme

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list in the *Official Report* the bids submitted for housing investment programmes since 1981 and the respective allocation made in each case.

Sir George Young: In their housing investment programme submissions local authorities are asked to specify the total programme of capital expenditure they propose to undertake in the relevant year. The figures are therefore intended to cover not only expenditure financed from allocations, but also the very considerable amount of expenditure financed from other sources. Proposed programmes and allocations for the years 1981-82 to 1986-87 have been as follows:

£ million

	Proposed Programmes	*Allocations*
1981-82	*2,917	1,795
1982-83	†2,968	2,192
1983-84	3,559	2,233
1984-85	4,481	1,853
1985-86	4,868	1,600
1986-87	5,416	1,465

All figures are in cash terms unless otherwise indicated.
* November 1979 prices.
† November 1980 prices.

Urban Development

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what appraisal his Department has undertaken to assess how far, and in what respect, housing projects for which urban development grant aid has been provided have helped urgent local housing needs; and what information is available to his Department concerning the proportion of dwellings provided under such projects which have been *(a)* let, or *(b)* sold under a low cost home ownership scheme, or *(c)* sold at open market value to (1) homeless households, (2) households registered on local authority waiting lists, (3) households registered on local authority transfer lists and (4) first-time buyers.

Sir George Young: All housing projects which have been supported by urban development grant (UDG) have been approved on the basis that the dwellings concerned would be sold or let under assured tenancies at full market value. Information about the personal circumstances of purchasers is not available at present but some housing projects are included in current research into the impact of UDG.

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment according to what criteria his Department assesses whether housing projects submitted by local authorities for urban development grant aid would be economically unviable were such grant aid not made available; and what appraisal his Department has undertaken to evaluate whether, when urban development grant aid has been provided for housing projects, it has in practice proved essential for their execution.

Sir George Young: All applications for urban development grant (UDG) receive a detailed development appraisal in order to establish whether the project could or would not proceed without grant. Research into the outcome of a representative sample of completed UDG projects is under way.

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list any housing projects for which urban development grant aid has been provided where the local authority has clawed back profits from the developer under the terms of grant aid and list in each case *(a)* the profit allowed to the developer under the terms of the grant before clawback, *(b)* the profit clawed back by the local authority and *(c)* the profit retained by the developer.

Sir George Young: Almost all offers of urban development grant for housing projects have included conditions requiring grant to be repaid to the local authority if during the period between grant approval and the completion of the project house prices increase more rapidly than building costs. It is not the practice to disclose financial details of individual projects, but clawback conditions are known to have come into operation in five cases.

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list any housing project for which urban development grant aid has been provided where the developers' approved expenses for the project have included *(a)* the provision of white goods in the dwellings, *(b)* the establishment of a show house and the running expenses for a sales office and *(c)* advertising and agent fees for the dwellings; and if he will list in each case the reasons why his Department judged such expenses to merit urban development grant aid.

Sir George Young: Urban development grant is not paid in respect of specific items of expenditure but rather to cover the gap between the total costs that the developer will have to incur in order to carry out the project and the estimated value of the completed project. Housing projects invariably involve marketing expenses and some projects have included "White goods" packages. Such expenditure would normally reduce rather than increase the grant requirement because it enables the completed housing to be sold sooner or at a higher price than would otherwise be the case.

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will list those firms from which members of his Department's urban development grant appraisal team have been seconded, the members seconded, and the periods of their secondment;

(2) if he will list any former members of his Department's urban development grant appraisal team who to his knowledge have subsequently been employed as consultants by local authorities wishing to submit urban development grant applications.

Sir George Young: The following have been or are members of the Department's urban development grant appraisal team whilst on secondment to the Department:

Appraiser	*Firm*	*Period of secondment*
D. Barker	Norwich Union Insurance Group	October 1982—April 1983
J Cooper*	Hillier Parker May & Rowden	October 1982—April 1983
P. Hilling	Authur Young McClelland Moores & Co.	October 1982—October 1983

Appraiser	*Firm*	*Period of secondment*
A. H. Mallinson*	Thomson McLintock Associates	October 1982—March 1984
J. F. Reid*	Costain Group Ltd.	April 1983—March 1985
N. F. Smith	Drivers Jonas	May 1983—May 1984
T. A. S. Russell*	King & Co.	July 1983—January 1985
R. N. C. Cowley	Peat Marwick Mitchell & Co.	August 1983—December 1984
M. C. Gloster	Grimley & Son	May 1984—August 1985
M. J. Barrington	Spicer and Pegler	October 1984—July 1986
N. J. Sadler	Richard Ellis	January 1985—March 1986
A. G. Vining	John Laing Construction Ltd.	April 1985—April 1987
G. M. Seeff	Stoy Hayward Associates	July 1986—to be determined.

* Former appraisers known to have acted for local authorities in connection with applications, or prospective applications, for Urban Development Grant.

There is in general no restriction on former appraisers or their firms acting for local authorities or other persons in connection with applications for urban development grant, but the terms of secondments preclude former appraisers from getting involved in any way with projects which were before the Department during their periods of secondment.

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether his Department has received a copy of the recent report by the district auditor to members of Langbaurgh borough council, drawing attention to the financial implications of their decision to dispose of part of the Spencerbeck housing estate to Barratt (Urban Renewal Northern) Ltd for refurbishment for sale with urban development grant aid; and what steps his Department plans to take to ensure that in future before urban development grant aid is approved for such projects, that the short and long term financial implications of the disposal of its housing stock for refurbishment for sale have been fully appraised.

Sir George Young: The Department has not received a copy of the auditor's report. It is for local authorities to assess the impact that disposals for sale will have on their housing revenue accounts.

Public Buildings and Works (Expenditure)

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what proportion of annual expenditure on public buildings and works is spent in the south of England, defined as south of a line from Bristol to the Wash.

Sir George Young: Expenditure figures on this basis are not available.

Council House Building

Mr. Stuart Holland asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what proportion of council house building in *(a)* England and Wales and *(b)* Scotland was represented by (i) public direct labour schemes and (ii) private contractors' schemes in the period 1982 to 1984.

Sir George Young: In the period 1982 to 1984 it is estimated that for England and Wales the proportion of council house building, measured in current values, carried out by direct labour organisations was about 8 per cent. and by private contractors 92 per cent. For Scotland the corresponding figures were 2 per cent. and 98 per cent.

Nursing and Rest Homes

Mr. Adley asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list for each local authority in England the total amount of rate relief granted under the Government's obligations to provide reimbursement of 90 per cent. of such relief to *(a)* registered nursing homes and *(b)* registered rest homes.

Mrs. Rumbold: Information is not available for particular types of premises receiving rate relief under the Rating (Disabled Persons) Act 1978. Figures are given for the amount of relief for all institutions, and the amount reimbursed to the local authority by my Department, for each local rating authority in England for the latest available year, 1984-85. In some cases the figures are still subject to audit.

	Subsidy to Local Authority (90 per cent.)	*Benefit paid by Local Authority (100 per cent.)*
Adur	65,079	72,310
Allerdale	55,764	61,960
Alnwick	19,977	22,197
Amber Valley	54,022	60,024
Arun	206,869	229,855
Ashfield	109,900	122,111
Ashford	53,516	59,462
Aylesbury Vale	121,008	134,453
Babergh	60,123	66,803
Barking and Dagenham	167,787	186,430
Barnet	371,374	412,638
Barnsley	168,134	186,816
Barrow in Furness	61,514	68,349
Basildon	43,275	48,083
Basingstoke and Deane	58,740	65,267
Bassetlaw	71,790	79,767
Bath	141,132	156,813
Berwick upon Tweed	15,986	17,762
Beverley	93,646	104,051
Bexley	89,061	98,957
Birmingham	451,353	501,503
Blaby	10,544	11,716
Blackburn	157,738	175,264
Blackpool	181,251	201,390
Blyth Valley	38,567	42,853
Bolsover	29,540	32,822
Bolton	181,633	201,814
Boothferry	33,377	37,086
Boston	23,894	26,549
Bournemouth	398,103	442,337
Bracknell	77,288	85,876
Bradford	501,777	557,530
Braintree	78,425	87,139
Breckland	44,041	48,934
Brent	486,729	540,810
Brentwood	24,710	27,455
Bridgnorth	30,837	34,263

	Subsidy to Local Authority (90 per cent.)	Benefit paid by Local Authority (100 per cent.)
Brighton	227,886	253,206
Bristol	666,384	740,427
Broadland	56,958	63,287
Bromley	229,131	254,590
Bromsgrove	113,545	126,161
Broxbourne	45,471	50,523
Broxtowe	70,759	78,621
Burnley	95,213	105,792
Bury	214,348	238,164
Calderdale	161,006	178,896
Cambridge	83,371	92,635
Camden	453,570	503,967
Cannock Chase	28,626	31,807
Canterbury	127,204	141,338
Caradon	39,909	44,343
Carlisle	100,280	111,422
Carrick	59,255	65,838
Castle Morpeth	85,708	95,231
Castle Point	46,737	51,930
Charnwood	76,807	85,341
Chelmsford	37,116	41,240
Cheltenham	125,537	139,486
Cherwell	60,776	67,529
Chester	80,906	89,895
Chester le Street	24,001	26,668
Chesterfield	55,096	61,218
Chichester	139,961	155,512
Chiltern	179,636	199,596
Chorley	61,010	67,789
Christchurch	31,079	34,532
Cleethorpes	23,561	26,179
Colchester	21,114	23,460
Congleton	44,756	49,729
Copeland	56,731	63,034
Corby	27,696	30,773
Cotswold	54,480	60,533
Coventry	450,517	500,574
Craven	41,948	46,609
Crawley	51,817	57,574
Crewe and Nantwich	119,596	132,884
Croydon	297,193	330,214
Dacorum	106,509	118,343
Darlington	134,916	149,907
Dartford	62,437	69,375
Daventry	19,863	22,070
Derby	102,659	114,066
Derwentside	75,591	83,990
Doncaster	269,246	299,162
Dover	80,786	89,762
Dudley	211,496	234,996
Durham	70,762	78,624
Ealing	285,154	316,838
Easington	54,956	61,062
East Cambridgeshire	23,148	25,720
East Devon	124,882	138,758
East Hampshire	127,534	141,704
East Hertfordshire	157,471	174,968
East Lindsey	88,816	98,685
East Northamptonshire	15,664	17,404
East Staffordshire	60,140	66,822
East Yorkshire	95,706	106,340
Eastbourne	130,989	145,543
Eastleigh	55,140	61,267
Eden	35,902	39,891
Ellesmere Port	58,734	65,260
Elmbridge	118,884	132,093
Enfield	202,147	224,608
Epping Forest	102,183	113,537
Epsom and Ewell	44,186	49,095
Erewash	101,657	112,952
Exeter	202,296	224,773
Fareham	44,531	49,479
Fenland	55,692	61,880
Forest Heath	16,778	18,642
Forest of Dean	58,060	64,511

	Subsidy to Local Authority (90 per cent.)	Benefit paid by Local Authority (100 per cent.)
Fylde	86,344	95,938
Gateshead	213,615	237,350
Gedling	72,925	81,028
Gillingham	31,492	34,991
Glanford	52,059	57,843
Gloucester	64,302	71,447
Gosport	37,113	41,237
Gravesham	33,653	37,392
Great Grimsby	62,066	68,962
Great Yarmouth	47,697	52,997
Greenwich	266,228	295,809
Guildford	123,970	137,744
Hackney	355,967	395,519
Halton	92,255	102,505
Hambleton	47,849	53,166
Hammersmith and Fulham	198,726	220,807
Harborough	39,363	43,737
Haringey	324,521	360,579
Harlow	40,313	44,792
Harrogate	212,215	235,795
Harrow	172,427	191,585
Hart	39,804	44,227
Hartlepool	65,397	72,663
Hastings	128,417	142,686
Havant	62,967	69,963
Havering	159,954	177,727
Hereford	78,427	87,141
Hertsmere	145,281	161,423
High Peak	61,691	68,546
Hillingdon	306,220	340,244
Hinckley and Bosworth	30,760	34,178
Holderness	29,614	32,905
Horsham	136,694	151,882
Hounslow	191,088	212,320
Hove	267,530	297,256
Huntingdon	54,585	60,650
Hyndburn	64,651	71,835
Ipswich	87,908	97,675
Isles of Scilly	0	0
Islington	312,726	347,474
Kennet	43,213	48,015
Kensington and Chelsea	252,170	280,189
Kerrier	88,648	98,498
Kettering	57,865	64,295
King's Lynn and West Norfolk	55,312	61,458
Kingston upon Hull	294,032	326,702
Kingston upon Thames	110,722	123,024
Kingswood	60,460	67,177
Kirklees	228,193	253,548
Knowsley	104,535	116,150
Lambeth	580,361	644,845
Lancaster	133,210	148,011
Langbaurgh	64,687	71,875
Leeds	562,514	625,016
Leicester	220,623	245,137
Leominster	43,706	48,562
Lewes	176,085	195,650
Lewisham	313,905	348,783
Lichfield	84,069	93,410
Lincoln	75,992	84,435
Liverpool	666,315	740,350
London City	0	0
Luton	0	0
Macclesfield	175,386	194,874
Maidstone	40,142	44,602
Maldon	23,504	26,116
Malvern Hills	119,954	133,282
Manchester	809,666	899,629
Mansfield	119,925	133,250
Medina	57,788	64,209
Melton	21,529	23,921
Mendip	63,060	70,067
Merton	94,500	105,000

	Subsidy to Local Authority (90 per cent.)	Benefit paid by Local Authority (100 per cent.)
Mid Bedfordshire	83,936	93,262
Mid Devon	50,774	56,415
Mid Suffolk	41,782	46,425
Mid Sussex	129,043	143,381
Middlesbrough	91,162	101,291
Milton Keynes	57,111	63,457
Mole Valley	175,800	195,333
New Forest	125,516	139,462
Newark and Sherwood	18,285	20,317
Newbury	78,461	87,179
Newcastle under Lyme	80,373	89,303
Newcastle upon Tyne	612,601	680,668
Newham	272,972	303,302
North Bedfordshire	102,726	114,140
North Cornwall	51,284	56,982
North Devon	86,070	95,633
North Dorset	37,961	42,179
North East Derbyshire	3,903	4,337
North Hertfordshire	75,904	84,338
North Kesteven	51,365	57,072
North Norfolk	93,095	103,439
North Shropshire	29,975	33,306
North Tyneside	242,204	269,115
North Warwickshire	45,820	50,911
North West Leicestershire	37,084	41,205
North Wiltshire	109,198	121,331
Northampton	382,460	424,955
Northavon	107,753	119,726
Norwich	125,963	139,959
Nottingham	515,976	573,307
Nuneaton and Bedworth	70,346	78,162
Oadby and Wigston	45,549	50,610
Oldham	278,483	309,426
Oswestry	29,507	32,786
Oxford	131,145	145,717
Pendle	44,940	49,934
Penwith	43,627	48,474
Peterborough	136,838	152,042
Plymouth	194,101	215,668
Poole	193,020	214,467
Portsmouth	207,919	231,021
Preston	99,345	110,383
Purbeck	51,974	57,749
Reading	120,233	133,592
Redbridge	174,045	193,383
Redditch	35,314	39,237
Reigate and Banstead	202,045	224,494
Restormel	78,172	86,858
Ribble Valley	46,240	51,378
Richmond upon Thames	153,070	170,078
Richmondshire	25,581	28,424
Rochdale	208,340	231,489
Rochester on Medway	37,397	41,552
Rochford	27,407	30,452
Rossendale	31,561	35,068
Rother	142,463	158,292
Rotherham	218,506	242,785
Rugby	92,216	102,462
Runnymede	35,463	39,403
Rushcliffe	96,759	107,510
Rushmoor	32,152	35,724
Rutland	26,941	29,935
Ryedale	30,620	34,022
Salford	228,048	253,387
Salisbury	85,831	95,367
Sandwell	204,300	227,000
Scarborough	175,365	194,850
Scunthorpe	41,172	45,747
Sedgefield	71,067	78,963
Sedgemoor	89,421	99,357
Sefton	423,753	470,837
Selby	27,072	30,080
Sevenoaks	130,266	144,740
Sheffield	851,583	946,203
Shepway	109,196	121,329
Shrewsbury and Atcham	97,249	108,054
Slough	74,112	82,347
Solihull	152,053	168,948
South Bedfordshire	86,099	95,666
South Bucks	78,289	86,988
South Cambridgeshire	191,177	212,419
South Derbyshire	18,431	20,479
South Hams	68,884	76,538
South Herefordshire	21,821	24,246
South Holland	44,139	49,043
South Kesteven	48,041	53,379
South Lakeland	84,643	94,048
South Norfolk	19,584	21,760
South Northamptonshire	8,630	9,589
South Oxfordshire	122,269	135,855
South Ribble	58,540	65,044
South Shropshire	32,411	36,012
South Somerset	106,408	118,231
South Staffordshire	60,147	66,830
South Tyneside	145,852	162,058
South Wight	54,720	60,800
Southampton	179,284	199,204
Southend on Sea	269,638	299,598
Southwark	517,500	575,000
Spelthorne	60,223	66,914
St. Albans	140,964	156,627
St. Edmundsbury	61,513	68,348
St. Helens	185,206	205,784
Stafford	90,980	101,089
Staffordshire Moorlands	70,049	77,832
Stevenage	83,791	93,102
Stockport	265,046	294,495
Stockton on Tees	40,159	44,621
Stoke on Trent	346,150	384,611
Stratford on Avon	79,155	87,950
Stroud	106,775	118,639
Suffolk Coastal	54,256	60,284
Sunderland	357,947	397,719
Surrey Heath	73,822	82,025
Sutton	120,298	133,664
Swale	43,123	47,914
Tameside	160,943	178,826
Tamworth	21,117	23,463
Tandridge	127,808	142,009
Taunton Deane	83,556	92,840
Teesdale	10,280	11,423
Teignbridge	144,465	160,517
Tendering	184,677	205,197
Test Valley	136,607	151,786
Tewkesbury	45,598	50,665
Thamesdown	128,407	142,674
Thanet	192,246	213,607
Three Rivers	84,983	94,426
Thurrock	42,350	47,056
Tonbridge and Malling	127,616	141,795
Torbay	253,420	281,578
Torridge	20,628	22,920
Tower Hamlets	213,856	237,618
Trafford	146,853	163,170
Tunbridge Wells	121,673	135,192
Tynedale	53,274	59,193
Uttlesford	60,723	67,470
Vale of White Horse	64,407	71,563
Vale Royal	115,356	128,174
Wakefield	241,544	268,382
Walsall	240,566	267,296
Waltham Forest	128,546	142,829
Wandsworth	304,764	338,627
Wansbeck	66,462	73,847
Wansdyke	73,247	81,385
Warrington	99,233	110,259
Warwick	130,261	144,734
Watford	69,026	76,696
Waveney	84,784	94,205

	Subsidy to Local Authority (90 per cent.)	Benefit paid by Local Authority (100 per cent.)
Waverley	172,839	192,044
Wealden	106,948	118,831
Wear Valley	33,434	37,148
Wellingborough	66,487	73,874
Welwyn Hatfield	102,940	114,378
West Derbyshire	37,138	41,264
West Devon	39,604	44,004
West Dorset	76,164	84,626
West Lancashire	60,813	67,570
West Lindsey	58,901	65,446
West Oxfordshire	70,110	77,901
West Somerset	32,184	35,760
West Wiltshire	59,539	66,155
Westminster	453,326	503,696
Weymouth and Portland	73,681	81,868
Wigan	316,800	352,000
Wimborne	45,747	50,830
Winchester	124,139	137,932
Windsor and Maidenhead	120,230	133,589
Wirral	202,313	224,792
Woking	67,349	74,832
Wokingham	141,528	157,253
Wolverhampton	662,935	736,595
Woodspring	241,899	268,776
Worcester	102,165	113,517
Worthing	205,136	227,929
Wrekin	83,948	93,275
Wychavon	78,871	87,635
Wycombe	64,800	72,000
Wyre	69,038	76,709
Wyre Forest	92,675	102,972
York	97,472	108,302
Totals	46,235,756	51,373,067

Mr. Adley asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the working of the Rating (Disabled Persons) Act 1978 in so far as it relates to the relief from rates of registered nursing homes and registered rest homes.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Rating (Disabled Persons) Act 1978 was amended by the Rates Act 1984. As amended, section 2 provides for full or partial rate relief for institutions accepted by the local rating authority as being used wholly or predominantly for specified purposes, mainly the accommodation or employment of ill or disabled people.

Nursing homes, rest homes and similar premises fall within the scope of the relief when they are used wholly or predominantly to provide residential nursing and domestic care for people who are or have been suffering from illness or who are disabled, but not if their clients are there solely because of factors such as age, being otherwise fit. No distinction is drawn between public sector and private sector institutions. Last year, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services strengthened the regulatory and inspection procedures for such institutions under the provisions of the Registered Homes Act 1984.

To minimise the effect on local resources, particularly in areas where such premises are concentrated, my Department reimburses to local authorities 90 per cent. of the amount of the relief. The remaining 10 per cent. is taken into account when block grant entitlement is calculated.

Mr. Adley asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to how many cases relating to the Rating (Disabled Persons) Act 1978 have been heard in the High Court since the Act came into operation; and what effect the outcome of these cases has had on the working of the legislation.

Mrs. Rumbold: I am aware of six cases. Only two of them have affected the operation of the Act: Morgan *v.* Windsor and Maidenhead Royal Borough Council and Glenherne Nursing Services Ltd. *v.* Same, heard together in 1981. The judgment clarified the meanings of "care" and "illness" defined in section 2 of the Act in such a way as to bring within its scope premises providing for those who, as a result of illness or disability, could no longer live at home. A number of local authority and privately-run institutions which had previously been thought not be eligible have since successfully applied for relief.

Local Government Finance

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish, for each class of local authority and for local authorities in total, the percentage of increase in current expenditure in cash between *(a)* 1978-79 and 1986-87 and *(b)* 1981-82 and 1986-87.

Mr. Ridley: The information based on returns made by English authorities is as follows:

Percentage changes in net current expenditure

Class of authority	1978-79 to 1986-87	1981-82 to 1986-87
Shire counties*	114·7	38·1
Metropolitan areas†	118·5	36·5
ILEA	128·5	40·9
Metropolitan police	193·5	52·7
Greater London area‡	121·3	41·3
Shire districts‖	101·1	40·8
England	118·3	38·9

*Northumbria police authority expenditure is included in shire counties in 1978-79, 1981-82 but in the metropolitan area in 1986-87.

†Comprising MCC's and metropolitan districts in 1978-79, 1981-82 and metropolitan districts and joint metropolitan authorities for fire, transport and police (including the Northumbria police authority) in 1986-87.

‡Comprising GLC (excluding ILEA) City, inner and outer London boroughs in 1978-79, 1981-82; inner and outer boroughs and London fire and civil defence in 1986-87.

‖Including Isles of Scilly.

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will rank in descending order, using their 1986-87 budgets, all English local authorities on the basis of the percentage above or below their grant-related expenditure assessments for 1986-87.

Mr. Ridley: I have today placed the information in the House of Commons Library.

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will place in the Library copies of expenditure performance and growth tables for 1981-82 to 1986-87, showing also the figures from 1978-79 to 1986-87.

Mr. Ridley: The information will be placed shortly in the House of Commons Library.

Faslane Bay

Mrs. McCurley asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he is now in a position to make a statement about dredging in Faslane bay and the means

by which he intends to dispose of the waste, and in particular that part of it which is contaminated with asbestos.

Sir George Young [*pursuant to his answer*, 30 June 1986, c. *361-62*]: The contract for dredging in Faslane bay was not in fact let on that day but will be let shortly.

Mortgage Repossessions

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to how many mortgage repossessions have taken place in each of the years 1979 to 1985 in *(a)* England, *(b)* Scotland and *(c)* Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young [*pursuant to his answer*, 1 July 1986, c. 459]: Information is available only in respect of England and Wales and cannot be shown separately for the two countries. The following figures include both domestic and non-domestic premises, and do not refer to domestic premises only, as stated in the heading to the table in my reply to the hon. Member for Fulham (Mr. Raynsford) of 10 June at column *129*.

County Court Actions for recovery of possession: mortgage possessions: Warrants executed, England and Wales

	Number
1979	2,460
1980	2,540
1981	3,480
1982	3,700
1983	5,080
1984	7,960
1985	10,160

Source: Lord Chancellor's Department.

Housing Associations

Mr. Freeson asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how many homes were owned for rental by housing associations in England and Wales at the latest available date; and what were the figures for the same period for each of the last three years;

(2) how many homes have been built by housing associations for sale or shared ownership in each of the last three years;

(3) what is the total number of homes owned by the housing associations at the latest available date; and what were the figures for the same period for each of the last three years.

Sir George Young [*pursuant to his answer*, 3 July 1986]: The available information for England is as follows:

Housing associations: England

thousands

	Estimated Stock of Dwellings for rent at end of year	*Sales for shared ownership in year**
1982	432	2
1983	451	7
1984	474	3
1985	†493	4

* Built for sale, "shared ownership of the shelf" and "do-it-yourself shared ownership", including leasehold schemes for the elderly.

Source: Housing Corporation.

† Provisional.

Co-ownership and shared ownership housing association dwellings are included in the owner-occupied stock statistics and are not separately identified.

For information on housing associations in Wales, I refer the right hon. Member to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Swine Fever

Mr. Maclennan asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what consideration he has given to the imposition of import restrictions on possible sources of swine fever; what recent discussions he has had with other European Community countries to seek to improve the effectiveness of measures designed to combat the disease; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jopling: Measures for eradicating classical swine fever and rules for preventing its spread by intra-Community trade in pigs, fresh pigmeat and pigmeat products are the subject of Community directives. Representations have been made to me that I should take national action to restrict imports of certain pigmeat products. However, although the source of all but the most recent outbreak has been linked directly or indirectly to the feeding to pigs of imported pigmeat products, it is impossible to say from which country the infected imports came. In present circumstances I am advised that we would not be justified in making use of the relevant safeguard clause to impose additional restrictions and that any attempt to do so would be legally unsound, and would be overruled in Brussels.

I am, however, in touch with the Commissioner for Agriculture in the European Commission to underline the Government's serious concern at the classical swine fever situation which has existed in other member states for a number of years. I am urging on him the need for more stringent measures to be applied in the Community to stamp out disease when it occurs, and for a fresh assessment to be made of the degree of processing required to render pigmeat products safe. Officials are also pursuing these matters in the standing veterinary committee and direct with the member states concerned.

Radiation

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will publish a report on his Department's reaction to the Chernobyl emergency with particular reference to its state of readiness to monitor radioactive fallout from any source, the suitability of the relevant resources and contingency plans and the need for national and international agencies to adopt common and comprehensible measurements of contamination and standards of safety for exposure to or ingestion of contaminated materials.

Mrs Fenner: No. I am satisfied that my Department's contingency plans enabled us to detect immediately the presence of radioactivity arising from the accident at Chernobyl, and to make a prompt and realistic assessment of its implications for food and agriculture. The safety levels applied in the United Kingdom were agreed by the Government on the advice of the National Radiological Protection Board and are derived from recommendations published by the International Commission on

Radiological Protection. Discussions were held on 22-23 May by a group of Community scientists under article 31 of the Euratom treaty to discuss the trigger level for Community control measures, and my officials will be considering how best to participate in any work following up the European Council's consideration of the need for tolerance levels to be set on a scientific basis within the appropriate international fora.

Mr. John asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food in how many instances readings of 1,000 becquerels per kilogram or higher have been found in vegetables following the Chernobyl disaster; and what action his Department took in consequence.

Mr. Jopling [*pursuant to his reply*, 1 July 1986, c. *514*]: One result from Cumbria relating to a mixed sample of cabbages and leeks taken on 8 May 1986 showed the combined radiocaesium level of 1165 Bq/kg. This was a transient contamination and well below the level at which action would need to be considered. Subsequent results for the monitoring of vegetables in the area showed lower levels of caesium.

Dr. David Clark asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will place in the Library the results of radioactivity monitoring on cows milk, sheep milk, sheep and vegetables for May 1985 for Cleveland, Cumbria, Durham and Northumberland.

Mr. Jopling [*pursuant to his reply*, 2 July 1986, c. *572*]: My Department's terrestrial monitoring programme commenced in January 1986. No data are therefore available for the period requested for milk, meat and vegetables. This complements the environmental monitoring programme conducted by nuclear site operators as a condition of their licence under the Radioactive Substances Act 1960. The results of this monitoring are published annually by the site operators.

Dr. David Clark asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he increased the monitoring of vegetables in Cumbria following the discovery of readings of 1100 bq/kg of caesium 137 and 895 bq/kg of iodine 131 on cabbages and leeks in Cumbria on 9 May.

Mr. Jopling [*pursuant to his reply*, 2 July 1986, c. *572*]: The readings of 1100 bq/kg of caesium 137 and 895 bq/kg of iodine 131 found in cabbages and leeks in Cumbria on 8 May represented a transient contamination well below the level at which action would need to be considered. Subsequent results for the monitoring of vegetables in the area showed lower levels of caesium.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his advice regarding the safety of eating whimberries, wild bilberries, wild raspberries and black berries growing in north Wales or the lake district, as well as garden fruits, in the light of radioactive fallout in May in those areas.

Mr. Jopling [*pursuant to his reply*, 2 July 1986, c. *572*]: Levels of radioactivity in all crops tested are now extremely low in all parts of the country. However, we are continuing to test commercial fruits and wild berries as they come into season to ensure they are safe for human consumption.

Sheepmeat (Caesium Levels)

Mr. Wigley asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, for the area of Cumbria in which there is a ban on the movement of lamb, what is *(a)* the total lamb population, *(b)* the total number of lambs sampled on each occasion a sample is taken to test for radioactivity, *(c)* an analysis of the radioactivity levels by convenient range of radioactivity within these samples for each day on which testing has taken place since 1 May.

Mrs. Fenner: The information requested is as follows:

(a) approximately 400,000 lambs under one year of age are in the designated area in Cumbria.

(b) Ministry staff have been taking 100 to 200 lambs per week for testing within the designated area since the introduction of the emergency order on 20 June. All animals taken as samples are analysed for radioactivity.

(c) Information on the number of samples taken and the results obtained were published by my Department in a press notice on 20 June, a copy of which is in the Library of the House. The results of further monitoring will be published by my Department on a regular basis.

Butter

Mr. Walters asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the total value of the subsidy on open market butter purchased by non-profit-making organisations during 1985.

Mr. Gummer [*pursuant to his reply*, 2 July 1986, c. *571*]: The amount of subsidy paid in 1985 on open market butter purchased by non-profit-making organisations was £5·689 million.

Mr. Walters asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the subsidy on each 250 gramme packet of butter on the open market purchased by non-profit-making organisations during 1985.

Mr. Gummer [*pursuant to his reply*, 2 July 1986, c. *571*]: During 1985 the subsidy on open market butter purchased by non-profit-making organisations was 24p per 250 gramme pack from January to May and 23p per 250 gramme pack from June to December.

Mr. Walters asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what percentage of non-profit-making organisations have claimed the subsidy on butter purchased on the open market; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer [*pursuant to his reply*, 2 July 1986, c. *571*]: I regret this information is not available. Records are kept only of those non-profit-making organisations claiming subsidy under Commission regulation 2191/81. We have no means of establishing the total number of organisations which might be eligible to apply.

Fish Quotas

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what are the present European Community quotas for each type of fish imposed on the sea-fishing industries of each of the member states; and which of the quotas have been exceeded to date.

Mr. Gummer [*pursuant to his reply*, 3 July 1986]: The information regarding quotas is set out in the annexes to the following Council regulations:

(a) *Community Waters*
Council Regulation (EEC) No. 3721/85 dated 20 December 1985
Council Regulation (EEC) No. 3777/85 dated 31 December 1985

(b) *External Waters*
Council Regulation (EEC) No. 3551/85 dated 12 December 1985
Council Regulation (EEC) No. 3725/85 dated 20 December 1985
Council Regulation (EEC) No. 3730/85 dated 20 December 1985
Council Regulation (EEC) No. 3732/85 dated 20 December 1985
Council Regulation (EEC) No. 3783/85 dated 31 December 1985
Council Regulation (EEC) No. 114/86 dated 20 January 1986 extended the validity of Regulations (EEC) Nos. 3721/85, 3730/85, 3734/85 and 3777/85 until 31 December 1986.

The regulations were published in the *Official Journals* of the European Communities, Nos. L 339 of 18 December 1985, L 361 and L 363 of 31 December 1985 and L 17 of 23 January 1986, copies of which are available in the Library.

Official catch returns by member states are made available by the Commission of the European Communities on a monthly basis. The most recent figures, covering the period January to April 1986, indicate that the following quotas have been exceeded:

(a) Netherlands: Cod in I.C.E.S. Areas VII (excluding VIIa) and VIII (EC zone)

(b) Netherlands: Whiting in I.C.E.S. Area VII (excluding VIIa)

(c) Germany: Saithe in I.C.E.S. Areas Vb(EC zone) and VI.

Further fishing by vessels of these two countries for the stocks concerned have been prohibited by Commission regulation.

United Kingdom catch returns are available for the period January to May 1986 and they show that no quotas have been exceeded.

Fish Sizes

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps are being taken by Her Majesty's Government and other European Governments to ensure that no fish below the minimum size allowed to be caught are fished in European waters.

Mr. Gummer [*pursuant to his reply*, 3 July 1986]: In its report of 16 June 1986 to the Council of the European Communities, the Commission has underlined the need for effective enforcement of the total allowable catch/quota system and the technical conservation measures if the common fisheries policy is to work fairly. The Government fully endorses that approach.

The report, which was laid before the House on 2 July (document 7717/86), has identified various shortcomings in the way some member states enforce control on undersized fish. The Commission intends, where the circumstances require, to undertake infringement proceedings against member states in the European Court.

The United Kingdom is regarded as having effectively discharged its enforcement obligations, although we are criticised for taking little action on the landing of undersized nephrops tails in Northern Ireland. We will be discussing this criticism with the Commission to determine what further measures, if any, are necessary.

Persistent Plastics (Dumping Convention)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what methods are being used by Her Majesty's Government to monitor the effectiveness of the London and Oslo dumping convention in respect of persistent plastics.

Mr. Gummer [*pursuant to his reply*, 3 July 1986]: The effectiveness of these conventions is regularly reviewed by member countries on the basis of statistical data and scientific assessment of the state of the sea. Both organisations recognise that persistent plastics enter the sea mainly from coastal tipping, littering, or from ships' garbage, and not from sea dumping as such.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Supplementary Benefit

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the number of supplementary benefit claimants, and the value of the claims, for claimants *(a)* under 26 years and *(b)* 26 years and over in receipt of the no fixed abode allowance for 1981, and in each subsequent year to the latest convenient date.

Mr. Major: Separate statistical information on this subject is not maintained and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. However, our monitoring of the impact of the 1985 boarder changes does not show any evidence of general increases in homelessness among young people attributable to those changes.

Pensions

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will estimate the additional full-year costs of advancing the date of qualification for retirement pension to the beginning of the week within which the qualifying birthday falls.

Mr. Major: To advance the date of qualification for state retirement pension in this way would entail paying pensions for periods for which no entitlement exists, because the qualifying birthday is the minimum age at which state retirement pension becomes payable. The gross full year cost would be in the order of £20 million on the benefit rates applicable from July 1986.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people in Burnley at the latest date for which figures are available were receiving *(a)* rate rebates, *(b)* rent rebates and *(c)* rent allowances; and how many of these are certificated claims.

Mr. Major: On the basis of information from Burnley borough council's latest subsidy claim, it is estimated that the average number of people in receipt of rate rebate, rent rebate and rent allowance is:

	Rent rebate	Rent allowance	Rate rebate
Certificated	2,930	1,050	6,260
Standard	2,330	570	4,640
Total	5,260	1,620	10,900

Unemployment Benefits

Mr. Prescott asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, for the latest year for which figures are available, what is the total number of unemployed people who, during the course of the year, exhausted their unemployment benefit entitlement but were not subsequently eligible for supplementary allowance.

Mr. Major: The precise information requested is not available, but it is estimated that of those who exhaust their entitlement to unemployment benefit something like 15 to 20 per cent. are not subsequently eligible for supplementary allowance.

Hospital Schemes

Mr. Lawrence asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will identify and list in the *Official Report (a)* the hospital schemes started and completed since May 1979, and *(b)* the hospital schemes of more than £2 million now being planned, designed or constructed; and if he will give the costs of all these schemes in *(a)* and *(b)*.

Mr. Hayhoe: The information held centrally is as follows. Cost estimates for schemes in planning and design are not published in advance of the invitation to tender.

Table A
Hospital schemes started and completed since May 1979 each with a building and engineering cost of over £2 million

Regional Health Authority and Scheme	Estimated total cost £ million
Northern	
Fenham Blood Transfusion Service Centre	4·6
Hartlepool District General Hospital Scheme 1 Phase 1	5·9
North Tyneside Scheme 1 Phase 1	13·5
Queen Elizabeth Gateshead Scheme 1 Phase 1	7·9
Yorkshire	
Staincliffe District General Hospital Energy Centre	4·0
Trent	
Bassetlaw District General Hospital Phase 1	6·3
Glenfield District General Hospital Phase 1	16·0
Leicester General MIU	3·4
Lincoln County Phase 1	11·7
Northern General Phase 1c	7·9
Rotherham District General Hospital Phase 2	8·5
East Anglian	
Addenbrookes Geriatric Unit	4·7
West Suffolk Bury St. Edmunds Stage 1	2·3
Great Yarmouth District General Hospital 2	5·4
Hinchingbrooke Hospital Huntingdon Phase 3	13·9
Ipswich Phase 1 Heath Road Wing (Nucleus)	8·0
Rosie Maternity—Cambridge	6·3
North West Thames	
Charing Cross Hospital North Block	5·1
Lister Maternity Unit (Nucleus)	3·4
St. Charles Hospital	4·2
St. Mary's W2 Phase 1A	3·3
Watford (Shrodells Wing) Phase 3	17·5
North East Thames	
Broomfield Phase 3	9·7
Clacton district Phase 1 Stage 1 and 2	3·7
Colchester District General Hospital Phase 2	14·3
Colchester District General Hospital Phase 3 Residential	3·3
Homerton Hospital Phase 1	18·5
Newham Hospital Phase 1 (Nucleus)	11·8
Newham Hospital Phase 2 (Nucleus)	5·6
South East Thames	
Archery House	4·0
Kent and Sussex—Tunbridge Wells Phase 1	6·6
Orpington Hospital Phase 1	8·0
Maidstone District General Hospital Phase 1 (Nucleus)	14·0
South West Thames	
Croydon Mayday District General Hospital (Nucleus)	11·0
Queen Mary's Roehampton Phase 1	4·0
St. Georges Blocks G2 and F Phase 2	13·3
Wessex	
Odstock Hospital Spinal Injuries Unit	4·2
Swindon Laundry	3·3
Oxford	
Milton Keynes District General Hospital Phase 1	16·4
Wexham Park ENI	2·9
Wexham Park Maternity Unit	6·1
Wexham Park Paediatric Department and Stores	2·8
South Western	
Bristol Eye Hospital	5·5
Torbay District General Hospital Maternity Unit	3·0
West Midlands	
Bromsgrove Redditch District General Hospital Phase 1	20·5
Kidderminster District General Hospital Phase 5	3·4
New Cross Wolverhampton Wards and Theatres	2·7
New Cross Wolverhampton Wards 1 and 2	4·0
St. Georges Stafford Phase 2	2·8
Mersey	
Halton District General Hospital Phase 2 (Nucleus)	7·9
Macclesfield Development (Nucleus)	11·4
Regional Stores	3·2
North Western	
Hope Hospital Salford Phase 1	15·1
Manchester Royal Infirmary Phase 1	3·1
Blackpool Victoria Phase 4	4·5
Fleetwood ESMI	2·4
Park Hospital Geriatric Rehabilitation	3·4
Regional Blood Transfusion Centre	4·3
Royal Lancaster Infirmary Phase 2	3·6
Non Regional Health Authority	
Moorfield Eye Hospital City Road Development Phase 1	7·3

Table B
Hospital schemes over £2 million which are under construction

Regional Health Authority and Scheme	Estimated total cost £ million
Northern	
Blyth Community Hospital and Health Centre	5·5
Freeman Hospital	3·7
Furness General Scheme 2 Phase 1	7·9

Regional Health Authority and Scheme	Estimated total cost £ million
Hartlepool District General Hospital Scheme 3 Phase 1	3·1
Jarrow Community Hospital	4·3
North Tyneside Scheme 2 Phase 1	5·4
South Cleveland General Scheme 2 Phase 1B	8·0
Yorkshire	
Bradford Royal Infirmary Nucleus Wards and Theatres	3·0
Bridlington New Community Hospital	14·5
Friarage Hospital Phase 1 (Nucleus)	6·4
Goole New Community Hospital	12·6
Regional Blood Transfusion Centre Seacroft Phase 1	2·8
Scarborough District General Hospital Phase 1 (Nucleus)	8·1
Scunthorpe District General Hospital Phase 3A Service Centre	5·3
Staincliffe District General Hospital Phase 1 (Nucleus)	17·1
Trent	
Chesterfield and North Derby Royal Hospital Phase 2B	8·1
Derby City Phase 1	15·4
Derby Royal Infirmary Phase 2	10·9
Ilkeston Community Hospital	5·9
Kings Hill District General Hospital Phase 2	3·5
Lincoln County MIU—Phase 1C	3·3
Lincoln County Phase 1A and 1B	4·2
Northern General Geriatric	7·8
Pilgrim (Boston)—Phase 3	3·4
Victoria Mansfield—Phase 1	2·6
East Anglian	
Ipswich Phase 3 Heath Road Wing (Nucleus)	5·0
Peterborough 2nd District General Hospital Phase 1	16·8
North West Thames	
Hemel Hempstead Phase 1	7·7
St. Marys W2 Phase 1B	26·5
North East Thames	
Harold Wood Hospital Phase 1	9·5
North Middlesex—Kitchen/Dining and Geriatric Accommodation	5·2
Rochford Geriatric Wards	5·1
South East Thames	
Bassetts Residential Centre—MH Services	4·8
Buckland District General Hospital	3·0
Crystal Palace (Bowley Close)—MH Centre	3·8
Lewisham District General Hospital Phase 1A	7·9
Lewisham District General Hospital Phase 1B	3·5
South West Thames	
St. Georges' Block H Phase 2A	22·0
Wessex	
Andover Community Hospital	4·0
Bournemouth District General Hospital Phase 1	18·4
Royal Hants County Winchester Phase 4 (Nucleus)	11·6
Royal South Hants Southampton Phase 3	12·9
Royal United—Bath	5·1
St. Marys—Isle of Wight—Phase 3B (Nucleus)	20·7
West Dorset District General Hospital Phase 1	13·6
Oxford	
Heatherwood MI/EMI	4·8
South Western	
Cheltenham General Phase 1B	8·6
West Somerset (Musgrove Park) District General Hospital Phase 1	7·6
Weston-Super-Mare New Hospital	14·8
West Midlands	
Cheadle New Geriatric Unit	4·3
City General Stoke Surgical Accommodation (Nucleus)	17·7
George Eliot Nuneaton Phase 2 (Nucleus)	5·8
Good Hope Phase 1	3·9
Rubery Hill Regional Psych. Intensive Care Unit	5·0
Telford District General Hospital Phase 1	23·8
Walsall Phases 4A and 4B (Nucleus)	19·0
Wordsley—Obstetrics	5·9
Walsgrave Radiotheraphy Treatment Unit	3·9
Mersey	
North Sefton District General Hospital Southport Phase 1 (Nucleus)	21·5
St. Catherine's Birkenhead Redevelopment Phase 1	3·8
North Western	
Burmley General Hospital Phase 3	5·4
Fairfield Phase 1	5·4
Oldham District General Hospital Phase 1	16·6
Queens Park Blackburn Phase 1 Paediatric	4·0
Royal Albert Edward Infirmary Wigan Phase 1	5·5
Tameside General Phase 2	14·8
Non Regional Health Authorities	
Hammersmith Hospital Redevelopment Phase 1	16·0

Table C

Hospital Schemes Over £2 million in design

Regional Health Authority and Scheme
Northern
Ashington Low Energy Hospital (Nucleus) Hartlepool DGH Scheme 3 Phase 2
Kendal (Westmorland) General Scheme 1 Phases 1 & 2
Royal Victoria Infirmary Scheme 1 Phase 5
South Shields General Scheme 3 Phase 1
Yorkshire
Scunthorpe DGH Phase 3B A&E Block
Scunthorpe DGH Phase 4B (1) Ward Block
St. James University Hospital Leeds New Renal Unit
Trent
Bolsover Community Hospital Development
Coalville Community Hospital
Glenfield DGH Phase 2
Kings Mill DGH Phase 3
Leicester Royal Infirmary Phase 4B
N.W. Thames
Central Middlesex Psychiatric Unit
St. Albans City Hospital Development Phase 2
N.E. Thames
St. Ann's Geriatric Unit
Whipps Cross Phase 1
Whittington Redevelopment Phase 1
S.E. Thames
Eastbourne New DGH Phase 2
Eastbourne New DGH Pre-Phase 2
Hastings DGH Main Phase
Hastings DGH Pre-Phase Works
Hastings DGH Residence & Education
Medway DGH Phase 3B
Medway DGH Phase 3c
St. Thomas Hospital—South Wing
SW Thames
Mid Sussex Phase 1
Royal Surrey County Guildford Phase 2
Wessex

Royal United Bath—Operating Theatres

Oxford
John Radcliffe—Phase 3
Milton Keynes DGH—MI Unit
Milton Keynes DGH—OPD
Milton Keynes DGH Phase 2

S. Western
Frenchay DGH Phase 1
Gloucester Royal Phase 4B
Gloucester Royal Phase 4B Sub-Phases 1&2

W. Midlands
Anchor Meadow Community Hospital
Bradwell New Geriatric Unit (Nucleus)
Cannock Community Hospital
Edward Street—Psychiatric/Geriatric
Good Hope Phase 2
Good Hope Phase 3
Queen Elizabeth Birmingham—Reg. Specialties/Labs
RJAH Wards and Theatres
Rowley Regis Community Hospital Sandwell
Warwick DGH—Phase 1 (Nucleus)

Mersey
Alder Hey—Child Health Institute
Broadgreen Development Phase 1
St. Helens Redevelopment Phase 1 Boiler House
Warrington DGH Phase 1

North Western
Bolton DGH ESMI and Geriatric Unit
Bolton DGH Manufacturing Pharmacy and HSDU
Bolton DGH Phase 1
Fairfield Catering and HSDU
Fylde Community Hospital
Leigh Infirmary Phase 1
Manchester Royal Infirmary Phase 2
Manchester Royal Infirmary Service Complex
North Manchester General Boiler House
Peel Hall ESMI
Pendle Community Hospital
Queens Park Blackburn Phase 2 Geriatric
Whelley Hospital Phase 1

Non Regional Health Authority
Great Ormond Street—Boiler Plant Replacement
Moorfields Eye Hospital Redevelopment Phase 2B
National Heart and Chest Centre Brompton Phase 1

Table D
Hospital schemes costing over £2 million in planning

Regional Health Authority and Scheme

Northern
North Tyneside Scheme 3 Phase 1
Sunderland General Scheme Phase 2

Yorkshire
Bradford St. Lukes Development Phase 1 (Nucleus)

Trent
Derby City Phase 2
Kendray Hospital—Phase 2

East Anglian
Sudbury—Hospital Services Phase 1

North West Thames
Clayponds Geriatric Unit
Ealing Maternity Department

North East Thames
Goodmayes General Hospital

South West Thames
Bognor Community Hospital

Wessex
Salisbury District General Hospital Phase 1
St. Margaret's Hospital—Mental Illness Unit

West Midlands
Bromsgrove Community Hospital
Burton-On-Trent District General Hospital Phase 2
East Birmingham Obstetrics
Kidderminster District General Hospital Phase 6
Lichfield and Tamworth District General Hospital (Nucleus)
Queen Elizabeth Birmingham—Psychiatric Services

North Western
Ormskirk District General Hospital Phase 1

Drug Abuse

Mr. David Atkinson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what evaluation has been made of the impact which anti-drug abuse videos have had on teenagers' attitudes to drugs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: The Institute for the Study of Drug Dependence holds information in its library about videos which have been evaluated. In January 1986 this Department launched a drug misuse video package for 12 to 15-year-olds. Over 4,700 secondary schools in England and Wales have applied for a free copy. We shall be evaluating our package when schools have had sufficient time to make proper use of it.

Children's Deaths (Balconies)

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many children have (a) been injured and (b) died through falling off balconies during each of the last five years for which records are available; and of what ages they were.

Mr. Whitney: I regret that information is not available on the numbers of children injured through falling off balconies. The table shows the total number of accidental deaths registered with an underlying cause of death as "fall from or out of building or other structure" in England and Wales in each of the last five years for children aged under 15 years, and also, of those, the number specifically stating "fall from balcony" or similar term.

England and Wales 1981-1985
Number of accidental deaths of children aged under 15 years from falls from or out of building or other structure (ICD(9) E882) and falls from balcony, by age group.

Year	Age group Under 1	1-4	5-9	10-14	Total under 15
E882 Fall from or out of building or other structure					
1981	—	2	2	5	9
1982	—	11	2	3	16
1983	—	17	1	7	25

Year	Age group Under 1	1-4	5-9	10-14	Total under 15
1984	—	8	4	7	19
1985	—	12	5	3	20
E882 (part) Fall from balcony					
1981	—	—	—	—	—
1982	—	1	—	—	1
1983	—	2	—	—	2
1984	—	—	1	—	1
1985	—	1	—	—	1

Computerisation

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services which officials in his Department are to be offered increments in pay of £1,000 for helping to administer new computerisation methods and procedures; what salaries they currently earn; what consultations he has had with Civil Service unions about these new methods and procedures; and what was the outcome.

Mr. Major: In line with other Departments, this Department pays automatic data processing (ADP) allowances to the following specialist computer staff:

	Salary Scale	ADP allowance paid after Qualifying period of 1 year		
		1st year	2nd year	3rd year
Executive Officer	£5,250-£9,685	£700	£1,400	£1,800
Higher Executive Officer	£9,430-£11,941	£600	£1,200	£1,500
Senior Executive Officer	£11,639-£14,629	£500	£1,000	£1,200

The Department is also considering, as are other Departments, the payment of a discretionary allowance on top of the current ADP allowances; the terms and conditions for making payments have yet to be decided.

Mental Patients

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people have been detained in a mental hospital or psychiatric unit in each of the last seven years under the provisions of section 36 of the Mental Health Act.

Mr. Whitney: Section 36 of the Mental Health Act 1983 was implemented on 1 October 1984. Between that date and the end of 1984 there were six admissions to mental illness hospitals and units in England. Figures for 1985 are not yet available.

Single Payments

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the current average length of time for a decision on an application for a single payment in *(a)* Greenock and Port Glasgow, *(b)* Strathclyde, *(c)* Lothian and *(d)* Scotland as a whole.

Mr. Major: Claims for single payments are determined as soon as possible after all the information required has been collected; and urgent claims are given priority. Owing to a recent upsurge in claims in Scotland, resulting from a number of "take-up" campaigns mounted by local authorities and other agencies, claims are taking longer than usual to process.

Decisions on urgent claims are being given in one to two and two to three weeks, respectively at the Port Glasgow and Greenock local social security offices. Routine claims are taking longer, up to 15 and 8 weeks, respectively. Similar figures for Strathclyde, Lothian and Scotland are not available.

Children (Malnutrition)

Mr. Freeson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many children have been *(a)* admitted to hospital and *(b)* diagnosed as suffering from malnutrition in each of the last five years.

Mr. Whitney: I will let the right hon. Member have such information as can be obtained without incurring disproportionate cost as soon as possible.

Food (Nutritional Content)

Mr. Freeson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what studies are currently being undertaken into the nutritional content of the food eaten by pensioners, those on low incomes and those on supplementary benefit.

Mr. Whitney: A dietary and medical survey of adults aged 16 to 64, beginning in October, will provide data on a randomly selected sample of the United Kingdom population, including those on low incomes and supplementary benefit. In addition, consumption in low income and pensioners' households is included in the continuing survey undertaken by the national food survey committee. Details appear in its annual report.

Schizophrenia

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on his policy towards resources to combat schizophrenia in the light of the launch of "Schizophrenia: A National Emergency".

Mr. Whitney: A substantial proportion of the £1 billion which is spent annually on mental illness services is spent on the care and treatment of people with schizophrenia. We do not have statistics available centrally that would indicate the precise proportion. We mean to ensure that these funds are used to the best possible advantage. Early this year we set aside £6 million over the next three years to establish mental illness development projects in each

National Health Service region, to assist their progress towards improved patterns of care. (This supplements three projects, specifically on aftercare for schizophrenia, which were launched in 1983.)

When the development projects were launched we also set aside resources for additional research studies in mental illness; four new studies — all including people with schizophrenia and one including such people only — are already under way. We welcome the progress that has been made in recent years towards understanding this disease and finding the most effective methods of care.

We welcome, too, the part which voluntary bodies can play in the mental illness field, in co-operation with the statutory authorities both in raising additional funds and in increasing the knowledge of the public in a non-sensational way, so dispelling unfounded fears.

Residential Care Homes

Dr. Hampson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps he has taken, in the context of the Government's policy towards deregulation and in the light of the recommendations contained in the White Papers on that subject, Cmnd. 9571 and 9794, to review the regulations covering old people's residential homes; what assessment he has made of the implications of any relaxation in those regulations for the control of abuses; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short), on 12 June at column *288*, and reaffirm that there are no proposals to deregulate residential care homes.

I further refer my hon. Friend to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels), on 3 June at column *548*, on the two-year study which is being carried out by the Social Services Inspectorate. When the inspectorate's further report is available the regulatory arrangements will be reviewed and account will then be taken of the responses to the enterprise and deregulation unit's recent consultation with local authorities and other interested bodies in connection with the review of licensing described in the White Paper "Building Business . . . Not Barriers".

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PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

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SESSION 1985-86

23rd June-4th July 1986

SCOPE OF THE INDEX, ARRANGEMENT AND ABBREVIATIONS

This index is derived from the House of Commons Library's Parliamentary On-Line Information System (POLIS), and the subject terms used are based on those used in POLIS. There are often changes in column numbering, etc., between the daily part or weekly Hansard (which simply collects together the daily parts without revision) and the bound volume. The index for the bound volume is revised to take account of these changes.

Scope and arrangement of the Index

Oral and Written Parliamentary Questions are indexed under subject headings and the names of Members asking and Ministers replying to them. Questions are not listed under the names of Departments replying. Departmental listings can be arrived at indirectly by looking under the names of the Minister(s) of that Department. There are, however, the headings 'Northern Ireland', 'Scotland', and 'Wales' under which one can find not only most Questions answered by the Northern Ireland Office, Scottish Office, Welsh Office but also Questions about these areas of the United Kingdom which are answered by other Departments. Ministerial statements are indexed under subject headings, under 'Ministerial statements' and the names of Ministers making them and Members speaking on them. General debates are indexed under broad subject headings and under the names of all Members and Ministers taking part. Debates on legislation (Bills, Orders, Regulations etc.) are indexed under the name of the Bill, Statutory Instrument etc., under subject headings and under the names of those taking part.

Rulings and Statements by Mr. Speaker and his deputies are brought together under the heading Speakers rulings and statements.

Other contributions by Mr. Speaker and his deputies appear under the heading Speaker.

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The date of each item except Parliamentary Questions is inserted immediately before the reference.

Members' names are given in the form by which they prefer to be known and are printed in bold italics. Under their names, entries are arranged under one of the two headings *Debates etc.* (to include interventions on statements, points of order and so on) or *Questions*.

Abbreviations

Bills 1R = first reading, 2R = second reading, Money res = money resolution, Com = Committee stage, Rep = Report stage, 3R = third reading, amendt/amendts = amendment/amendments, * = matter taken formally, without debate.

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